XI.

THE FRENCH FLOWER GIRL.

I was lingering listlessly over a cup of coffee on the Boulevard des Italiens, in June. I had not been under the influence of an idea for two days, and was drooping like the roses of yesterday—very like, as you may imagine. I sate simply conscious of the cool air, the blue sky, the white houses, the lights, and the lions, which combine to render that universally pleasant period known as "after dinner," so peculiarly pleasant in Paris.

In this mood my eyes fell upon a pair of orbs fixed intently upon me. Whether the process was effected by the eyes, or the agency of fingers, simply, I cannot say; but, at the same moment, a rose was insinuated into my button-hole, a gentle voice addressed me, and I beheld, in connexion with the eyes, the fingers, and the voice, a girl. She carried on her arm a basket of flowers, and was, literally, nothing more nor less than one of the Bouquetières who fly along the Boulevards like butterflies, with the difference that they turn their favourite flowers to a more practical account.

Following the example of some other distracted décorés, who I found were sharing my honours, I placed
a piece of money—I believe, in my case, it was silver—in the hand of the girl; and, receiving a handsome acknowledgment, in the shape of a smile and a "Merci bien, Monsieur!" was again left alone—("desolate," a Frenchman would have said)—on the crowded and carousing Boulevard.

To meet a perambulating and persuasive Bouquetière, who places a flower in your coat and waits for a pecuniary recompense, is scarcely a rare adventure in Paris; but I was interested—unaccountably so—in this young girl: her whole manner and bearing was so different and distinct from all others of her calling. Without any of that appearance which, in England, we are accustomed to call "theatrical," she was such a being as we can scarcely believe in out of a ballet. Not, however, that her attire departed—except, perhaps, in a certain coquettish simplicity—from the conventional mode: its only decorations seemed to be ribbons, which also gave a character to the little cap that perched itself with such apparent insecurity upon her head. Living a life that seemed one long summer's day—one floral fête—with a means of existence so frail and immaterial—she conveyed an impression of unreality. She might be likened to a Nymph, or a Naiad, but for the certain something that brought you back to the theatre, intoxicating the senses, at once, with the strange, indescribable fascinations of hot chandeliers—close and perfumed air—foot-lights, and fiddlers.

Evening after evening I saw the same girl—generally at the same place—and, it may be readily imagined, became one of the most constant of her clientèle. I learned, too, as many facts relating to her as could be learned where most was mystery. Her peculiar and persuasive mode of disposing of her flowers (a mode
which has since become worse than vulgarised by bad imitators) was originally her own graceful instinct—or whim, if you will. It was something new and natural, and amused many, while it displeased none. The sternest of stockbrokers, even, could not choose but be decorated. Accordingly, this new Nydia of Thessaly went out with her basket one day, awoke next morning, and found herself famous.

Meantime there was much discussion, and more mystification, as to who this Queen of Flowers could be—where she lived—and with whom. Nothing was known of her except her name—Hermance. More than one adventurous student—you may guess I am stating the number within bounds—traced her steps for hour after hour, till night set in—in vain. Her flowers disposed of, she was generally joined by an old man, respectably clad, whose arm she took with a certain confidence that sufficiently marked him as a parent or protector; and the two always contrived sooner or later, in some mysterious manner, to disappear.

After all stratagems have failed, it generally occurs to people to ask a direct question. But this in the present case was impossible. Hermance was never seen except in very public places—often in crowds—and to exchange twenty consecutive words with her, was considered a most fortunate feat. Notwithstanding, too, her strange, wild way of gaining her livelihood, there was a certain dignity in her manner which sufficed to cool the too curious.

As for the directors of the theatres, they exhibited a most appropriate amount of madness on her account; and I believe that at several of these establishments, Hermance might have commanded her own terms. But only one of these miserable men succeeded in making a tangible
proposal, and he was treated with most glorious contempt. There was, indeed, something doubly dramatic in the Bouquetière's disdain of the drama. She who lived a romance could never descend to act one. She would rather be Rosalind than Rachel. She refused the part of Cerito, and chose to be an Alma on her own account.

It may be supposed that where there was so much mystery, imagination would not be idle. To have believed all the conflicting stories about Hermance, would be to come to the conclusion that she was the stolen child of noble parents, brought up by an ouvrier; but that somehow her father was a tailor of dissolute habits, who lived a contented life of continual drunkenness, on the profits of his daughter's industry;—that her mother was a deceased duchess, but, on the other hand, was alive, and carried on the flourishing business of a blanchisseuse. As for the private life of the young lady herself, it was reflected in a magic mirror of such contradictory impossibilities, in the delicate discussions held upon the subject, that one had no choice but to disbelieve everything.

One day a new impulse was given to this gossip by the appearance of the Bouquetière in a startling hat of some expensive straw, and of a make bordering on the ostentatious. It could not be doubted that the profits of her light labours were sufficient to enable her to multiply such finery to almost any extent, had she chosen; but in Paris the adoption of a bonnet or a hat, in contradistinction to the little cap of the grisette, is considered an assumption of a superior grade, and unless warranted by the "position" of the wearer, is resented as an impertinence. In Paris, indeed, there are only two classes of women—those with bonnets, and those without; and these stand in the same relation to one

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another, as the two great classes into which the world may be divided—the powers that be, and the powers that want to be. Under these circumstances, it may be supposed that the surmises were many and marvellous. The little Bouquetière was becoming proud—becoming a lady;—but how? why? and above all—where? Curiosity was never more rampant, and scandal never more inventive.

For my part, I saw nothing in any of these appearances worthy, in themselves, of a second thought; nothing could have destroyed the strong and strange interest which I had taken in the girl; and it would have required something more potent than a straw hat—however coquettish in crown, and audacious in brim—to have shaken my belief in her truth and goodness. Her presence, for the accustomed few minutes, in the afternoon or evening, became to me—I will not say a necessity, but certainly a habit; and a habit is sufficiently despotic when

"A fair face and a tender voice have made me"—

I will not say "mad and blind," as the remainder of the line would insinuate—but most deliciously in my senses, and most luxuriously wide awake!

But to come to the catastrophe—

"One morn we missed her in the accustomed spot"—

Not only, indeed, from "accustomed" and probable spots, but from unaccustomed, improbable, and even impossible spots—all of which were duly searched—was she missed. In short, she was not to be found at all. All was amazement on the Boulevards. Hardened old flaneurs turned pale under their rouge, and some of the younger ones went about with drooping moustaches, which, for want of the cire, had fallen into the "yellow leaf."
A few days sufficed, however, for the cure of these sentimentalists. A clever little monkey at the Hippodrome, and a gentleman who stood on his head while he ate his dinner, became the immediate objects of interest, and Hermance seemed to be forgotten. I was one of the few who retained any hope of finding her, and my wanderings for that purpose, without any guide, clue, information, or indication, seem to me now something absurd. In the course of my walks, I met an old man, who was pointed out to me as her father—met him frequently, alone. The expression of his face was quite sufficient to assure me that he was on the same mission—and with about as much chance of success as myself. Once I tried to speak to him; but he turned aside, and avoided me with a manner that there could be no mistaking. This surprised me, for I had no reason to suppose that he had ever seen my face before.

A paragraph in one of the newspapers at last threw some light on the matter. 'The Bouquetière had never been so friendless or unprotected as people had supposed. In all her wanderings she was accompanied, or rather followed, by her father; whenever she stopped, then he stopped also; and never was he distant more than a dozen yards. I wonder that he was not recognised by hundreds, but I conclude he made some change in his attire or appearance, from time to time. One morning this strange pair were proceeding on their ramble as usual, when, passing through a rather secluded street, the Bouquetière made a sudden bound from the pavement, sprung into a post-chaise, the door of which stood open, and was immediately whirled away, as fast as four horses could tear—leaving the old man alone with his despair and the basket of flowers.
Three months have passed away since the disappearance of the Bouquetière; but only a few days since I found myself one evening very dull at one of those "brilliant receptions," for which Paris is so famous. I was making for the door, with a view to an early departure, when my hostess detained me, for the purpose of presenting me to a lady who was monopolising all the admiration of the evening—she was the newly-married bride of a young German Baron of great wealth, and noted for a certain wild kind of genius, and utter scorn of conventionalities. The next instant I found myself introduced to a pair of eyes that could never be mistaken. I dropped into a vacant chair by their side, and entered into conversation. The Baronne observed that she had met me before, but could not remember where, and in the same breath asked me if I was a lover of flowers.

