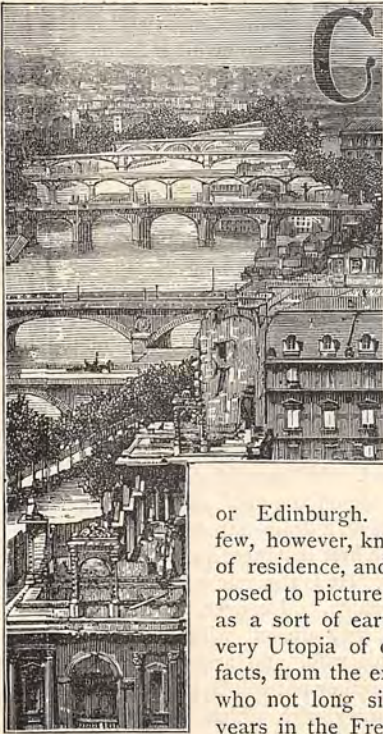


## THE ENGLISHMAN AT HOME IN PARIS.

BY A LATE RESIDENT.



COMMUNICATION with Paris is now so rapid, frequent, and inexpensive, that Britons from the most remote parts of our islands contrive some time or another to visit it, and some are as well acquainted with its beauties as they are with those of London, Dublin,

or Edinburgh. Comparatively few, however, know it as a place of residence, and many are disposed to picture it to themselves as a sort of earthly Paradise—a very Utopia of delights. A few facts, from the experience of one who not long since spent some years in the French capital, may be of some utility and interest to

any that think of making it their abode. Few things more astonish the untravelled Englishman, when he first issues from the railway terminus in Paris, than the gigantic height and size of the ordinary abodes of the Parisians. Towering Babel-like to six or seven storeys, built of solid white stone around a courtyard, which in the more aristocratic quarters is entered by a wide and handsome doorway, they present a very imposing and in many cases palatial appearance. At first we wonder where the poor, or even people of limited means, can find a lodging. But we soon discover that these lordly mansions are the common abodes of from twenty to forty families, who occupy separate suites of apartments on the different floors, and that, contrary to the usual order of things, the poorer they are the higher they rise in the world.

The tenants of the first three storeys (*étages*) are more or less wealthy in proportion to the character of the quarter. Lifts have unhappily not yet been introduced into private houses, so that all who can, generally spare themselves the pains of mounting to the upper storeys, while artisans with their families, if employed in the neighbourhood, as well as domestic servants, have to be content with small rooms under the roof.

Such are the homes of most of the Parisians. Only millionaires can afford the solitary grandeur of an

*hôtel* or house of their own. But an *appartement*, it will be understood, is a set of rooms—often spacious and lofty—on one floor; drawing-room, dining-room, bed-rooms, kitchen, &c., are all found together.

This is evidently a great change from the typical Englishman's ideal of a home. It is not that well-secured castle in which he delights to entrench himself. If he be a University man, perhaps his thoughts are carried back to college days, when, bent on hard work, he was wont to "sport his oak" and banish all intruders. But then he was not the happy Benedict with a merry tribe of playful youngsters ready to burst in upon his hours of business or study, through one of the many doors of this domestic labyrinth. No doubt it is very convenient to have all one's belongings thus within easy reach. Once, too, we have performed our daily pilgrimage up the public staircase, we have no more painful steps to climb before we retire to rest, nor on our way to dinner. The servants also are within easy reach—perhaps sometimes too near, when they take refuge from their diminutive kitchen in the *salle-à-manger* during the intervals between meal-hours. Then there is the perfect immunity from the solicitations of beggars, street musicians, *et hoc genus omne*. Nor on a fifth or sixth are you likely to be disturbed by unexpected callers, except they really desire your society or help. But there is another side to the question. The postman never pays you a visit, except to deliver a registered letter for which your receipt is required. All letters, &c., are left in the porter's lodge, of which more anon. And if you value a quiet life, you must reckon with your neighbours, who are all round you, above, below, and at your side. Should you be of a contemplative disposition or in delicate health, this is no light matter. One may be given to loud vociferous talking; an unhappy couple may keep you awake at night with their noisy bickerings, or a more amiable household may entertain you at unseasonable hours with their not too harmonious music, while a fourth may be of unpleasantly convivial habits. The writer has a distressing remembrance of two such cases in his own experience. In the one, his next-door neighbour was a Russian count (?) mysteriously mixed up with French politics, who occasionally gave entertainments of an extensive and decidedly fast character, which lasted till "the rosy-fingered morn appeared." In another house he was the helpless victim of the incessant wailings of the peculiarly fretful child of a poor family above his head, which could never be pacified until he sent up a franc to pay, as he said, *pour tranquillité*. Such are some of the drawbacks to life in an *appartement*, and most domesticated Englishmen will agree with the writer in deciding against the arrangement.

