

## A LETTER FROM PARIS.

I had never dreamed of traveling throughout France under such conditions, and in the future I will reflect twice before starting thus for a long journey. First of all, it is exceedingly disagreeable to be boxed up as cattle in small, stifling cars, where you can hardly get an occasional breath of air, unless the old cranky lady or the old played-out gentlemen sitting near the windows allow the other passengers to open these "portieres." And then, in traveling in France there is another inconvenience, a regular nuisance: it is caused by those people who, wishing to travel as economically as possible, carry their lunches with them, and what lunches! Cheese that smells worse than Limburger; at least it seemed so to me in the cars, and other such things.

From Paris to Lyons, I had the good fortune of being seated opposite a bland looking old lady who surely must have felt quite an interest in me by the kind way in which she kept looking at me, but when a moment ago I said "good fortune" it was only by gallantry, for I have never felt so ill at ease as I was in that car, in the close vicinity of that lady who to my utter disgust began eating a lunch which she drew from her basket, and whose description I shall not attempt. As I was looking at her she mistook my expression and kindly invited me to partake with her. She extended me a huge cheese sandwich that I still more eagerly refused, but the old lady was tenacious and in spite of my negations she thrust it in my hands and as I could not get out of it I was compelled to swallow it. Then a conversation ensued and my poor French pronunciation was plainly demonstrated to me. You see I had committed a blunder while I was in the states, I had allowed myself to join a so-called French class directed by an American lady who lived on her "fine pronunciation!" Well, this fine pronunciation, I have just found out, did not exist; and that the lady in question was absolutely unable to speak the Parisian language with its proper accent; and on account of my having taken French in America for two years with an American teacher, I am almost unable to make myself understood.

The plains of France and the general aspect of the country is not at all like that of the United States. The scenery is beautiful and the population is more numerous. A traveler must not come here to enjoy the savage beauty of nature; the immense prairies and desert fields are unknown and the imposing mountain landscape cannot be seen. Here the whole land resembles rather a garden, well cared for, well planted, picturesque and studded with rare flowers. The rivers and streams, very numerous, roll softly and gently their waters towards the sea and the "Rhône" and the "Saône;" these two great and swift rivers of historic fame bathe very many large cities, strung along their deep beds. All along the railroad track, multitudinous houses can be seen; some are large and aristocratic in appearance and size, but the majority are small and are inhabited by the "paysans"—peasants as they are called here. Each man, in France, no matter what his station, has a house, large or small, according to his position and a piece of land. There is no country in the world where equality seems to prevail as much as here and just as the noble count in his "chateau" and his many forests and farms; the poor peasant has his hut also, his crop, and he lives happy, bringing up his family and caring for no one else. A peasant never sells his house or his field; he always tries to

buy some more property and increase by constant labor his inheritance, but it would seem a profanation for him to part with the home that has descended to him through generations. The peasant families are united and the best accord reigns in the household. The people and the animals are on the same footing and the boys of the house generally sleep in the stable, with the cows, believing that the odor of manure helps the lungs and that by that proceeding they are free from consumption. The hogs pace to and fro in and out of the house just as they choose in company with the chickens and the small children; and it is considered by them great fun to roll themselves in the manure. A funny thing to note is that if a peasant has his wife ill he will never send for a doctor or at least very seldom; but if the cow or the ass or the pig is sick, he would go immediately to town in order to bring back the veterinary surgeon. The farming girls or "paysannes" cannot be termed pretty but their costume is so original that it attracts attention. They wear mostly short calico dresses with no underwear at all, not even stockings, and nothing over their heads. The corset is unknown to them and their shirtwaist is simply a "chemise." Moreover, they always wear the modern shoes or "sabots" except on Sunday. These girls are the only girls truly happy that I have ever seen. They do not live in the polluted atmosphere of the cities where the dullness of the mind shall under the pressure of vices, precede the flabbiness of the body and atrophy both the physical and metaphysical parts of human nature. The life of these girls—true women of nature—is the one preached of by Christ; and the children of God, who believing in the Word would grow thus, never should feel these pangs of the soul and these diseases of the body that civilization brings with its unwholesome theories.