I muttered something about loving beauty in any shape, and admired a bouquet which she held in her hand.

The Baronne selected a flower, and asked me if it was not a peculiarly fine specimen. I assented; and the flower, not being re-demanded, I did not return it. The conversation changed to other subjects, and shortly afterwards the Baronne took her leave with her husband. They left Paris next day for the Baron's family estate, and I have never seen them since.

I learned subsequently that some strange stories had obtained circulation respecting the previous life of the Baronne. Whatever they were, it is very certain that this or some other reason has made the profession of Bouquetière most inconveniently popular in Paris. Young ladies of all ages that can, with any degree of courtesy, be included in that category, and of all
degrees of beauty short of the hunch-back, may be seen in all directions intruding their flowers with fatal pertinacity upon inoffensive loungers, and making war upon button-holes that never did them any harm. The youngest of young girls, I find, are being trained to the calling, who are all destined, I suppose, to marry distinguished foreigners from some distant and facetious country.

I should have mentioned before, that a friend calling upon me the morning after my meeting with the Baronne, saw the flower which she had placed in my hand standing in a glass of water on the table. An idea struck me: "Do you know anything of the language of flowers?" I asked.

"Something," was the reply.

"What, then, is the meaning of this?"

"SECRECY."
THIRTY DAYS OF PLEASURE FOR FIFTEEN, FRANCS.

Such is the marvellous announcement that—paragraphed in newspapers, posted upon walls, and sent forth on the wings of handbills—has been astonishing Paris for several weeks past; a miraculous project to provide pleasure for thirty consecutive days to some two hundred thousand persons. But pleasure of what kind? To many, barricades are pleasures, and thirty days not too long for their enjoyment. Could it be the object of the prospectus to get up a revolution by subscription; to provide each subscriber with fifteen francs worth of freedom, according to the particular taste? As may be supposed, there were not wanting alarmists, who, taking that view, had settled the veriest minutiae of the meditated rising—down a list of prices to be submitted to the public, at fixed prices, as, "Enfranchisement for one, two francs; open and advised speaking, one franc, fifty centimes; ditto, with sarcasms, or sauce piquante, two francs; ditto, with libels, two francs, fifty centimes. General violence à discrétion. Bloodshed and infamous excesses to be charged as supplements."

A short time elapsed, however, and the united sagacity of at least six journals, about six hundred café
politicians, and no end of the mob, was found to be miserably at fault, and the credulous and superficial were in a "blaze of triumph." The design was discovered to be a mere harmless attempt to apply the principles of association and co-operation in a new manner; to secure to the people—not their political rights, which they somehow manage to do without—but their favourite pleasures; which, to Frenchmen, are something like a necessity. Benefit societies, in England of all descriptions, had done much to teach "the people" to be provident; the Great Exhibition had done more in encouraging them to be industrious; but it was reserved for the French to point what is, to Frenchmen, an equally useful moral, by showing them how they may combine to make the most of the result, both of their providence and their industry. Accordingly, France has her "Trente Jours de Plaisir pour Quinze Francs."

The nature of the design being no longer doubtful, the ways and means had to be discussed. How was it possible for the projectors to give two hundred thousand persons, in the short space of thirty days, free admission to the opera, the theatres, the public gardens of Paris; to Mabille; to the Chaumièrè; to the Château Rouge; and to the fêtes of the surrounding country—Asnières, St. Cloud, Versailles, Meudon? In the first place, the speculation could never "pay;" ten sous per head per diem being the only return for an expenditure involving at least, as was calculated, ten times that amount. Physical impossibility was also set up as another slight objection:—Suppose the two hundred thousand persons should take it into their heads to visit the same place on the same identical evening—How could the requisite amount of accommodation be provided for them? What
would be the fate of the opera, with two hundred thousand determined sight-seers besieging its doors? What could be expected of the most yielding and expansive of public gardens?

The financial part of the matter was soon answered. It was not a question between the projectors and the public, but between the projectors and *themselves*. Their great and undisguised object being the acquisition of money, they had of course made all due calculations. If these calculations failed, they were prepared to take the consequences. With regard to the second difficulty, the solution was equally simple. If the two hundred thousand subscribers desired anything so unnatural as a simultaneous visit to the same place of amusement, they could not be gratified. In fact, according to the arrangements, they could not select their own particular amusement for any particular evening, but must submit to take their turn, as general convenience might dictate. Thus, the two hundred thousand would be distributed every evening over *all* the places of amusement, every man seeing everything by degrees in due course.

The projectors calculated that the theatres, spectacles, balls, concerts, and public gardens in and around Paris, afforded daily accommodation for three hundred thousand persons; and they guaranteed to make arrangements with the directors of these amusements for places for their two hundred thousand subscribers. They further supported their case by citing the opinions of such men as Victor Hugo and Alexander Dumas, who expressed their warm belief, both in the commercial practicability and social advantages of the scheme. The principal theatres, to be sure, announced, publicly, their refusal to make any "arrangements" for the reception of this wholesale visitation on any but the usual terms;
a "reduction on taking a quantity" was out of the question. This decision would, of course, involve extra expenditure on the part of the projectors; but, nevertheless, could not prove fatal to the project, which was soon understood to be in a fair way of realization.

The most potent enemies of the "Trente Jours de Plaisir" were now the satirical journals, who could not, of course, give up so good a "subject" for ridicule. The "Corsaire" was too dignified to trouble itself much about the matter, so long as there remained Red Republicanism, or Moderate Republicanism, or Republicanism of any kind, to bring into contempt; but the "Charivari" needed subjects for its artists, who had been working "Actualités" and "Causeries" to the last point of despair; and the "Trente Jours" was too tempting to be missed. But after a few days of most unparalleled facetiousness in its pictorial department, the "Charivari" appeared one morning with the imposing advertisement of the "Trente Jours" on its back page; and, by a curious coincidence, from that exact date the ""Trente Jours" disappeared from its pages as a subject for satire. Meantime the "Tintamarre" had not been idle. The "Tintamarre" is the latest literary offspring of the satirical mind of Paris. It spurns your "polished razor keen" as a weapon of wit; and, in its warfare, inclines itself to the five-and-twenty-bladed pocket-knife; while it does not neglect to attack with the tomahawk as often as it has strength to lift that weapon. It inclines itself to zoological comparisons; and, when a minister or journal of Order is to be attacked, the old-established donkey is its favourite illustration, except when this animal gives way to the equally congenial baboon.

The "Tintamarre," from the very first, waged war against the "Trente Jours," for no reason more serious,
I believe, than the fact that it afforded a good mark. The arguments against the practicability and utility of the scheme having been exhausted, a grand discovery was made, that the name of the director of the project was Rion, and that his name was naturally susceptible of a pun! Accordingly, the changes were rung upon the word, most remorsely. "Rion du tout," figured in every column, in an endless variety of forms, all tending to the conclusion that "nothing at all" was precisely what the subscribers were likely to get for their money. As may be supposed, the donkey was trotted out, until he must have been as dead beat as the reader himself; and as to the baboon, his synonyme was legion.

Notwithstanding, however, this terrible resistance, it was announced, a few days ago, that the directors were in a position to proceed with the accomplishment of the project. Whether or not they had secured the desired number of subscribers, I am unaware; but it is evident that they have obtained a sufficient number to justify them in taking the step. Nor is there any reason why the project should not be successful with even something less than the proposed number of subscribers; everything depends upon the facilities which the directors of the public amusements give to the undertaking. These, of course, vary; in some cases it will be necessary to pay the full price of admission; but then, on the other hand, there are many sights in Paris well worth seeing, but which meet with but little support; and these may, doubtless, be secured on advantageous terms. The conclusion, therefore, must be, that, taking the average, all the amusements of Paris may be at the disposal of M. Rion, for considerably less than the sum subscribed.

