

Lough Swilly, or the "Lake of Shadows," runs from its mouth past you up to Letterkenny, a really beautiful lough. On your right hand, Lough Foyle is visible; on the left can be traced the valley of Mulroy Lough, though its waters cannot be seen; and beyond this the view is open right up to Errigal Mountain, near Gweedore in the north-west.

Innishowen lies under and before you. Until lately, the waters of Lough Swilly came up to within a few miles of those of the Foyle; and there is geological evidence to show that during the Glacial period the conditions were accurately described by its name—viz., "Innis Eogan," or the Island of Eogan; then it became corrupted into "Innis-Owen," and lastly "Innishowen."

To describe Derry would be beyond the limits of my space. It is a beautifully situated city, with a glorious

old cathedral, a fine river, and charming scenery all round. The city itself, with its cathedral on the summit, forms a striking view as one goes down the river to Moville, and before entering the narrows, which stretch from about a mile below the city to Culmore. Looking back at the city we see the river running through a narrow glen, at the upper end of which was placed the boom, to stop the vessels trying to relieve the city when besieged by King James. This siege fills a brilliant page in history, and I can only say to those who want more of it, *vide* Macaulay.

From Culmore the lough widens out to a great width. At the lower end lies our old friend, the Transatlantic steamer. In half an hour I am on board; and next day I am back in my chambers, thoroughly re-invigorated and fit for anything.

THE FRENCH CHARACTER, SEEN THROUGH ENGLISH SPECTACLES



COUNTRIES, like individuals, have their inner as well as their outer life. We may take in at a glance a stranger's peculiarities of features, dress, manners, and speech; but we must be for some time in his company, and observe him closely, under varying circumstances, if we would understand his character. It is the same with large communities or races of men. John Bull has always been disposed to look with suspicion upon men of other nationalities, and to measure them by a standard as narrow as his own island home. There are too many Mrs. Browns still, who "cannot abide furriners." Even travelled Englishmen—and who does not travel nowadays?—are apt to take their prejudices with them, closing their eyes to the excellencies of their neighbours, and exaggerating their faults. So it is with regard to the French. We must live among them, and mingle with them in the converse of every-day life, if we would grasp the many details which go to make up national character, and form a fair judgment upon it.

A residence of some years in Paris, and more recently in a large provincial town of France, has given the writer opportunities of doing this in a measure. He, therefore, proposes to note down a few of the impressions he has received.

The first feature in the character of the French that he would mention is not one which all are, at first,

prepared to attribute to them. It is their love of reasoning—their sternly logical mind. By this it is, of course, not meant that they always reason correctly, or that they invariably come to sound conclusions; but simply that they do reason about all matters, great or small. They are, indeed, as every one knows, a singularly impulsive and excitable people. A madman has been defined by Locke as one who reasons correctly from wrong premisses. In paroxysms of great national excitement a whole nation may go mad; but when they do so they may still reason after a fashion, though most erroneously. So it has often been with the French. In their calmer moments, however, they are extremely precise in their modes of thinking and acting. Their very language is a proof of this, and is a mirror of their minds. Those who know it best will admit that it is far more difficult than they at first supposed. The superficial smattering of it which is often acquired at school or college is easily gained, and as easily lost. But a thorough mastery of its principles and idioms, not to speak of its pronunciation, and ability to write as well as speak it correctly, are the results of long and careful study, besides constant practice. This arises chiefly from the many niceties of expression and delicate distinctions, all intended to insure accuracy. The French language is like a pure limpid stream, through which every pebble at the bottom is distinctly visible. A good French writer or speaker spares no pains to make his words the transparent, exact medium of his thoughts. Nothing loose or slipshod in composition can be tolerated. The sentences are, for the most part, short, terse, and neatly chiselled, following each other like the steps of a mathematical demonstration. There is, therefore, much less room for individual

taste and originality of style than in English; but the intelligent reader is seldom at a loss to understand the meaning. It might be interesting to illustrate this by examples; but we simply refer to this fact as characteristic of the French themselves. It is not, then, surprising that a people, whose language is so precise, should be equally exact and methodical in all their social regulations. To our view, this love of order is often carried to an extreme, which is practically vexatious and unnecessary.

