

The Way They Went to Paris.



"HE TRIMMED HEADS FOR HIS NIGHT'S LODGING."



HE Paris Exhibition has been a god-send to that curious class of the community which delights in eccentric wagers and eccentricity of action generally. To refer to the bets made in regard to the way of getting to the French capital—to describe these alone would occupy a goodly volume, especially if one attempted to record the adventures met with on the journey.

The world seems to be made up, broadly speaking, of two sorts of people—those who are content to go on continually the old jog-trot way, and those who are always striving after some novelty in the manner of doing things. Of the latter sort must have been the man who committed suicide because he got tired of getting up and dressing every day of his life. If that man had lived until the present year of grace he would have been delighted with the carnival of novelty inspired and encouraged by the Exhibition; and if he had not been one of those to set out for Paris in some unheard-of way he would at least have had his bet on some crank so proceeding.

Perhaps that, after all, is the best use of an exhibition, for it stimulates originality,

which, of course, is the mother of invention. And there is no telling how much genius of this sort a certain eccentric Hungarian barber put, as it were, on its mettle. The barber in question wagered some nine months ago that he would walk from Buda-pest to Paris, visit the Exhibition, and see the sights, without expending a florin by the way. All he took with him were the implements of his trade, and he may be said to have literally cropped and shaved his way to the great show. He trimmed heads for his night's lodging, smoothed down chins for his drinks. One hopes he enjoyed his Exhibition, and got back again to the beautiful Hungarian capital in the best of health and spirits.

The wager of this "scissorial artist"—the description used to be over the door of a barber at Cannes—was duly heralded in the Continental papers, and was at once the signal for the making of a host of similar fantastic bets.

The first to follow his example was a Vienna coachman, who undertook, against a handsome wager, to walk from the Austrian capital to Paris, pushing a wheelbarrow before him. He succeeded in his effort, and netted a nice sum for his pains. Every



"THE VIENNA COACHMAN."

night he sent a wire to the hotel where his bet had been made, recording the progress of his journey and the distance covered.

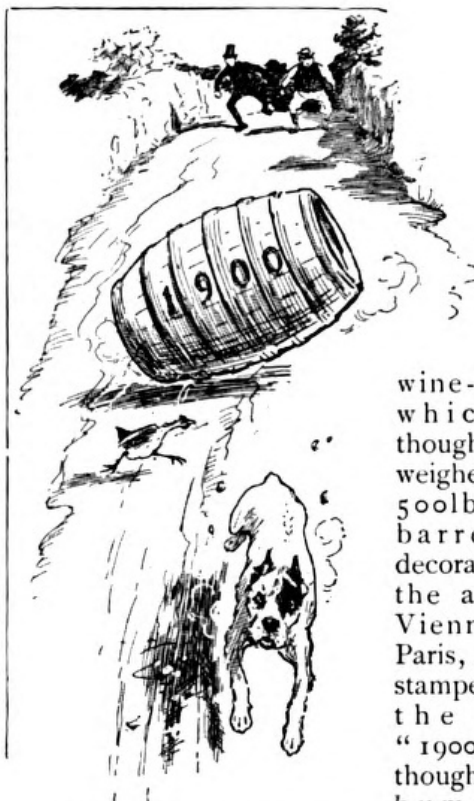
Less fortunate was a fellow-citizen who started for the city on the Seine walking backwards. He, too, would probably have won his wager had not the police stepped in when he had done twenty-five miles and



"WALKING BACKWARDS."

arrested him as a person of unsound mind. This shows the superiority of our English police. They would have seen him safely over the dangerous crossings and let him proceed, with a blessing.

Vienna is noted for its "cranks." It is said to have twice as many as Chicago. Two of them came to the fore in the race of eccentricity for going to Paris. One was a merchant, the other a restaurant-keeper, and they made a wager for 5,000 crowns that they would reach the Exhibition on foot within two months, trundling before them all the way a huge



"THESE HUMORISTS COVERED EIGHTEEN MILES A DAY."

wine-barrel, which, although empty, weighed over 500lb. The barrel was decorated with the arms of Vienna and Paris, and was stamped with the date "1900." Although these humorists covered eighteen miles a

day, they cut matters pretty fine, only entering the Vincennes gate of the fair city a few hours before the stipulated time.

Grätz, a Styrian town, also produced its pair of humorists, but in this case, like the pairs that went into the ark, they were male and female. The bet in this instance was to the effect that the twain would do the whole of the journey on one pair of legs, the idea being, of course, that one would carry the other. As a matter of fact, all the carrying was done by the husband, but whether they got all the way to Paris, or, indeed, how far they went, history — that is, the newspaper — sayeth not.