However this may be, the scheme is now in operation
and thousands of the middle classes of Paris are avail-
ing themselves of an opportunity that, to a Frenchman, is no common boon. To secure a day’s pleasure, for the sum of five-pence, is, indeed, an effort of human inge-
nuity that few except a Frenchman could have con-
ceived; but so tempting are the terms offered, that there is no reason to suppose that a nation, even less partial to pleasure than the French, might not take advantage of them.

Such is the veracious history of an undertaking that has been exciting the ridicule, reprobation, approbation, and, ultimately, co-operation of all the harmless people in Paris, who are not too much occupied with politics, for the last several weeks. Whether it be a very important or desirable object to throw open so much miscellaneous amusement to an equally miscellaneous collection of persons, is another question; but the realiza-
tion of the “Trente Jours de Plaisir” (unless M. Rion happens to be ruined) is certainly not without its significance, as an indication of what we may expect for the future—either of good or evil—from the associated movements of large masses towards a common object. As a matter of taste, the notion of thirty days of pleasure implies wastefulness of the most valuable but most fleeting of human possessions; as a matter of practice, it may be pronounced impossible. About a week of continuous sight-seeing is sufficient to sicken any person possessing a respectable amount of fastidi-
ousness: a month of it will scarcely bear contempla-
tion. For my part, I would as soon walk a thousand miles in a thousand hours. Nevertheless, chacun à son goûт: M. Rion has accomplished a bold feat, and M. Rion’s subscribers have my hearty congratulations.
XIII.

DINING WITH THE MILLION.

The French journals, debarred from the discussion of prohibited politics, have been lately discovering several heroes in humble life. Modest merit is very apt thus to turn up in the newspapers at dead seasons, like the Shower of Frogs, and Tremendous Turnips, which, in England, are among the most important results of the close of the parliamentary session. It happens occasionally that we read in the obituary of some very distinguished person, an honour to his country, whose like, the journalist informs us, we ne’er shall look upon again, and whose name we thus hear mentioned for the first time. We have never suspected the great man’s existence until he has ceased to exist. We have never known of the honour we enjoyed until we have ceased to enjoy it.

Thus it is that a large portion of the Parisian public were perhaps utterly unable to do honour to the Père Nicolet, until they were all of a sudden deprived of him. Death, however, unlocks the biographical treasures of the French journals, and they have celebrated the memory of Père Nicolet with that nicely-modulated mournfulness, that neatly-balanced regret, that well-
punctuated pity, and that enlarged sympathy which a fantailtonist (who is paid by the line) can never coldly repress.

"Who is, or rather, who was Père Nicolet?" may especially be asked in our own country, where ignorance, so that it be the result of choice, is so distinguished and respectable.

Few can answer the question better than I can. The Père Nicolet! how well I remember that great and magnificent man. The remembrance carries me back (with a swiftness comparable to nothing but Prince Hussein’s carpet, or an Excursion to Brighton at half-a-crown)—to old familiar Paris—to

"Other lips and other hearts,"

not to mention other cookery and other cartes—Paris with its narrow Seine, that divides, but does not separate its shores; its terraces, fountains, and statues; its sauntering and sun; its immaculate toilettes, and morals (occasionally) to correspond; its balls where people actually dance, and its conversaziones where talking is not unknown—Paris, where people go to the Opera merely because they like music, and yawn not, though a play be in nine acts; where gloves are carried to perfection; where it is not customary to consider any man a snob or a swindler because you have not been introduced to him; where nobody is so ill-bred as to blush, although many, perhaps, have reason to do so; where everybody is a great deal more polite to everybody else than anybody deserves; where all the children are men, and all the men are children, and where all the ladies are more important than the two put together; for the politest nation in Europe fully recognises the Right of Woman to govern—and to work.
The Père Nicolet! The mention of his name recalls an eventful evening. Everybody who has been accustomed to sun himself occasionally in Paris has experienced the difficulty of dining. Not difficulty in a vulgar sense. That may be experienced elsewhere, even in our own happy land, where great men have been reduced to feed their horses upon cheese-cakes. I allude to the more painful embarrassment of prandial riches. In England, according to Ude, a man is troubled in the choice of a religious sect, because there are fifty of them; but he has no hesitation as to his fish sauce, because there is, or was, but one. In France the case is reversed. The example of the English philosopher Hobson—proverbial for the ready adaptation of his inclination to his alternativeless condition—is readily followed in matters of faith; it is in feeding (can alliteration excuse a coarse expression?) that the Frenchman finds himself at fault. Thus it is that in Paris, I have found what I may call a cart-load of five hundred dishes an insuperable difficulty in the way of a dinner, compared to which the English embarrassment between a steak and a chop, or a chop and a steak, is felicity itself. What monotony in variety it is to go the round of the restaurants! How soon the gilding is taken off the Maison Dorée; how quickly the Café de Paris ceases to be distinguished from any other café—de Paris, or elsewhere; what a disagreeable family the Trois Frères speedily become. Then Vachette, Véry, and Vefour—Vefour, Véry, and Vachette!—are ringing the changes in vain. The dinner which was probably prepared for the Sleeping Beauty previously to her siesta, and kept waiting a hundred years, may have been found somewhat behind the age when it came to be eaten; but it could not have been more change-
less and unchangeable than those great conservative cuisines.

Be it observed, however, that I am not assuming to myself any particular claims to epicurean honours. I am not going to set up an ideal on so very material a subject, to talk about the spiritual and divine side of gastronomy; to fall into affected raptures at the traditions of Vatel or the treatise of Savarin; to talk of the rare repasts I used not to revel in before the old Rocher was ruined, and the wonderful old vintages which I must confess had not then come under my notice. Nobody raves in this manner but antiquated dogs, who have not only had their day, but who have been making a night of it ever since—except perhaps the comic bon vivant of some third-rate magazine, who has probably drawn his inspiration from a restaurant, in the Palais Royal, at two francs, prix fixe. Perhaps there is no subject upon which more nonsense has been written (inclusive of the lucubrations of the comic bon vivant) on both sides of the question, than upon French cookery. For my part, I am perfectly aware that the best dinners in the world are to be had in Paris, if you go to the right places. But the vaunted variety is all nonsense as far as the accidental diner is concerned. Deduct from the ten thousand plats, or whatever number the carte may profess to contain, the dishes that do not happen to be in season (always a large proportion;) those that never are, and never will be in season (a still larger number;) those of which, at whatever time you dine, the last plat has just been served (an equally large number;) those which require to be specially ordered in the morning (not a few;) and you will find that as to selection the remainder is not very bewildering—especially when it is remembered that two different names very often refer
to one dish or to two, with a difference so slight as to be scarcely distinguishable.

Having thus, I hope, justified myself for finding promiscuous dining in Paris monotonous after a few months of it, I need not farther explain how I came to test the resources of the Barriers in this respect, and how, in the course of not finding what I was looking for, I met with the Père Nicolet.

The Barriers, I may premise, are a grand resort, not only of dancers, (to whom I have already alluded in this journal) but of diners and drinkers of all descriptions and degrees. It is owing to their happy attraction that so few drunken persons are seen about the streets of the city; and not, as has been sagaciously inferred, because drunken persons are by any means rare phenomena among a Parisian population. The octroi duty upon viands and wine entering Paris, was diminished some time ago by a popular act of the President, but not sufficiently so to injure the interests of the restaurants outside. It is when the neighbourhood around becomes so thickly populated that the government find it desirable to extend the boundary and bring it within the jurisdiction of the city authorities, which has happened now and then, that these establishments suffer. Placed under the ban of the octroi, their wines and viands are no longer cheaper than in the heart of the city; and their customers forsake them for new establishments set up on the outside of the new Barriers, destined perhaps some day to be themselves subjected to a similar proceeding.

