

## A TOUR THROUGH LITTLE FRANCE.



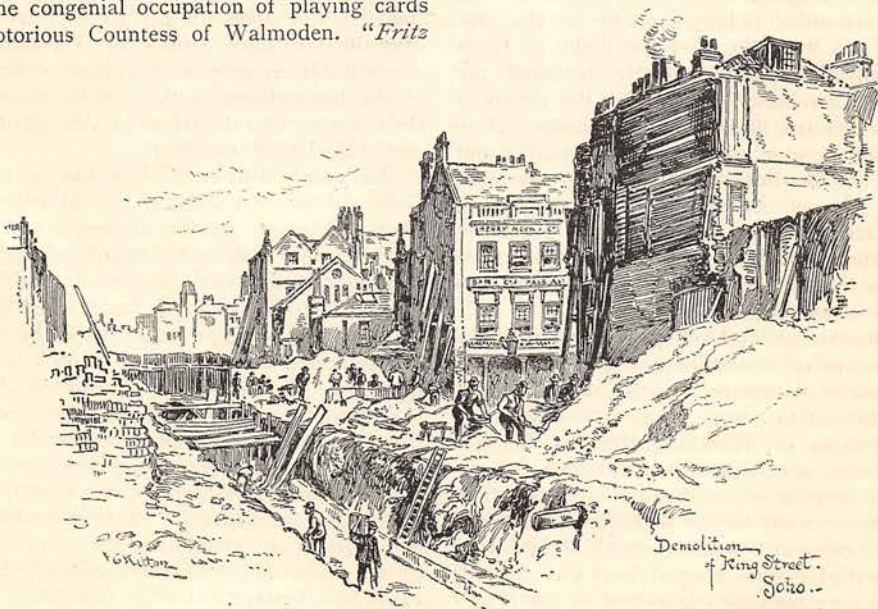
THE dingy, smoke-begrimed district immediately to the north of Leicester Square—lovingly called by its foreign denizens “*La Petite France*”—teems with historical interest. The visitor to London can barely realise to-day that these narrow, ill-favoured, densely-populated streets of Soho, lined with gloomy, mildewed houses, formed up to the middle of last century the aristocratic quarter of the capital. Indeed, up to the early part of the reign of George III., Soho Square was the centre of the most fashionable part of the metropolis. At one time no fewer than four foreign ambassadors lived here, and many of the nobility had their town mansions overlooking the Square. In the early days of the House of Brunswick several members of the Royal Family resided in Leicester House, which stood just on the confines of Soho. William, Duke of Cumberland—by some called the “Victor,” by others the “Butcher” of Culloden, was born in this house in 1721. Here, too, died, very suddenly in 1751, Frederick, Prince of Wales, son of George II. When the royal father was informed of the death, he was engaged in the congenial occupation of playing cards with the notorious Countess of Walmoden. “*Fritz*

*ist tot!*” calmly observed his Majesty, without interrupting the game.

The open place at present known as Soho Square was originally called Monmouth Square. The name was altered after the unsuccessful Monmouth rebellion against James II. The new appellation was derived from the countersign employed at the battle of Sedgemoor. The title of the unfortunate duke was allowed to survive in Monmouth Street, which at one time was the greatest emporium in the metropolis for cast-off apparel.

The great painters Hogarth and Sir Joshua Reynolds both resided in Soho. The eminent caricaturist afterwards removed to Chiswick, where his house is still shown to those admirers of his marvellous works who care to make a pilgrimage to the riverside village he loved so well. In the little Campo Santo outside the parish church is Hogarth's tomb, which recently has been restored at the cost of the family. In Gerrard Street—not far from Wardour Street, so well known for its old furniture shops—lived the ill-fated Lord Mohun, and hither his body was carried home, when he was killed in the fatal duel in Leicester Fields by the Duke of Hamilton. The tragic event is graphically described by Thackeray in “Henry Esmond.” Dryden lodged in this street towards the latter part of the seventeenth century, and here also Edmund Burke occupied a house for some time.