When I arrived at Lyons, the second city of France in size, I was struck with the resemblance of this city to an American town. In all directions, factories, smoke, and a truly rustling population. It is in this city of Lyons that the most fine silk and extra expensive velvets are manufactured in large quantities. The silk-worm was at first imported in France under the reign of Louis XIV from China and by his orders the country surrounding Lyons having been considered the most propitious to the growing of mulberry trees, many plantations were begun, and succeeded so gloriously that the manufacture of silks and velvets was started at once and was crowned with the best results. Today, as we all know, France stands, not only high in the field of silk manufacturing, but highest; and its silks and brocade velvets are imported the world over, the United States importing the most, and best quality. Some patterns of brocade velvet are so elaborately designed that they require one workman—an artist finisher—to prepare ready for sale not more than one-half yard a day. Certainly such velvet is not bought by everybody and costs at least 80 or 100 francs a meter, or \$20 in American money. The men employed in the silk and velvet factories are paid according to their merit, experience and ability. The designers get from 8 to 10 francs each day, many other finishers can earn the same price, but the common working men, the dyers, the washers, those who clean the silks to prepare them for use do not have more than 3 francs or 60 cents a day. Moreover, a great number of women and girls are employed and receive from 10 cents to 40 cents daily.

The next city I had the time to visit was Avignon, the "City of the Popes," with its huge castle that can be seen

for many leagues. This city, important only in history, is not very large, about 45,000 inhabitants, and is considered one of the aristocratic cities of France. It contains many convents, a beautiful public garden that used to be the garden of the popes, and the houses are very old and ugly in appearance, but the aristocratic families nevertheless take pride in preserving them and living there. The castle is so huge that if it was pulled down, they could build the whole city of Avignon with its stones, but the government keeps it as an old relic of the past and uses it as a barracks for soldiers. I must not forget to say just now that this part of the country is so rich in vegetables and fruits that there are several factories for "candied fruits." The main manufactory is in the little city of Cavillon, about 30 miles from Avignon, and it is from this little place that our American confectioners receive their preserved fruits, melons and other such things. The price of vegetables there is so low that during some years, a bushel of tomatoes can be had for two cents and potatoes for almost nothing. So, it is a good thing, and there can be no starvation in such a land. The natives of that blessed province often say that if God came down to the earth he should select the "department of Vaucluse;" just as we say for California.

Les Telibres et les cigalliers and their "Provençal" poetry stand high in this part of France, their form of sentiment is peculiar and simply written on pastoral subjects; these poems might be of the Bucolic style. The principal poets in that language—for it is a special tongue, derived from the Latin, containing also the Gaelic element are, Mistral, the great Mistral, the Wordsworth of Provence, the lover of nature, the adept who has penetrated all secrets; who sees the trees growing, the budding flowers of the plain and can in poetry repeat their tuneful song; who knows by heart the song at the brook that flows swift and transparent as a sunlight dream; who paints with melodic words the rustling of leaves on the paper; who sets to life the peaks of the snow-crested Alps and sings its romantic legend; who, in a word, reveals to the human heart, that secret of nature—called love in all forms of life—written in golden words for the poet on the emerald-green tablet of nature! Then comes "Cabanel," the Tennyson in miniature, the follower of his master "Mistral," the solitary soul who shall sing its regrets to the helpless echo that repeats but cannot grant the relief to affliction, except by its own words which die in their own repetition; he relates to us the beautiful story of the "Poutou"—"the Kiss," and the simple language, made from flowers multi-color and pure is the frame that will enhance the idyl and epic poem of that shepherd, handsome and loving, who leaves his flock of sheep to his ever faithful friend, the dog "Mider," to go in the neighboring valley and visit the object of his sincere love, the shepherdess "Youranetta," who in spite of his burning heart, refuses him the tender kiss he has come to seek from afar, and says she will grant it only the next day when they shall be wed. At that very moment the rascally wolf who has killed the poor dog Medon, appears, bloody through the bushes, the head of his poor victim in his teeth; and at the heartrending sight, of his dear friend Medon, all disfigured, hardly recognizable; the sobbing shepherd seeks refuge in the tears of sorrow before the green shrubs upon which poor Medon's head hangs, and it is at this psychological instant that the shepherdess, the beautiful "Journetta," clasps with her loving soul to her bosom the sorrow-