Meantime, on every day of the year, but on Sundays more especially, thousands upon thousands, attracted perhaps as much by the excursion as by other considerations, flock to these restaurants to transact the mighty
affair of dinner. Let us plant ourselves, that is to say, myself and two or three congenial associates, at one of the largest and most respectable. The place is the Barrière Clichy, and the time, Sunday, at six o'clock. The principal dining room, on the first floor, is spacious and lofty, with all the windows open to the air. Nearly all the long narrow tables, which look very white and well appointed, are occupied by satisfied or expectant guests. Yonder is a respectable shopkeeper at the head of his very respectable family. *See with* what well-bred politeness he places chairs for his wife and the elder girls; who hang up their bonnets, and adjust their already nicely adjusted hair in the mirror with perfect composure, not at all embarrassed by the presence of a couple of hundred persons whom they have never seen before. At the next table is a grisette dining with a young gentleman of rustic appearance, with red ears, who does not seem quite at his ease. Never mind, she does, that’s very plain. They are waiting to order their dinner. The young lady stamps impatiently with her little foot upon the floor, and strikes a glass with a fork to attract the attention of a waiter, a practice that is considered underbred by fastidious persons; and which, to be sure, one does not observe at the Trois Frères. The garçon at length arrives, and the young lady pours into his ear a voluble order; — a flood of Julienne soup and a bottle of anything but ordinaire wine, corking it down with a long array of solid matters to correspond. The young gentleman with the red ears, meantime, grins nervously; and indeed does little else during a very long dinner, making up, however, for the subordinate part he has hitherto played, by paying the bill. Round the room are scattered similar parties, arranged variously. Now a lady and gentleman, then a gentleman alone,
then a lady alone (who partakes of everything with great gravity and decorum;) then two ladies together, who exchange confidences with mysterious gestures, show one another little letters, and are somewhat lavish in the article of curaçoa; then two gentlemen together, who are talking about the two ladies, exchange a glance with one of them, and depart.

Such is a specimen of the society usually to be met with at a dinner outside the Barriers. If you wish to exchange a little for the worse, you will not find the process very difficult. In the restaurants of a lower class, there is a greater preponderance of cold veal and fried potatoes among the viands, and of blouses among the guests. The wine, too, is rougher, and what Englishmen call fruity. You will be amused, too, during dinner, by musical performers (who walk in promiscuously from the street,) conjurors, and other ingenious persons, some of whom whistle duets with imaginary birds, which they are supposed to carry in their pockets, and imitate the noises of various animals with a fidelity I have seldom known equalled.

The sun is setting as I stroll forth with my friends along the exterior Boulevards, rather dull, as becomes inhabitants of our beloved island, and anxious for "something to turn up" to amuse us. One proposes a visit to a suburban ball; another, an irruption into a select wedding party, which is making a great noise in a large house adjacent, where dancing may be seen through the open windows. The last proposition is negatived on the ground that we are not friends of the family, and might possibly be ejected with ignominy. I had myself, by the way, assisted at one of these entertainments a few days previously. It had been given by my laundress, on the occasion of the marriage
of one of her "young ladies" with a youth belonging to my hotel. On that occasion I had been bored, I must say; and, moreover, had found myself compelled to contribute, in the style of a milord, towards setting up the young pair in life, for which purpose a soup-plate was sent round among the guests. It was next proposed to inspect the manners of the lower orders. With great pleasure; but how, and where? Somebody had heard of a great establishment, which could not be far off, where "the million" were in the habit of congregating to an unlimited extent, on Sundays especially. We would stop the first intelligent plebeian we came across, and inquire for such a place. Here is a man in a blouse, with a pipe in his mouth: a circle is formed round him, and six questions are addressed to him at once. He is a plebeian, but not intelligent, so we let him pass. The next is our man: he looks contemptuously at us for our ignorance, and directs us to the Barrière de Rochechouart—le Petit Ramponneau, kept by the Père Nicolet, whom everybody (sarcastic emphasis on everybody) knows.

The Barrière de Rochechouart is not far off; and the Barrier once gained, the Petit Ramponneau is not difficult to find. A long passage, bordered by trees, leads into a spacious court-yard, bounded by gardens. Round the court-yard, taking the air pleasantly, hang the carcases of sheep and oxen in great, in astonishing, in overwhelming numbers. Not a pleasant spectacle, truly, to a person of taste; but, viewed with an utilitarian eye, magnificent indeed. Mr. Pelham would find it simply disgusting: Mr. M'Culloch would probably describe it as a grand and gratifying sight. Making our way across the court-yard, rather inclined to agree with Mr. Pelham, we pass through the most con-
spicuous door fronting us, and find ourselves at once in the kitchen, an immense hall, crowded with company, well lighted up, and redolent of

— "the steam
Of thirty thousand dinners."

On the right hand, on entering, there is a bar, a pewter counter crowded with wooden wine measures, in the regular public-house style; but with something more of adornment in the way of flowers and mirrors. On the left, the actual batterie de cuisine is railed off, like the sacred portion of a banking-house. On the sacred side of the railing the prominent object is a copper of portentous dimensions; seething and hissing, and sending forth a fragrant steam, which, night and day, I believe, is never known to stop. Cooks, light and active, white-capped and jacketed, are flitting about, and receiving directions from the proprietor, the great and solemn Nicolet himself. To say that the Père was stout, would be, simply, to convey the idea of a man who has more than the ordinary amount of flesh upon his bones. To say that he was solemn and grand, would not be distinguishing him from the general notion of solemnity and grandeur, as associated with any heavy and stupid persons. Let it be understood then that he united all these qualities in their very best sense, and had, besides, a bonhomnie and good humour that is not always found reconciled with them. As he stood there distributing his orders, and himself assisting continually in their execution, he looked like a monarch; and, probably, felt himself to be every inch a king.

Meantime, a crowd through which we had elbowed our way, are choking up the space between the counter and the sacred railing, all intent upon winning their
way to a little aperture, through which dishes of smoking and savoury ragout, or whatever the compound may be called, are being distributed to each comer in succession, as he thrusts in his arm. This great object gained, he passes on and finds a table where it pleases him. This, it should be observed, is no difficult matter. In the principal room itself long tables and benches are arranged on all sides; in the garden, in every direction, similar accommodation; up stairs, in several large rooms, extensive preparations are spread. Everywhere, up stairs, down stairs, throughout the garden, groups are engaged in the one great occupation. Conversation, here in whispers, there buzzing; now boisterous, anon roaring and unrestrained; on every side. Heartiness and hilarity predominant, and everybody at his ease. As we stroll through the place, our foreign, and, shall I add, distinguished appearance, so unusual at the Petit Ramponneau, attracts attention. I hear somebody stigmatize us as spies, but somebody else re-assures the suspecter by a description a nearer the mark—that we were only English—a little eccentric. It should not be forgotten by philosophic persons who like to intrude into strange scenes, that a good-humoured word to the roughest and most quarrelsome-looking fellow has always a good effect; and that nothing stops the democratic mouth so effectually as wine.