Soho has always been a favourite quarter for the location of French people. After the revocation of the Edict of Nantes—just two hundred years ago—the Huguenots settled here in great numbers. With heart-







felt gratitude—after years of religious oppression in their own country—they thankfully appreciated the blessing of being permitted freely to celebrate divine service according to the rites of their Protestant faith. On the south of what was then termed Leicester Fields—to the left of St. Martin's Court—a place of worship called Orange Street Chapel was erected in 1684 for the use of the French refugees who had been fortunate enough to find safety in England from the sufferings which clerical intolerance had compelled them to endure so long in their native land. After the Reign of Terror in 1789, during the great French Revolution, vast numbers of French nobles and priests fled to England. Very many of them settled in Soho, where their own language was generally spoken. The political events which followed rapidly on the proclaiming of the Republic after the flight of Louis Philippe from the Tuileries, greatly increased the French population in Soho; and after the events of 1871, the Communists found here a new home. Here the disaffected foreign politician lives quietly and peaceably. The hot-headed partisan from the other side of the Channel becomes in his new home an orderly, well-conducted member of society. He settles down to active, industrious habits, and seeks generally in some humble but honourable calling to earn honestly the means of existence.

The Continental political refugees here have been of all degrees and of all conditions, from the monarch to the penniless adventurer. In the parish church of Soho, dedicated to Saint Anne, were interred in 1756 the remains of Theodore, King of Corsica. This unfortunate sovereign was a disinterested, unselfish ruler, popular with his own subjects. The want of funds necessary for the payment of his troops caused him to come to London in search of fresh supplies. Here the luckless crowned head was arrested for debt, and for some time was lodged in the King's

Bench Prison. Horace Walpole tells that as soon as Theodore was set at liberty, he took a chair to the Portuguese Minister. The king was not successful in finding his excellency at home, and not possessing a sixpence in his purse wherewith to pay for his ride, desired the chairmen to carry him to a tailor in Soho, whom he prevailed upon to harbour him. Next day the unhappy sovereign fell sick, and in three more died. The poor tailor, who gave King Theodore what meagre hospitality he could afford, was himself in too indigent circumstances to be able to pay for the interment of the royal remains. The expense was defrayed by an oilman in Compton Street, called John Wright, who said that he was "willing for once to pay the funeral expenses of a king." Against the outer wall of Saint Anne's Church

is a tablet erected to the memory of poor Theodore by Horace Walpole. In Voltaire's "Candide" the unfortunate monarch thus tells of his ill-luck:—"I am Theodore, King by election of the island of Corsica. I have been commonly addressed as 'your Majesty:' to-day people scarcely deign to call me sir. I have had money coined at my royal mint: at this hour, unhappily, I do not own the smallest circulating medium. I have employed two Secretaries of State: at the present time I can barely obtain the services of a menial to attend upon me. I have sat upon a gilded throne, yet misfortunes have overtaken me in London, where in a loathsome debtor's prison I have for many a weary day lain on straw." Compton Street and the adjacent Dean Street were both so called after Dean Compton, the Rector of Soho, while Wardour Street was named after the third Lord Arundel of Wardour, who owned considerable property in this neighbourhood. Nearly all the thoroughfares in this locality commemorate by their designations the reigns of the last of the Stuarts and of his Dutch successor.

The entire district of Soho has an unmistakable Gallic flavour. In many of the old streets, where in days gone by our greatest statesmen and poets lived, and the most fashionable people of their time had their mansions, French families of humble and lowly position may be found in almost every house. Over many of the primitive little shops, the names of the occupiers and their trades are printed in the French language. French schools abound in all directions. On every side are modest little cafés, where the exiles from a sunny country seek solace amidst our fogs and mists in never-ending games of dominoes.