But we turn to another feature of French home life. Good *servants* are universally admitted to be a prime factor in domestic comfort. At home we hear loud and

frequent complaints about the shortcomings of the race. Certain it is that we seldom meet with those zealous, devoted attendants, not uncommon in the days of our fathers, whose interests were so bound up with their employers' welfare that nothing but death could part them from the family which they had entered in their youth. Their successors, it is said, are more selfish, self-sufficient, grasping, not to speak of graver faults. These charges we need not here attempt to discuss. There is, of course, another side of the argument. There is hope that a good master or mistress will sooner or later obtain good and faithful servants, or will succeed in moulding the raw material in some measure to their tastes. But in Paris the difficulty is much greater. The system of engaging them on a week's notice from either side tends to make the connection much more official and less binding, while it disposes both sides to too easy and frequent changes. Very slight misunderstandings provoke a hasty rupture, and the offending or aggrieved Charles or Marie instantly prepares to go in search of pastures new, and soon obtains another situation. Amongst ourselves, on the other hand, the month's notice gives time for cooler reflection, and allows the parties to come to a fresh agreement that may result in a lasting attachment.

Another element of weakness is the common practice of sending the cook each morning to purchase in the market or shops the provisions required for the day's consumption, and allowing her to obtain a five per cent. commission, or a sou in the franc. This offers a strong temptation to make bargains prejudicial to her master's interests, and accept inferior articles. Many a servant, far too honest to pilfer even a sou, much less anything of more value, will think herself perfectly justified in defrauding her employers in this way. In fact, the code of ethics amongst the lower orders of the French is very peculiar. Lying is regarded as quite a venial sin, if a sin at all. With regard to the veriest trifles they will invent the most plausible stories, and smile with perfect innocence and self-complacency if found out.

A girl from the country, who had repeatedly shocked her English mistress by her deliberate falsehoods, was seriously asked whether she did not think it wrong to deceive her, and with the utmost *naïveté* replied, "Well, madam, I was taught so when I was a child, but now it's quite another thing."

Some English families, finding such principles very objectionable, endeavour to overcome the difficulty by importing English servants. But the wisdom of this course is very doubtful. The best prefer to remain at home, and if any of a better sort are induced to come, their ignorance of the language and customs is a serious bar to their usefulness. One whom the writer brought over, being English to the backbone, would make no effort to learn French, and regarded the natives as ignorant barbarians with whom it was hopeless to converse. Once she thought she had achieved a great feat in mastering the French for turnips (*navets*), and when asked on her return from the market how she had sped, she said, with an air

of mingled triumph and contempt, "Oh! yes, ma'am, I asked for *ruffians* (navvies), and they gave them me at once." This same remarkable genius appeared the first Sunday arrayed in a bonnet of bright ultramarine blue with white feathers, and a necktie of the most flaming red. She was much surprised and not a little flattered at the admiring gaze of all beholders, which she took as a compliment on her personal appearance, and was a good deal mortified on learning afterwards that her tricolour costume was the true source of the interest she had attracted, and that as she sailed along the boulevard the crowd had everywhere greeted her as "a good Republican."

We pass to a third peculiarity of French home-life of even greater importance. I refer to the *conciergerie*. His office is very closely interwoven with the whole of the social fabric. To say that he is a house-porter would be to give a most inadequate idea of the real meaning of the extent of his influence on domestic comfort for weal or woe. He is that and very much more. If we add that he is the landlord's resident representative, the nature of his functions will be better understood. All complaints about defects in the building—a tile off the roof, smoky chimneys, deficient water supply, a drain-trap out of order, and the like—must in the first instance, and often the last, be laid before him. He is the sole arbiter of differences amongst the tenants. Moreover, all letters, parcels, cards, messages, &c., are left with him, or—what is often worse—his wife, and according as they are favourably disposed or not will be the degree of punctuality and accuracy with which the commission is executed. Are you in want of a new servant, it is to the *conciergerie* that he or she will first apply for *your* character. And then alas! for the family that have failed to propitiate this potentate. They may wonder in vain why they can never get "suited," until they discover this dread secret.