There is no doubt, however, in that respect as to

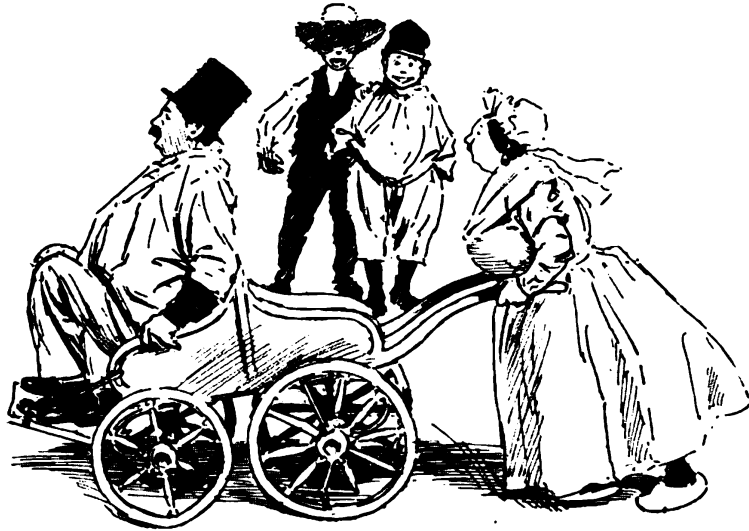


"THE CARRYING WAS DONE BY THE HUSBAND."

the achievement of a Dutchman named Van Der Bosch. The worthy in question wagered and won a considerable sum of money that he would walk from Amsterdam to the Paris Exhibition on a pair of high stilts without once taking them off *en route*. He accomplished his object easily, and with plenty of time to spare, the stilts allowing him to get forward with great expedition. Metaphorically he "did it on his head," and, according to his own statement, would do it again with pleasure for half the money—provided he could be sure of convenient sleeping quarters.

As it was, his stilts made him so tall that he could enter neither inn, tavern, nor farmhouse. He was obliged to sleep as best he might by the wayside, and after lying on the ground two or three times he found the difficulty of getting on to his feet again so trying that afterwards he preferred to recline on the roof of a house, if he could find one convenient, allowing his "legs" to rest on the ground. In lieu of a house—and in some respects preferable—he found a hay-stack almost all that could be desired. Almost—for unfortunately, on one occasion a woman, seeing his stilts against the side of a stack, and not seeing the man on the top of them, began to hack off the end of one for firewood. Van Der Bosch's most pathetic reminiscence, however, was of the attempt he was once compelled to make to sleep on or against a tree.

From a Belgian city—Liège says one paper—a most impressive little turn-out set forth Paris-wards. It consisted of the family



"A MOST IMPRESSIVE LITTLE TURN-OUT."

go-cart, in which the wife was to trundle her worse half. There was a good round sum on the event; but the husband was so thoroughly—and deservedly—jeered on the way by everybody they met, that at the end of the second day he threw up the game.

Another crank—this time an Englishman—was compelled to lose his wager from another cause. He was a resident of Oporto, and after dining excellently at his club he offered to bet anyone present that he would visit the Paris Exhibition on his hands and knees, if it were made worth his while. As a matter of fact, he actually started off, and it being night-time, he managed to reach the city confines;



"HE PREFERRED TO RECLINE ON THE ROOF OF A HOUSE."



"ON HIS HANDS AND KNEES."

but there he was promptly taken into custody by two unsympathetic Portuguese policemen.

France itself has furnished quite a number of eccentrics who have visited Paris in a more or less original manner. An Amiens family, consisting of father, mother, two sons, and two daughters—the latter being grown-up girls—put on roller skates, and without once taking them off landed safely at the Exhibition. They were met there by a huge crowd of enthusiastic fellow-citizens, who had themselves preferred to accomplish the journey by the more prosaic train.

Another little family party must have given the Parisians the idea that the Ark had just opened its doors. For the members of the family in question—seven in number—made their journey to the Exhibition each on a different description of quadruped. The head and commander of the whole rode a horse, the mother sat comfortably on a pillioned ass, a son bestrode a lusty steer, and the rest of the family were mounted severally on a sheep, a goat, an ostrich, and a large dog. The

whole thing may have been *pour rire*, as our French friends would say, or, as was suggested, as an advertisement, the eccentric family being in the show line.

Equally eccentric, surely, must have been the couple who elected to go to Paris with the one-wheeled coach, *i.e.*, a barrow, one being an inside passenger, the other acting as horse—or was it ass?—and driver at the same time. One could have understood it better if the twain had been “a lover and his lass,” but the records have it down in black and white as husband and wife.

Thousands of cyclists, of course, and automobilists without number, have negotiated distances of four hundred miles and upwards in getting to the Exhibition; but it was left to a Viennese commissionaire, Johan Sonnenblume by name, to cover the distance on foot, but under really sporting conditions. This pedestrian is already fifty-nine years of age, but yet he covered the distance from one capital to the other in seventeen days, or at the rate of fifty miles a day.



“ON ROLLER SKATES.”



“A LITTLE FAMILY PARTY.”