Clean, cheerful restaurants of a homely but inviting appearance are plentiful. At these establishments the *pot au feu* is prepared to suit the tastes of the French guests. The flavour of garlic and oil which prevails about Soho betrays its foreign population. The entire



neighbourhood represents faithfully a bit of Paris ; not indeed of the *Boulevard des Italiens*, nor of the *Champs Elysées*, but rather of the *Rue de Cherche Midi*, or of the *Avenue de Clichy*. Every trade in which the French are believed to excel is actively carried on in



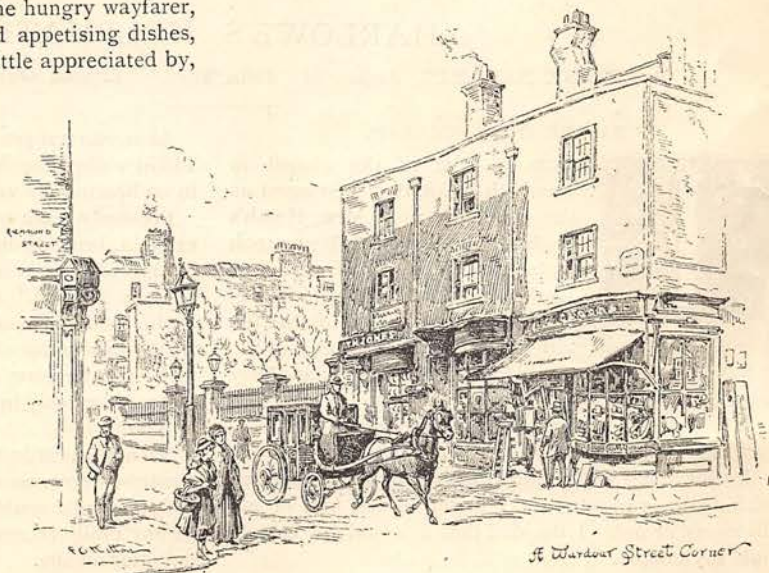
MONUMENT TO KING THEODORE OF CORSICA.

Soho. On every side are the shops of laundresses, bootmakers, pork-butchers, hairdressers, and book-sellers. The French language is heard in every direction.

The sales of the London newspapers must in this district be indeed limited. The demand is rather for the *Reveil* or the *Petit Journal*. In the windows of the little restaurants the bills of fare, which are temptingly exposed to catch the attention of the hungry wayfarer, contain mention of toothsome and appetising dishes, little known to, and perhaps but little appreciated by, English palates. In the cafés, absinthe and vermouth appear to be the beverages most in demand, but these are consumed by the frequenters in moderation, for the French people, as a rule, are temperate and abstemious. Some of the unpretending restaurants in Soho cater most successfully for their patrons. In many of them the cookery is equal to what would be found in eating-houses of similar rank and description in Paris on the south side of the Seine, in the vicinity of the *Rue Dauphine* or the *Rue du Bac*.

In Frith Street, Soho, was a tavern of remarkable excellence, known familiarly for many years as the restaurant of old Père Félix. It was much frequented in the lifetime of its proprietor, who deservedly enjoyed a high reputation among the many customers who were wont to congregate in the little dining-room. The worthy proprietor himself carefully superintended everything in the kitchen, and nothing pleased the good old man more than to have to prepare a succulent dish for a judiciously arranged party of favoured guests, who were able to fully appreciate the gastronomic labours of the Frith Street Cordon Bleu. While M. Félix was busily engaged with his culinary triumphs down-stairs, his buxom spouse anxiously overlooked the arrangements in the cosy *salle à manger*, ever most solicitous to promote the comfort of every patron. The bill of fare was—as a rule—perhaps not very varied, but everything that was served was excellent in its way, and was cooked with the greatest care and neatness.

Near to the restaurant of Père Félix was a hairdresser's shop of modest dimensions—in its time a great institution amongst the French population in Soho. The tonsorial artist—who was well advanced in years—had not succeeded during a lengthened residence in this country in acquiring even a moderate knowledge of the English tongue; French only was spoken here. The old hairdresser, notwithstanding his long absence from his native country, necessitated perhaps by some slight difference of opinion on political questions with the judicial authorities of France, possessed an intimate knowledge of all that was going on in the world of Paris that was perfectly marvellous. It was indeed a mystery however the white-haired old Frenchman obtained his information about histrionic affairs, which certainly had the merit of being generally accurate. The shop was the daily rendezvous of the numerous French Bohemians who flock together in this part of London.