An unwary traveller, for instance, who reaches the railway station in time to take his ticket, finds it rather hard to be told that he is too late to register his luggage. He is pointed to the inexorable notice that the office is closed a quarter of an hour before the departure of the train. Probably the train has not yet arrived, and there is really ample time; but this law of the Medes and Persians altereth not, and he has to choose between leaving his portmanteau behind, or waiting for a later, perhaps a slower, train. Such has been the writer's experience, and it is certainly not pleasant.

Another similar delay always occurs at one's journey's end. However late may be the hour, and however severe the weather, the travellers have to cool their heels in a dreary, fireless ante-room, waiting till the doors are opened and they can rush in to claim and carry off their rightful belongings. A Frenchman, indeed, sees no hardship in this, for he is inured to it from his youth, and he will inveigh loudly against the laxity of some English companies, which allow their passengers to pounce upon their luggage, as an eagle on its prey, without any proof of ownership.

So it is again with the Paris omnibuses. It must be admitted that they are far better regulated than our own. All confusion and disputes are prevented by the distribution of numbers at the bureaux where the omnibuses stop. These are given to each person in the order of his application, and called out by the conductor, so that the passengers enter in turn. There is no struggling for seats, nor has the weakest to give place to the strongest. Sometimes we have seen a vigorous, self-asserting Englishman push past the rest, and clamber in triumph to the top; but he has been invariably ordered down again, and, like a rebellious schoolboy, been compelled to yield precedence to those who had obtained a higher figure. It was a salutary lesson, and who will deny that he was served rightly? This rule is never relaxed. It may be a little trying to the patience; still it is just and fair, and is acquiesced in by the Parisians without a murmur. In a similar manner the jostling and crushing, too frequent among ourselves at the doors of exhibitions and places of amusement, and even of churches, are rendered impossible by the "queue," into which all are compelled by the police to form themselves. The docility with which an eager crowd will submit to such discipline is well worthy of imitation. All see it to be reasonable, and seldom resent it. The same methodical spirit may be traced throughout the institutions of France. We see it in higher matters, such as the legalisation of marriages, which cannot take place without the fully-attested consent of the parents, or of

the nearest of kin, on both sides, besides many other formalities. In the administration of public funds for the relief of the poor, the direction of prisons, lunatic asylums, postal and telegraphic affairs—in short, everywhere, all is conducted most systematically and as by clockwork. There is, indeed, not unfrequently a needless amount of fuss and punctiliousness in these arrangements. Precious time is lost in tying and untying red tape. Sufficient margin is not always allowed for the exceptions continually occurring to the best rules. Still, on the whole, there is no doubt that the wheels of society move in consequence more smoothly. Much friction is saved. The liberty which is one of the watchwords of the French Republic, and is equally prized by ourselves, is not allowed to degenerate into that spurious licence of every one being left to do what is right in his own eyes.

So far we have been speaking of some of the written laws which regulate daily life in France. But we must remember that these are supplemented by an even more rigorous unwritten code of custom. This is so, of course, in every country. There are always a number of indifferent matters, neither right nor wrong in themselves, as dress, food precedence in society, &c., which must be decided by the will of the majority. And nowhere does fashion rule so imperiously, or is custom so stern and exacting, as amongst our opposite neighbours. Their very language implies the importance attached to the outward proprieties of life, in such phrases in constant use as "*Cela ne se fait pas,*" "*Comme il faut.*" When a mother would reprove her child for some petty delinquency, she will say, "*Ce n'est pas beau,*" rather than "*Ce n'est pas bien.*" So far is this carried that, in the minds of many, punctilious attention to trifling matters of etiquette has evidently much more weight than the requirements of moral duty. They seem more anxious to do what is thought proper than what is right. It is, therefore, far harder for a Frenchman to have the "courage of his convictions." To stand out alone against public opinion and practice involves a veritable martyrdom, such as few are prepared to undergo. The result is a dead level of easy indifference in all serious matters.