Having “inspected,” as the newspapers call it, the resources of the place, we planted ourselves down stairs to see what it could afford us by way of refreshment. Here the proprietor himself was at hand, all bows and blandishments and expressions of “distinguished consideration;” and, through him, we duly made the acquaintance of some of the other people of the house, who were taking their own dinner, or supper, now that
the labours of the day were at an end. One of these, a lively, bright-eyed young lady, who went about like a benevolent countess, a youthful Lady Bountiful, great in ministering charities, I understood to be the daughter of the proprietor. We had succeeded in accomplishing a very satisfactory fraternisation in that quarter by the time our wine arrived. The wine, I may observe, was some of the best Burgundy—at the price—I ever drank, and we gave it due honour accordingly, to the delight of the Père, who prided himself especially upon his cellar. We invited him to partake, and he immediately sat down and grew communicative. The conversation turned naturally upon himself; then upon his house. He had commenced on his present system, he told us, a poor man, without a penny to bless himself with. By the exercise of industry and economy, which, I have since learned, approached to something like heroism, he became what I saw him. As I saw him, he was simply a cook in a white cap and apron. But he was, in reality, something very different. His wealth, I have since learned, was immense, indeed, he had the reputation of being a millionaire. Yet, with all his prosperity, he never changed his old habits, nor made the slightest attempt to set himself up higher in the social scale, which men of a tenth part of his means are accomplishing successfully every day. He might have married his daughters to bankers even; but he gave them to men of his own rank, and was satisfied so that they were happy. As for the business, it had increased by degrees to its present extent; and even now it augmented day by day. Nor did he gain his wealth by any undue contribution upon the poor: on the contrary, the Petit Ramponneau was the greatest blessing that they could enjoy. A dinner there, he assured me to my
surprise, cost the visitor but five sous, exclusive of wine, which, however, could be enjoyed at a proportionately economical rate. If any testimonial was wanting to the excellence of the system, it could be found in the number of persons who availed themselves of it, sometimes from three to four and five thousand in the course of the day. Of these, the majority were of the very poorest class, as I could see for myself; but among them were many of an apparent respectability that made their presence there a matter of surprise. The number of persons of the better classes who were reduced by "circumstances" to dine there, was by no means inconsiderable. He himself, the Père, had often recognised faces that had been familiar to him in far different scenes. And he was convinced that the establishment which, by good management, was so large a source of profit to himself, was an inestimable benefit to the poorer classes of Paris.

I thought of the many thousands in London who starve more expensively than they could dine at the Petit Ramponneau, and entirely agreed with the worthy Père.

While we were talking, the guests had been gradually moving off; plates and dishes were being carried away in huge piles; the tables and benches were being cleared and re-arranged; the copper had ceased to hiss, and the furnace to roar. Everything denoted preparations for closing.

Presently half-a-dozen men began to roll some huge tubs, nearly as high as themselves, into the court-yard. I asked the meaning of this arrangement. "They are the wine-barrels that have supplied the consumption of to-day," was the reply.

I was fairly astonished, and by a matter of the merest
detail. It gave me the best idea I could have formed of the large number of the frequenters of the *Petit Ramponneau*. But so it always is. Statistics tell us very astonishing things in calculations and total results; but they suggest nothing definite to ordinary minds. The sight of these huge empty wine-barrels gave me a more distinct idea of the enormous consumption of wine in one day, than the most skilful grouping or tabulating of figures could possibly have done.

Here we took our leave of our new acquaintances, and made the best of our way into Paris. As for the *Petit Ramponneau*, it flourishes still, I believe; but I regret to learn that the worthy proprietor is among the things that were. Poor fellow! he died, I am told, true to the last to his simple unostentatious system; in his white cap and apron, by the side of the great copper and the roaring furnace.
I am not about to describe savage life, or uninhabited islands: what I have to say relates to most civilised society, and to no island whatever. My object is simply to "request the pleasure" of the reader's company in a short excursion out of Paris: an arrangement which secures to him the advantage of visiting a place which is beneath the notice of the guide-books, and to myself the society of that most desirable of companions, one who allows me to engross the entire conversation.

Imagine, then, a party of Englishmen in Paris, rising one morning with the general desire to "do something to-day." Having done nothing for several weeks except amuse themselves, having been condemned to continual festivity, the necessity for some relaxation became imminent. We had been to see everything that we cared to see, and everybody who cared to see us, with a little over in both cases. We had filled "avant scène" boxes until the drama became a bore, and had reclined in cafés until their smoke became a nuisance. We had scoured the Boulevards by day, and the balls by night; "looked in" at the monuments with patronising airs, and at the shops with purchasing propensities. We
had experienced dinners both princely and penurious; fathomed mysterious cartes from end to end, and even with unparalleled hardihood had ventured into the regions of the **prix-fixe**. We had almost exhausted every sort of game, active and sedantry. At billiards, we had exploded every cannon, possible and impossible, and reposed upon every cushion, convenient and inconvenient. One desperate youth had even proposed that we should addict ourselves to dominos; but, we were not far enough gone for that; the suggestion was received on all sides with that sensation of horror which shipwrecked mariners manifest when one of the party proposes to dine off the cabin-boy. No: we must find materials of amusement less suggestive of tombstones, that was clear, even if we perished miserably without their assistance.

The fact was, that under the influence of the sunshine and flowers, the lustre and langour of the most bewildering of capitals, I was fast subsiding into a state of collapse. I felt a dash of the infatuation of the lotus-eater, in his

“— land that seemed always afternoon.”

Though in our case, for we were all alike, instead of afternoon we seemed to be in a perpetual state of “the morning after.” It was at length agreed that we should enter the first public conveyance we could find that was leaving Paris.

The conveyance destined to receive us was, in appearance, a cross between the English omnibus of domestic life and the French **diligence**, that has, alas! nearly disappeared; a fat, heavy vehicle, drawn by a couple of strong little .hacks, with a driver who gave himself
diligence airs, and cracked his whip and smoked his pipe most ostentatiously.

The first thing we learned on taking our seats was, that we had better have gone by the railway; that is to say, if we intended only going as far as Sceaux, and were pressed for time. We replied, that we were going wherever the omnibus chose to take us, and time was no object. These observations were elicited by a good-humoured old man, with a clear, hale, weather-beaten face, which he had contrived to shave to a most miraculous point of perfection, though it was as wrinkled as the boots of any groom. His dress was poor and threadbare in the extreme; and in England he might have passed for a broken-down carpenter; but he, nevertheless, wore the cordon of the eternal Legion of Honour.

The omnibus, he said, went as far as Longjumeau, a place which we were all anxious to see, as being associated with a certain postilion, with big boots, and a wonderful wig, who sang a peculiar song with immense rapidity, accompanied by jingling bells, a crackling whip, and a perpetual post-horn. To our great regret, however, we learned that this distinguished individual was not likely to be seen at Longjumeau, the natives of which had probably never heard of his existence. It was too bad, however, to allow the illusion as to the existence of our old friend to be thus dispelled; so we easily succeeded in persuading ourselves that the popularity of the postilion doubtless kept him continually on the move, and that his native place was, after all, the place where, we should have remembered, it was least likely to find him.

We proceeded on our way in the most approved style of French omnibuses, with a great deal of clatter,
great deal of confusion, and very little speed. The country, anywhere within a mile or two of Paris, is not very inviting: level wastes of barren ground, with occasionally an oasis in the shape of a brick-kiln, or something equally ornamental; dusty roads, planted with rows of little trees, and bounded by high walls, covered with quack advertisements. The passenger gazes out of the window about once every ten minutes, hoping for a little variety; but as far as the waste, the trees, the walls, and the quack advertisements are concerned, he might believe himself still in the same spot. Accordingly, the wise tourist generally seeks amusement inside the vehicle, as we did on the occasion in question, by encouraging the passengers to sing country songs, and contributing ourselves something of the kind towards the general hilarity.

At last, after an hour's jolting and stumbling, and hallooing, and cracking, on the part of omnibus, horses, driver, and whip, something like open country begins to make its appearance, with occasionally an attempt at foliage and cultivation. We have just time to congratulate ourselves upon the change—with a slight regret at the absence of hedges and green lanes—when the omnibus stops at an accumulation of rustic restaurants, schools for young ladies, billiard-rooms, tobacconists' shops, and one church, which we are told is Sceaux. Here we alight, after an exchange of affectionate flatteries with our fellow passengers, who are bound to Longjumeau, and make our way, as a matter of course, to the park. But previously a bell at the railway station announces the arrival of a train from Paris, and we have an opportunity of observing the perfect working of this pretty little line, the serpentine course of which is, at first sight, calculated to strike horror into the
engineering mind; and to see how the carriages perform impossible curves in perfect safety, and finally accomplish something very like a figure of eight at the terminus, without any relaxation of speed. The manner in which this is effected is principally by providing the engines with small oblique wheels, pressing against the rails, in addition to the usual vertical ones. The carriages, too, are so constructed, that both the fore and hind wheels may turn freely under them; and each carriage is connected with its neighbour by a kind of hinge, which effectually prevents a separation, while it affords every facility for independent motion. Thus almost any curve can be accomplished, and it is next to impossible that the train can come off the rails. But for this contrivance, the railway, condemned to a straight line, would probably never pay, and all the pretty places where it has stations would lose half their visitors.

