

THE PLAGUE OF ELLIANT

Music and original lyrics: (*La Peste D'Elliant (Bosen Elliant) in the Barzaz Breiz 1839-1847 p. 52-55, v)*

Translation and arrangement by Dorothea de Beckham (Dee Becker) (© 2020)

[541 – 542 CE Plague of Justinian; 1348 CE Plague reaches Elliant]*



Between Langolen and Le Faouet, Lives Saint Bard, a holy man. We call him Father Rasian the Saint**
He said to the men of Faouet: Celebrate a mass every month, a mass for the dead in your church.
The plague has gone from Elliant, but does not leave without others: she takes seven thousand one hundred souls!

Verily, Death descended into the land of Elliant, All the world perished, except for two:
A poor old woman of sixty and her only son. "The Plague is the end of my house," said she;
"When God will wish she will enter; when she comes in, we will go out," In Elliant's public square,
We would find grass to mow, Except in the narrow rut of the cart that drives the dead on earth.
Hardness would have chosen the heart that would not have cried, in the land of Elliant whoe'er he was,
Seeing eighteen full carts at the door of the cemetery, and eighteen others come there.

There were nine children in the same house, the same dumper carried them to the ground.
Their poor mother was dragging them. The father followed, whistling ... He had lost his mind.
She was screaming, calling to God, she was upset body and soul: "Bury my nine sons, and I
Promise you a cord of wax that will go around your walls three times.
Who will tour your church three times, and three times around from your asylum?"

I had nine sons whom I had given birth to, and now Death came to take them,
Take them from my doorstep; more people to give me a little drop of water!"

The cemetery is full to the walls; the full church all around; You have to bless the fields to bury the
corpses.
I see an oak tree in the cemetery, with a white sheet at its peak: the plague has swept everyone away.

NOTES BY VILLEMARQUE IN THE BARZAZ BREIZ:

The Elliant Plague is never sung without joining this strange added legend:

"It was a day of forgiveness in the village of Elliant; a young miller, arriving
at the ford with his horses, saw a beautiful lady in a white dress,
on the edge the river, a wand in hand, who begged him to pass her across the water.
"Oh! yes, surely, madam, *ré*," he liquidated; and already she was
in croup [coughing] on the horse, and soon deposited on the other bank.

So, the beautiful lady said to him:

"Young man, you don't know who you just passed:

I am the Plague. I just went around Brittany, and I

go to the church in the town, where Mass is being celebrated;

All those whom I strike with my wand will suddenly die;

As for you, fear nothing, it will not harm you or your mother either. "

And the Plague kept its word, made me naively observe a singer;

because the song says:

"Everyone perished, except two people

A poor old woman and her son. "

"Do you know," said another, "how they managed to get it to leave the country?"

We sang it. Seeing herself discovered, she fled.

There is no safer way of hunting the Plague than of singing it;

Also, since that date, the Plague has not reappeared. "

** This epidemic occurred in 1348 in Elliant in the country of Quimper, Brittany.*

*** St. Ratian, 5th - 6th century; disciple of St. Guénolé (Gwenole, Winwaloe, Winwallus (c. 460 – 3 March 532)).*

NOTES:

Barzaz Breiz notes regarding Rasiaen (pp 52,55) https://fr.wikisource.org/wiki/Barzaz_Breiz/1846:

The plague which desolated all Europe in the sixth century ravaged Armoynque: those who were struck lost the hair, teeth and sight, yellowed, languid and many died. There were cantons of Armorican Brittany whose entire population was swept away. The parish of Elliant, in Cornouaille was one of them. The neighboring country, and that of Tourc'h in particular, prayed to a hermit from there named Ratian for the luck to be preserved from the plague. This is what we learn from the author of the life of Saint Gwénnolé, written at that time and a shortened ninth century account by Gurdestin, abbot of Landévenek. What the popular poet calls out as a contemporary, a saint character called Ratian, who actually lived at that time between Langolen and Faouet, that is to say in Tourc'h. ¹

¹ St. Ratianus: because of a disaster of his people he besought the Lord, and thus they are in many other places now because so many people listened to him and kept his place (Turc'h) by the abovementioned mortality. {V. Cartul. Abbat. Landeven. ap. D. Morice, Hut. de Bretagne, 1, preuves, col. 17.1; Cf. D. Lobineau, *Vies des saints de Bretagne* [Lives of the saints of Brittany] Art. Saint Gwénnolé; And the abbey Tresvaux; ibid -2ⁿ edition, 1, p. 99.)

Annuaire de Bretagne: historique, littéraire et scientifique, 1897

Saints days: January 10th – St. Ratian, disciple of St. Guénnolé, 5th century

La peste noire, une épidémie qui a marqué la Bretagne

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zh_nC-NKieQ Posted Apr 12, 2020 by France 3 Bretagne (Accessed June 2020)

L'une de nos équipes s'est replongée dans ce qui fut l'une des pires pandémies, la plus meurtrière du Moyen-Âge. L'épidémie de peste noire qui emporta 30 à 50% de la population d'Europe. En Bretagne, cette épidémie arriva en 1348 et à Elliant dans le pays de Quimper, cette histoire tragique a traversé les siècles.

[One of our teams plunged back into what was one of the worst, deadliest pandemics of the Middle Ages. The epidemic of black plague which claimed 30 to 50% of the population of Europe. In Brittany, this epidemic happened in 1348 and in Elliant in the country of Quimper, this tragic story has spanned the centuries.]