On the other hand, it would be a great mistake to suppose that their politeness is a mere French polish, or studied hypocrisy. Closer observation will lead to a truer and more charitable conclusion. A French lady, no mean authority on the subject, writing for girls on the manners of good society, has summed up the matter in this terse and admirable sentence—"In order to be polite, be good." ("*Pour être poli, soyez bon.*") "The education of the heart," she adds, "is in fact the principal basis; indeed, the only one on which should rest that combination of delicate attentions and benevolent thoughtfulness, called by the general name of politeness. If the language and manners are opposed to the sentiments we do not attain at being polite, but we play a comedy of politeness." Viewed in this light, good manners are, as she well points out, a carrying into detail of our Lord's golden rule, "Do unto others as you would they should do

unto you." Very happily has this distinguished authoress expressed the real feelings of many of her fellow-countrymen. Their charming behaviour in society is, we are convinced, in a large number of instances, much more than a thin veneer, covering a hollow, selfish nature. When we see, as we often may, the poorest men and women respectful and considerate to each other in the casual intercourse of life, as well as towards their superiors, and when we find them ready to put themselves to considerable inconvenience to serve or direct a foreigner, without any hope of reward, we cannot doubt that such acts are dictated by genuine kindness of disposition.

At the same time there is sometimes a comic side to the picture. For those who are fond of statistics it might be an interesting question to compare the profits derived from the hat trade in France and in England. Considering the amount of wear and tear to which the requirements of etiquette must expose them, we should suppose their manufacture to be a most lucrative business. It would not be easy to enumerate all the occasions where the hat plays a part in the owner's daily life. Does a Frenchman meet a lady of his acquaintance, not content with raising his hat at the beginning and end of the conversation, he will patiently stand in all weathers with uncovered head until the fair one is pleased to bring the interview to a close. Do men, not on intimate terms, wish to exchange civilities, off go both hats again. Whenever, too, they enter a house, or a shop, or an office, or a public conveyance, there is the same inevitable ceremony, or offence may be given. Even if a strange lady passes a gentleman on the staircase of an hotel or private house, a slight elevation of the hat must mark the deference due to her sex. Much of this may appear to us matter-of-fact folks almost puerile and superfluous. Most, however, will admire, and be inclined to imitate, the reverence for sorrow and death expressed by uncovering the head at the sight of a passing funeral. There

is a delicate touch of nature in this simple act which needs no comment.

Moreover, in the Frenchman's exuberant politeness to ladies, we can hardly fail to recognise another elevating principle—a chivalrous respect for woman. It may seem odd to us that a French lady will never be the first to salute a gentleman, but always waits to be saluted. We allow our ladies this privilege as a protection against the intrusions of strangers; but the French, with a somewhat happier idea, consider the man's respectful greeting as an act of knightly homage. A similar sentiment suggests the jealous care exercised over young unmarried ladies, forbidding them to visit or go out alone. For the same reason, a lady will never offer her hand to a gentleman in the street or at home except he be a very intimate friend, or a relative. She receives him with a graceful bow, and at his departure may deign, as a mark of favour, to shake hands. This studious regard to the dignity of woman is also seen in correspondence. A letter from a gentleman to a lady, unless he can claim the privileges of relationship or age, would be inadmissible which did not conclude with some assurance of homage or respect. So ingrained is this feeling into the Gallic mind that a Frenchman, writing in English to an English lady and thinking to combine the etiquettes of both nations, has been known to subscribe himself as "Yours very affectionately and respectfully."

But here we must pause on the threshold of a wide and interesting subject. Enough, perhaps, has been said to show that Frenchmen are not the mere creatures of impulse which some have represented them to be, but are a remarkably logical and methodical race. Their politeness, too, is not such an empty, vapid form as it is sometimes supposed to be. Rather, in very many instances, is it the natural outcome of a kind and generous heart. Indeed, in these and other national characteristics we may find not a little worthy of imitation.

WILLIAM BURNET.

VOLATILE EFFIE.

A LEAF OUT OF A YOUNG MOTHER'S JOURNAL.



UT now for the real object of this letter. (Does it take your breath away to get four sheets?) We want you to help us about Effie. John and I are at our wits' end, and should most thankfully take your wise head and kind heart into counsel. I fear we have been laying up trouble for ourselves and our little girl. The ways of nature are, there's no denying, very attractive in all young creatures; and it is so delightful to see a child do as "'tis its nature to," that you forget that nature, left to herself, produces a waste,

be it ever so pretty. Our little Effie's might so easily become a wasted life!

But, not to prose any more, let me tell you the history of Effie's yesterday—one of her days is like the rest, and you will be able to see where we want your help.

Figure to yourself the three little heads bent over "copy-books" in our cheery school-room. Before a line is done, up starts Effie—

"Oh, mother, may I write the next copy, S H E L L? 'Shell' is so much nicer than K N O W, and I'm so tired of it!"

"How much have you done?"