The great lion of Sceaux is its park, where the château, built by Colbert, and subsequently associated with persons of no less importance than the Duc du Maine and Madame de Montespan, was flourishing before the first revolution. Art has here been somewhat ungrateful to nature. The one has furnished the tallest of trees and the thickest of bosquets; but the other has clipped them with more than her usual want of taste, and, through the latter, has cut avenues ingenuously imitative of railway tunnels, of which the pastoral effect may be imagined. On Sundays and Thursdays, during the summer, crowds flock from Paris to the balls which are held in this park, where there is also a tolerable gathering of rustic simplicity from the country round. Then it is that all the coloured lamps, which now by daylight look so dingy, are brilliantly lighted up; the dirty stucco statues gleam like ala-
baster; the seedy drapery becomes golden and gorgeous; the grimy decorations are festive and fairy-like; and the smoky-looking glass column in the centre glitters like an immense diamond, reflecting the surrounding scene with a thousand flattering and fantastic variations.

But what about Robinson Crusoe? All in good time. Robinson is now something less than two miles off, if the information of our decorated friend may be relied upon; and perhaps the sooner we join him the better. Accordingly, with Sceaux behind us, and the prospect of dinner before us, we proceed gaily on foot through roads as rustic in appearance as the inevitable brick walls and unavoidable quack advertisements will allow them to be, and arrive at last at our journey's end, without meeting on our way with any incident of travel more exciting than the sight of two countrymen and a windmill.

Here, then, we are, at last, at Robinson. Robinson, then, is a place, and not a person? But what relation has this to De Foe's Robinson Crusoe? Simply this;—that the spot is the most romantic, the most picturesque, and was the most desolate within so short a distance of Paris; and it has been called "Robinson," as a tribute at once to these united charms, and to the merits of a work which is as popular in France as in its native country. The surname "Crusoe" the French throw aside, as they do everything which they can either not pronounce, or not understand, refusing in particular to swallow anything like a name which does not become the mouth, on the wise principle which leads every animal but the donkey to reject thistles.

The fame of the place, however, has by degrees rendered its name inapplicable. Its romantic and picturesque qualities it still retains, but its desolation is no
more. It is Robinson Crusoe’s island with the spell broken, the loneliness of thirty years profaned. It is Robinson Crusoe’s island monopolised by common-place colonists, who have set up cafés and restaurants. It is Juan Fernandez captured by the savages, who appear there in the shape of the bourgeoisie, or as pert-looking young Frenchmen, in varnished boots, escorting transparent bonnets. It is Robinson Crusoe’s island, in fact, with a dash of Greenwich.

In common with all those who land in any sort of island, civilised or savage, our first impulse was to secure dinner. For this purpose, we betook ourselves to the most imposing restaurant of the place. Gueusquin was the name, I think, of the Bois d’Aulnay. Here, in the midst of a rustic and not too French style of garden, laid out upon an eminence, stands a building which has all the aspect of the most primitive of farms. It is dedicated to Robinson Crusoe, as may be seen from the verses conspicuously painted up over the door:—

“Robinson! nom cher à l’enfance,
   Que, vieux, l’on se rappelle encore,
   Dons le souvenir, doux trésor,
   Nous reporte aux jours d’innocence.”

On entering, we see Robinson Crusoe on every side, that is to say, all the walls are devoted to his adventures. We see multiplied in every corner the well-known goat-skin costume, pointed cap, and umbrella. Here is Crusoe outside his hut, tending his flock; there he is shooting down the savages from behind a tree. In one panel he starts back at the sight of the foot-mark in the sands, in the attitude of the leading actor of the Gymnase, to express violent surprise at the important intelligence conveyed to his mind by that powerful
print. Over the window, he is feeding his goat; close
to the door, he notches his calendar, or, not inappropri-
ately, cuts his stick. He welcomes to the lonely isle
the astonished white men, beside the stove; and once
more steps on his native soil, just over the mantel-piece.
Crusoe is everywhere. He is engraved on the spoons,
painted on the plates, and figured on the coffee-cups.
His effigy reclines upon the clock; his portrait on the
vases peers through the flowers. So completely do his
adventures seem associated with the place, that we
almost expect to see him in his own proper person, with
his parrots and dogs about him; discussing his goat's
flesh at one of the rude tables, which might have been
fashioned by his own hand; or busy kindling a fire
upon the tiled floor, which might also be of home
manufacture.

We are interrupted in the midst of this inspection, by
the question where we will dine? Where? Anywhere.
This is the salle à manger, is it not? Certainly; but
we can dine up a tree in the garden if we please. In
that case we do please, by all means, provided the
climbing is easy, and there are good strong branches to
cling to. The garçon smiles, as he conducts us to the
garden, and introduces us to the resources of the
immense tree in the centre. Here we are instructed to
ascend a staircase, winding round the massive trunk,
and to choose our places, on the first, second, or third
"story." This dining accommodation we now find to
consist of a succession of platforms, securely fixed upon
the vast spreading branches, surrounded by a rustic
railing, and in some cases covered with a thatched
umbrella, of the veritable Robinson Crusoe pattern.
With the ardour of enthusiasts, who know no finality
short of extremes, we spurn the immediate resting-
places, and ascend at once to the topmost branch. Here we find a couple of tables laid out, and seats for the accommodation of about a dozen persons. A jovial party of the savages before alluded to, in glazed boots, and transparent bonnets, are already in possession of one of the tables; the other is at our disposal.

The soup now makes it appearance, not borne upwards by the waiters, but swung upwards in enormous baskets, by means of ropes and pulleys; and we speedily bawl down, with stentorian voices, according to the most approved fashion of the habitués, our directions as to the succeeding courses, which are duly received through the same agency. Everybody now gets extremely convivial, and we, of course, fraternise with the savages, our neighbours. At this period of the proceedings, some of the boldest of our party venture upon obvious jokes relative to dining “up a tree,” a phrase which, in England, is significant of a kind of out-of-the-way existence, associated with pecuniary embarrassment; but, I need scarcely add, that these feeble attempts at pleasantry are promptly put down by the general good sense of the company. The Frenchmen, bolder still, now indulge in various feats of agility, which have the additional attraction of extreme peril, considering that we are some couple of hundred feet from the ground. The tendency of the Robinsonites, in general towards gymnastic exercises is very sufficiently indicated by the inscription, “Défense de se balancer après les Paniers,” which is posted all over the tree. To my mind the injunction sounds very like forbidding one to break one’s neck.

The dinner having been duly discussed, the united wisdom of our party arrived at the opinion that we should descend; an operation proverbially less easy
than ascension, more especially after dinner. The feat, however, was satisfactorily accomplished, after a pathetic appeal on the part of two or three of my friends for another quarter of an hour to sentimentalise upon the magnificent view, rendered doubly magnificent in the declining sun, of distant Paris, with its domes and towers, and light bridges, and winding river; and the more immediate masses of well wooded plantations, and well-cultivated fields. I should have mentioned that we had to drag away the youngest of these sentimentalists by main force, which rendered our safe descent somewhat marvellous under the circumstances.

We had now to decide upon our mode of return to Paris, a work of time, owing to the numerous distracting facilities. A short walk was pronounced to be desirable, and a walk to Fontenay-aux-Roses delightful above all things. So we set forward accordingly, our way lying “all among the bearded barley,” like the road to “many-towered Camelot.” At Fontenay-aux-Roses, which, strangely enough, does justice to its name, lying in a huge nest of roses, of all degrees of deliciousness, we were fortunate enough to find that vehicular phenomenon, in the existence of which I had never before believed, the “last omnibus.” This was promptly monopolised; and my next performance, I fancy, was to go to sleep; for, on being informed that we were again in Paris, I seemed to have some recollection of a recent dinner on the top of a tree, with Robinson Crusoe, who was appropriately decorated with a pink bonnet and a parasol.
XV.

FRENCH HORSE-RACING.