On Sundays and on high festivals, Soho is visited by Frenchmen with their families from all parts of London. It is the general place of meeting for the entire Gallic population. The French restaurants and cafés on these holidays are thronged with merry, cheerful people, who enjoy themselves in an amicable manner, with that moderation so characteristic of the nation. The frequenters of these French taverns are quiet, sober, and well-behaved. In many of these establishments scarcely a word of English is ever spoken, the language of Voltaire and Rousseau alone prevails. Many of these Frenchmen—frugal and industrious—who possess a knowledge of music, will, after a hard day's work at their ordinary avocations, gladly earn a trifling increase to their scanty incomes by playing on some instrument during the evening in the orchestra of one or other of the London theatres. Others, again, employ their leisure hours in giving lessons in their native language.

In Moor Street is the Swiss Chapel, in which are preserved the colours presented by George II. to the

Swiss residents in London who volunteered to form a battalion of five hundred soldiers to aid in the suppression of the Jacobite rebellion of 1745.

The spacious new thoroughfare between Piccadilly Circus and Bloomsbury, recently formed by the Metropolitan Board of Works, and which is destined in future generations to perpetuate the revered memory of the good and philanthropic Lord Shaftesbury, will greatly affect Soho. This street passes through the very midst of the French quarter, while broad roads are to branch out of it to the north and south in the direction of Tottenham Court Road and Trafalgar Square. In a short time probably little will remain to remind the visitor to London of this interesting district. It is a genuine bit of Continental life in the centre of this great city. The old landmarks of this metropolis are slowly but steadily being removed. The improvements, doubtless, are imperatively required; nevertheless, the antiquarian will be sorry when Soho is obliterated from the map of London.

H. R.

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### THE PASSING HOURS.

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IN my soul's temple, sacredly enshrined,  
 'Mid airs the most benign, oh! still may I  
 Conserve what'er of best, to beautify  
 The passing hours, synthetic search may find:  
 The truth of science, seen by sense and mind;  
 The singing pictures of sweet poetry;  
 Ideas turned to use, all forms of art;

High sympathies to symphony all strife;  
 A healthy hatred of the lies of life;  
 And in the holy of holies of the heart,  
 Love for those loving us with purest faith,  
 Volitioned in the future as the past,  
 To guard; or seek them through the terrorless vast,  
 When the earth melts beneath the touch of death.

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## HARLOWE'S HELPMATE.

By FRANK BARRETT, Author of "John Ford," "Hidden Gold," "Honest Davie," &c.

### CHAPTER THE SIXTEENTH.

**I**T was in front of the chapel in Lambeth Road that I stopped as the conviction that Mrs. Heath's husband was the clerk Burns took possession of my mind, and just at that moment I caught sight of Philip coming down from the Kennington Road, with his bag of tools in his hand.

"Is our little friend still living?" he asked; and they were his first words.

"Yes," said I; "her husband has come."

"That is well," said he.

I went home with Philip to his lodgings, perplexed with doubt as to whether I ought to tell him of my discovery or not. I decided that it would be best to hold my tongue.

As it was not yet time to go to the hall, I sat with Philip while he took his tea, which the servant brought in on hearing his voice.

Presently there was a knock at the door, and Madge came in, bringing little Bobby with her, and we knew by that and her grief that it was all over.

"She is gone," said Madge, smothering her sobs. Philip took her hand and comforted her, while I took Bobby on my lap and gave him my tuning-fork to play with—for the poor child, comprehending nothing but seeing everybody in grief, was on the verge of bursting into tears also.

Soon afterwards Mr. Burns came in. I never saw a man so overcome with sorrow. His eyes were blinded with tears; he could not speak for some time. Neither he nor Philip recognised each other at first; but they did after awhile.