But more than this. These men have a yet greater depth of influence. In the complicated web of Parisian society they often act as political spies. The *gardien de la paix*, the policeman of the quarter, may not unfrequently be seen in the closest consultation with them, and contrives to worm out of them full particulars about the antecedents and doings of each family. It is clearly, then, the part of wisdom to conciliate one in whose hands such power is reposed. This an independent Englishman is at first slow to understand. He naturally kicks against what he feels to be a violation of his rights as a subject of the British Crown. But the sooner he submits with a good grace to the inevitable, the better for him. If on first engaging an *appartement* he forgets to slip at least twenty francs into the functionary's yielding palm, he will probably find his verbal agreement null and void. From time to time, and especially each New Year's Day, a similar offering is looked for. If it be withheld, the consequences will be disastrous in the extreme. It is, however, only fair to add that, although the *concierges* hold a position eminently invidious and liable to abuse, not a few of them are on the whole honest,

sensible, obliging, anxious to do their duty well towards their landlord and his tenants alike. One notable instance I may mention from my own experience. Being obliged, in my absence from Paris during the sieges, to leave all my goods and chattels to the sole care of a *concierger* whose conduct had not always been above suspicion, I naturally felt a good deal of anxiety about them. But my fears proved groundless, for I found everything intact. The worthy fellow, to whom I had committed the key of the outer door, having patiently endured the privations and perils of those terrible months, had at the risk of his life baffled the attempts of the Communists to pillage the rooms. Had I kept the key, and not relied upon his honour, the result might have been very different.

A word on another practical matter of no slight importance may fitly close this brief sketch. I refer to the question of *economy*. There is a mistaken notion still common on this side of the Channel that one may live in Paris less expensively than at home. In some cases it may be so. Those whose position in their own country obliges them to keep up large establishments, and whose claims for hospitality are in proportion, may considerably reduce their expenditure by living where they are comparatively unknown. *Noblesse oblige* in such cases. But persons of small or even moderate means will be grievously disappointed if they think to make both ends meet any

better there than at home. Their difficulties will be rather increased. Provisions of all kinds, and especially fuel, are much dearer in Paris than even in London, partly in consequence of the heavy *octroi*, or duties, levied on their admission within the city gates. Rents of *appartements*, even on the upper storeys, are higher than those of houses of corresponding size in our metropolis. Taxes, in the absence of income-tax, being chiefly indirect, except that levied on the value of the *appartement* and its furniture, are certainly lower. The scale of servants' wages, on the other hand, has risen there even more than with us. On the whole the cost of living is undoubtedly heavier. The idea that a franc is equal to a shilling is a myth long since out of date. Its value is more nearly represented by a sixpence. And, whatever other motives may induce our countrymen to emigrate to Paris, a desire to economise ought assuredly in most cases to have no weight. Higher considerations, such as the lower moral tone and the loss of many religious privileges, may well be added to the adverse side of the balance. The superiority of the climate, the peculiarly pure and bracing air, the freedom for the most part from the dismal fogs and mists for which our islands are so notorious, as well as the peculiar charms and convenience of this beautiful city, are indeed most attractive features; but they must be enjoyed by a resident at the sacrifice of many substantial advantages.

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## COLLECTING BUTTERFLIES AND MOTHS.



HERE is, perhaps, no more beautiful or more interesting science than entomology, and particularly that branch of it which is devoted to the Lepidoptera or scale-winged insects, commonly called butterflies and moths. Like the botanist, the entomologist enjoys the benefit of pleasant country rambles in search of his specimens; but besides the pleasure of collecting them, he also feels the excitement of the chase.

Many people urge cruelty as an objection to the study of entomology, but the accusation is erroneous. The slightest cruelty need never be practised. Even supposing insects to possess a nervous system equal to that of the higher animals—which they do not—the death by the cyanide or chloroform bottle would be nearly painless. As a further argument against the charge of cruelty, it may be stated that many insects appear to be incapable of feeling pain. The dragon-fly for instance, if deprived of its tail, will eat flies with as great a relish as though it had a stomach to digest them;

and the butterfly, though impaled on a pin, will calmly sip the honey from a flower, evidently unconscious of anything wrong.

Strange as it may seem, although in many cases apparently oblivious to pain, insects appear to possess the sense of smell in a wonderful degree of perfection. If the females of several kinds of moths are placed in the open air, they will soon be surrounded by a large number of males of the same species, these having been most probably attracted by means of a very acute sense of smell.

As our space does not permit even the briefest description of the various kinds of Lepidoptera, we must therefore proceed at once with our principal object, viz., collecting and preserving them. The necessary apparatus for this purpose is simple and inexpensive, and such as can be easily made in a few hours. All that one requires at first are some setting-boards, a net, killing-bottle, store-box, collecting-box, and some pins.

First as to the net. There are several kinds, all more or less possessed of some peculiar advantage of their own. The strongest and most simple is undoubtedly the plain ring-net. This is simply a ring of cane or stout iron wire lashed firmly to the end of a stick. A great drawback to this net, however, is the impos-