The sky is very blue and very bright; the air is crisp, clear, and invigorating. Objects, both distant and near, seem more clearly defined, more sharp and full of corners, than usual. It is very cold in the shade, and very warm in the sun. You feel a chilling blast upon one cheek, that is the wind; and, upon the other, something red-hot, the sun. The wind is in an eccentric and changeable mood, and seems bent upon putting the weather-cocks out of temper. Everybody who has not brought out an overcoat, wishes that he had; and everybody who has, wishes that he had not. Some people go closely buttoned up; others carry their cravats in their pockets; and nobody is certain which is best, so frequent and so sudden are the alternations from heat to cold. Wherever there are trees, heaps of fallen leaves, ankle-deep, knee-deep, are drifting before the breeze; occasionally furnishing food for “bonfires,” and filling the air with clear blue smoke, and that peculiar warm fragrance so suggestive of health and rusticity.

In short, it is October, and October in Paris; Paris,
that is bidding adieu to *al-fresco fêtes*, and beginning to find the inside of *cafés* preferable to the outside. It is still, however, a city of sunshine, and there is at any rate no prospect of rain to spoil its out-of-door diversions. Such was the comforting conviction at which I arrived the other morning, when I prepared, with true English ardour, to “go to the races,” the last of the season.

I had a vague notion that “going to the races” in France, was not a very dissimilar proceeding from taking a trip to “the Derby” in England. I had prepared myself for rising at some unearthly hour in the morning; for breakfasting in a state of trance caused by the fear of being too late, in the midst of anxieties relative to the packing of hampers, and fears that the livery-stable keeper might have mistaken his instructions, and be very punctual in bringing round the phaeton and four in time for—the Oaks; for ultimately setting forth, amidst the applause of small boys, provisioned for the day, and with perhaps the additional luxury of a pea-shooter and a post-horn, to which, had I belonged to a “crack-regiment,” I might have added flour-bags and rotten eggs.

But, alas! going to the races in Paris is a very prosaic proceeding. I grieve to say that my friends called for me at my hotel, on foot, after keeping me waiting about seven hours. Not even a stage-coach was practicable. There are, to be sure, Hansom cabs in Paris (they are among the most recent signs of civilization,) but we agreed that to ride in a Hansom in a foreign land would be something like profanity, almost as bad as drinking bitter ale, another grand and solemn pleasure to be reserved for London alone! Accordingly, we set forth as ingloriously as can be conceived, by way of
the old broken-backed Pont Neuf (which daily becomes
more picturesque and less secure) in the direction of the
"Cham' d' Mars;" in pronouncing which latter word, I
must insist upon the English reader not dropping the
final s.

On the road to Epsom, at Sutton, there is a celebrated
hostelry, called "The Cock," where everybody stops, as
a matter of course. On our road to the Champ de Mars
there is also a place of refreshment, which no wayfarer,
vid the Pont Neuf, was ever known to avoid. This is
the famous establishment of the "Mère Moreau," whose
name is almost as well known in Paris as is that of a
person called Napoleon. But what would the plump
head-waiter at "The Cock" say to the French substitute,
with its Arabesque front all blue and gold, its plate-
glass, its pictorial walls, the lovely and accomplished
ladies behind the counter (every one, for aught any of
Mrs. Moreau's customers may know to the contrary, a
duchess in her own right;) and, above all, the effemi-
nate description of refreshments provided for the travel-
ners? One can fancy the disdain with which that
prejudiced and respectable person would regard the
offer of a plum or a peach, floating in a little glass of
perfumed and impotent liquid, that, in its normal state
of barbarism, is believed to have been brandy; or his
disgust at the discovery that a similar species of refresh-
ment is known by the fanciful and mysterious title of a
"Chinoise." Nevertheless, victims to the same fatal
fascination (which reminds us forcibly of our childhood,
and its dangerous excesses on hard-bake,) all classes
may be seen at all times mingled in harmony at the
"Mère Moreau's;" the grandest of yellow gloves side by
side with the humblest and most gloveless of ouvriers,
forming, indeed, as motley a group as can be seen at any
“Crystal Palace” (of gin) in London, with the difference, that nobody here is drunk.

Before leaving the “Mère Moreau’s,” into which, it may be taken for granted, we had entered, it is as well to mention that a grand civil war has been waging for the last six months between that establishment and a rival establishment next door. The latter has the attraction of being lined on all sides, from floor to ceiling, with looking-glass; but it has no duchesses; that is to say, the young lady attendants must be classed simply as “respectable females.” By this happy arrangement, ladies in one place, looking-glass in the other, the tastes of most persons may be gratified. The shepherd Paris of to-day may bask in the contemplation of beauty at the “Mère Moreau’s;” while, next door, the modern Narcissus has no need of a brook to reflect his own charming image.

But meantime we are keeping the company waiting for us at the Champ de Mars, or what is worse, perhaps, we are not keeping them waiting.

Here we are, then, at last, on the course; and a very respectable course it is; at least a mile and a quarter round, so we are informed, and embracing the entire circumference of the large plain, which is dedicated, like most things in France, to the god of war. Planted closely against the ropes which bound the outside of the circle, with that evident determination to have their money’s worth which is always manifested by “the people” at a gratuitous entertainment, are a miscellaneous collection of men and boys, women and children, bloused, bearded, paletôtèd, decorated, as the case may be, waiting, with the same patience that they manifested three hours ago, for the commencement of the race. In the middle of the field are the exclusives:
squadrons of gentlemen on horseback, who are evidently thinking of anything rather than their bets, if they have made any, and are looking, like men of taste, at the ladies, who stand up in open phaetons in the approved style. These gentlemen are, for the most part, remarkable for their tight brown baize trousers, hostlers' coats, square-toed boots, and square patches of whisker, with the other accessories which (as all Frenchmen know) make up the ordinary costume of an English nobleman. Some, indeed, have gone so far as to shave their upper lips, and encase their necks in bird's-eye cravats; but these are the enthusiasts. I believe that few of them bet much, or heavily; but their appearance gives them a tremendous character for experience and daring in all matters relating to the turf, a reputation which they certainly purchase at a cheaper rate than two or three knowing young gentlemen whom I have met with in England.

With the exception of these noble sportsmen, there is little enough in the scene that the disconsolate Englishman is accustomed to associate with races in his native land. At first sight he would imagine that he had mistaken the day, and had come to witness a review. Posted at regular intervals, all along the ropes on either side of the course, are sentinels, with loaded muskets and stern faces, evidently "on service." In the centre of the ring is a group of mounted officers, who have the appearance of a staff, and who clearly believe themselves to be in possession of the field, and allow the civilians to be there as a matter of favour. The adjacent barracks, too, where immense moustaches hang out of the windows, seem to favour the idea.

At the imminent risk of our lives, we cross the course, attended by a sentry, whose words are a little
sharper than his bayonet. Him, however, we defy, with valour; he is too well armed for the duty which he has to fulfil; and we should stand in much greater awe of the policeman in England, who might possibly use his staff. Here, among the outsiders, there is much more variety and animation. Here there are, of course, more soldiers, performing prodigies of prospective valour in quelling contingent outbreaks, heroic cavaliers in the cause of order which has not yet been violated. A picturesque group they are; some lounging in their saddles, or leaning against their horses' sides, whistling and singing, cracking rude jokes, and smoking short pipes. As an Englishman gazes on their bronze faces and martial bearing, it occurs to him that if the French army had been made up of such fellows as these, a celebrated person, now lying tranquilly in the Invalides, might possibly have made his way to Brussels on a certain occasion!

Leaving that important question still unsettled, we pass on to the Grand Stand, a hastily-constructed wooden edifice, where a very respectable selection of the nobility and gentry, grisettes and gamins, of Paris, are accommodated with seats at a cost of something less than a ruinous amount in sous. In this vicinity may be seen such important persons as the "promoters of the breed of horses," from whom the umpires are selected, like the Pope from the Cardinals. Here, too, are booths for refreshment, of which it does not seem fashionable to partake; they are apparently placed there to give an air of conviviality to the proceedings. Round the Grand Stand the crowd is, as usual, thickest; but there is no noise, no confusion, and above all, no thimble-rigging, or rigging of any other description; the crowd is patient and well-bred, like the audience at
a theatre. Stay, there is an exception out yonder, where there seems to be a struggle of some kind, and from whence strange oaths are borne upon the breeze. I ask an ancien militaire with a decoration in his button-hole, who has stopped me to take a light for his cigar, what is the matter? "Nothing at all," is the answer, simply "deux messieurs qui se battent." The "deux messieurs" are presently led past me, and a pair of more horrible ruffians I think I never beheld, but the politeness of the old school has nothing to do with mere facts. Alas, that these fine courtesies should be passing away from us!

Another diversion in the crowd. They are evidently getting tired of waiting. This time the gentlemen of France are not tearing each other's eyes out, nor kicking each other in the face, proceedings inseparable from the pleasant French system of boxing. A professor of a great science is delivering a lecture, which he illustrates by experiments. He has placed his foot upon a little wooden bench, which he carries about with him for the purpose, and the first impression of the innocent spectator is that he is about to tie his shoe. Nothing of the kind. Observe, he takes from his pocket a neckerchief, with which he solemnly invests his leg, just above the knee, with as much care as ever dandy bestowed upon his throat. His object is to teach the public that noble art, the want of which has driven so many men into Coventry or despair, and the possession of which made the fortune of the late Mr. Brummel—"the art of tying a cravat!" See with what interest he is watched. Aspiring youth sees the gratification of its ambition, unsuccessful middle age feels that there is yet hope, as the professor, with a volubility of tongue and dexterity of finger equally difficult to follow, demonstrates every
variety of knot, bow, or tie, from the highly-respectable, uncompromising rigidity that says capitalist in every wrinkle, down to, or shall we say up to? the most graceful negligence that ever pleased the leisure, or embittered the working hours of an exquisite. I notice, by the way, that the Professor, though impressing upon others the importance of his art, has arranged his own neck most inartistically:—a seeming contradiction; but then bishops do not always practise what they preach, any more than doctors are remarkable for taking their own prescriptions. The lecture is immensely successful, and the lecturer makes his bow amidst a shower of copper. As my young friend Glum said the other day, when an English manager refused his tragedy, “France is, after all, the foster-mother of Genius!”

But surely it is time for the races to commence? Time? Yes; it is two hours after the hour appointed. The jockeys are, doubtless, being weighed, and found wanting, perhaps, in many qualifications, as French jockeys usually are. A loud roar, and shouts of laughter chorused all over the field. Here they come, that’s certain, but with a strange sort of welcome! No; it is only a dog running over the course; a dog of sporting appearance, who makes his way at once into the ring. At last the great opportunity has arrived for the military to assert itself. The army is not to be trifled with. A score of dragoons at once make an impetuous charge against the invader, whom they chase all over the field. But never since Abd-el-Kader defied the French legions in Algeria, have Frenchmen found so formidable a foe. An enemy making a steady resistance may be easily overcome by numbers; but an enemy who will not fight, nor altogether fly, is terrible. Now, he seems inclined to run for it; they will have him for certain!
Twenty hoarse voices are raised in concert, twenty sabres gleam in the sunshine, twenty steeds rebound from the pressure of forty spurs, and thunder forward with resistless fury. Nothing can withstand the charge, except the enemy, who is on a sudden seen very quietly twenty yards behind his pursuers. The troop now wheel round in admirable style, and attempt to cut the animal down with their sabres. Somehow, he is always under the horse's legs; and a horse, it is well known, is not the more manageable under such circumstances. The crowd laugh louder and louder, and the dragoons become more and more furious. Chasing one's own hat in a high wind is generally considered the most hopeless and bewildering object of human aspiration; but a troop of horse chasing a dog beats it hollow. The dragoons come to a stand, and seem to consult; a delay of two or three minutes takes place before they decide upon renewing the attack; meanwhile the dog has walked very leisurely off the field, to the great relief of everybody.

Now the real business of the day is beginning in earnest. The horses are coming on to the course. They come, led caressingly by the jockeys, who talk together in groups. But I am disappointed in their appearance. They are barbarous specimens, perhaps, of the jockeyship of that very young sportsman, France? No, they are most business-like, most orthodox, quite English, in short. Their jackets, pink, blue, yellow, white, party-coloured, are perfection; their boots have not a wrinkle that is not unexceptionable. As for the horses, they are slim and sleek, and tread the ground in the evident belief that they are at Newmarket or Ascot, where, in truth, they would not be very much out of place. I refer to my "Ent'acte," the little theatrical
journal containing the substitute for "Dorling's c'rect list," which is being sold everywhere on the course, and I discover that the simple reason why the horses and jockeys remind me of England, is, that they ARE English!—Flatman! Boldrick!! Chiffney!!! and a host of celebrities, whose names I have learned by heart from "Bell's Life," are before me. Now it is all over, I don't mind confessing that I had expected to see something like the French postilion, who rides six horses round the circle at Astley's. I had made up my mind to moustaches; and half believed that they would ride standing, and not sitting, on the saddles. As it is, the very Frenchman, of whom there are evidently some, for I see certain Antoines and Pierres down in the list, are distinguishable from their British brethren by little else than their colours.

And the horses? Are they English also? At this inquiry, a little English "gent" turns round, and with a good-natured smile of contempt, informs me that "most of 'em belong to Rasper and Pastern." Rasper and Pastern, evidently a notorious firm, and I had never heard of them before! The same authority further, informs me that they (the horses) are none of 'em first-raters, (which I believe I could have told him myself;) that it is not worth while to bring out really fine animals, on the chance of a prize of a very few thousand francs, but that these are well enough "as times go."

While we are talking, the jockeys are mounting, and arranging themselves for the start. There is some sort of signal given, for which, I observe, nobody seems waiting or watching, as in England: I, myself, am ignorant whether a handkerchief is dropped, or a gun fired, or a bell rung, or whether neither, or all, of the three operations are performed. With as little formality as
may be, some ten or a dozen horses make what in sporting eyes would be considered as bad a start as could possibly be accomplished. A few Englishmen, with sharp anxious faces and obvious betting-books, declare it to be "too bad," and "disgraceful;" but everybody else thinks it the right thing, or all the better for being the wrong thing.

After the preliminary stumbling and shying, however, they go gallantly; but, from what I see of the relative merits of the competitors, I should think that the contest might just as well have been between a couple of the horses simply; for no more than that number seem to have the ghost of a chance. However, not a man gives in; the "nowheres" are as hopeful as the "everywheres," to the very last. Now they make a great strain and turn the corner; the ladies in carriages all turn also; and the sporting gentlemen on horseback, as sporting gentlemen always do, and I suppose always will do, take the diameter of the field, and dash across to meet them coming round. Now they near the winning-post. Some feeble-minded persons declare themselves for Blue, but there can be no doubt that White will be the winner. White wins accordingly, not by a nose, nor a head, nor a neck, nor a length, but by numberless noses, uncountable heads, incalculable necks, and no end of lengths, perhaps, some dozen or two. In White's energetic exuberance, he flies so far beyond the flag that you think he is going round the field again. But this is only a jovial mode of asserting his triumph, which he has probably learned in France. By this time the crowd has become more dense. New arrivals clamour for the second race, and, in due time, for the third: which are all won and lost with the greatest good humour. The races themselves do not differ mate—
rially from similar displays in England. The grand difference is in the interest which they create. In England nearly all the spectators are excited by the contest: in France, the majority, who have no notion of betting, are simply amused by the spectacle. They go to a race, as they would go to the Hippodrome; and they wonder, perhaps, why M. Auriol, the admirable clown, is not engaged at both places.

It is all over: the people have been entertained, and that is sufficient. They do not trouble themselves about who has lost and who has won. They have nothing to say about “making up a book,” “odds,” “backing,” “hedging,” or “levanting.” For them “settling day” has no terrors. They are thinking of dinner, unless attracted by a balloon ascent in the neighbourhood, an irresistible attraction to a Parisian, and one that can at any time make him forget everything else under the sun.