

A LETTER FROM FRANCE.

The entente cordiale between France and England, which is receiving so marked an outward demonstration at Portsmouth while I am writing these lines in the harbor of Liverpool, was perhaps foreshadowed by the friendly treatment which we Canadians of the Canadian Manufacturers' Association received in Paris on our visit. This could not well have been more hearty or more graceful. But perhaps the friendly feeling towards Britain and all who belonged to her was already growing, for there were to be seen a great many British flags, or imitations of British flags about the city. Sometimes the imitations were funny. I saw near the Arc de Triomphe, over what must have been a private house, a red ensign with the field sixteen times instead of four times as big as the Jack. It was odd, but it represented a genuine feeling.

The beauty of Paris has been often described. Doubtless much of its apparent roominess and convenience of space dates from the days of Baron Haussman, who was given a free hand by Napoleon III, they say, or his gay minister De Morny, for the sinister purpose of so laying out Paris afresh that cannon and soldiers could sweep the streets by canister and rifle ball from a central point (the avenues radiating from centres), in case any attempts were made to erect barricades in times of modern revolution. But many elements go to make the beauty of the city. For one thing, the stone-cutting and carving of the houses are masterly. Nowhere else have I seen such lovely figures of angels, of children, of fruits and flowers, of clouds even, spring from creamy freestone at the corners of dwellings. The human subjects seem almost alive. And the decorations of public buildings or squares are for the most part admirable—that is to say, you have architectural grandeur where grandeur is called for by the subject; or you have placid beauty or solemnity in memorials where these are specially desired. The number and disposition of shrubs and flowers in the residential quarter is an element that adds much to the city's appearance. In story after story of tall dwellings one sees ranges of flower boxes; and the clambering roses along the boulevards have an effect all their own.

Individual taste can do much to brighten even a business street of dull grey stone. Not far from the Grand Opera stands a building of four stories, devoted evidently to dry goods or millinery. High upon it was the legend: "Hail to the Spring," in large white letters on a green and gold back-ground of flowers, surrounded with crimson and blue stones (as they seemed) set in the pervading grey. Somehow the dainty thing made one think at once of spring flowers or spring clothing or spring bonnets. Any how it was refreshing to the eye in no common degree. It would not be fair to say, however, that you see no ugliness in Paris, in spite of what the author of "John Bull and His Island" has said, or that more senses than one are not occasionally shocked. The cochers and the soldiers are many of them dirty; and here is a costume that passed me one day and nearly caused me to gasp: Sulphur colored breeches, a lilac vest, a blue hat and a violently discordant tie—all this on a figure with a swaggering walk and a stick that described circles in the air as its grinning owner passed along. Other odd things struck us here and there, trivial for the most part. For instance, peaches selling on the street at "60c. the half kilo," which we at first interpreted to mean sixty cents for peaches weighing one pound and a tenth. But upon reflection and enquiry it proved to be sixty centimes, not six dimes, and so the imaginary and fabulous price of peaches came down to the reasonable sum of five cents per pound. Similarly, what seemed an impossible drinking feat, namely, "Boisson—biere colossal, 30c.," assumed the more believable proportions of a huge drink of beer for six cents.

The Bourse was, of course, an object of interest to business folk among us, its floor being a barometer of commerce in some directions and an exhibition, at certain hours, of the calisthenic possibilities of the human frame. The building has been enlarged of late years. Our party did not go inside, having been there before and having an important

engagement ahead. Coming down from our hotel we saw through an opening of the Avenue de l'Opera, the home of the Bank of France, a stone building of four stories, with a clock. And in the same street, "The Sun" of Canada, which made us feel on the instant more at home. In nearly every city to which our trip took us in the British Islands were to be seen the signs of the New York Life, the Mutual Life, and the Equitable Life assurance companies or some of them. And they in most cases occupied premises in prominent buildings. The hold which some of the large domestic underwriting companies have in the Old Country is exemplified in the number of their offices in various parts of the large cities. The Prudential is an example of this in London, Manchester, Liverpool, and in the Scottish cities the Standard Life. But the great fire insurance companies have buildings in many cities that seem to typify age and strength.

After this rather wide degression from a foreign beginning let me recur to my scanty notes made in France. I transcribe, without expanding, some records made here and there, indicating the impression the sleepy French villages make upon a traveller by railway:—

"Etaples, 2.40 p.m., 14th July—No sign of life.

"Outreau, 3 p.m.—A man and a dog in the street, some women close by in a field. Here are several estaminets" (drinking houses).

These places are not far from Amiens, a city of historic interest which is also a considerable producer of velvet, linen, and other manufactures, and has to-day probably 70,000 people.

"Talk about American brag, and humorous exaggeration! Here is a little shanty in the merest hamlet of North France calls itself the Café de L'Univers, and I suppose twenty people would crowd it out of house and home.

"A somewhat curious landscape along here. The trees, like the trees in England, seem smaller than ours, but the profusion of the English trees and shrubs and their variety of shape contrasts favorably with the north French landscape, which is more bare.

"In the north of France, for a long distance east of Calais, there is no forest, the land is mainly bare—that is to say pasture or arable land, resembling the South of Scotland and the North of England.

"Row after row of Lombardy poplar trees mark the landscape in these departments.

"Passengers are severely let alone by officials in the French railway carriages, according to our experience."

I may conclude this discursive sketch of a brief trip by mentioning my two fellow-passengers in the smoking compartment from Paris to Calais. I boldly asked them for a match, and each of them showed the most courteous taste to provide it. Accepting the favor from the younger man I thanked him in English, upon which the other said; "You will excuse my brother that he speaks not English. He is of Eetalee and is charmed to be at your service." Noticing that they had been talking French together, I then made a modest essay in that language, speaking very likely the language of Voltaire's Charles X. of Sweden, or of Les Aventures de Telemaque, rather than the conversational French of to-day. But neither of them laughed at me. By and by an exchange of cards showed one to be an officer in the Italian army, while the other had been, he told me, a resident of Malta for twenty years. They were the most cheerful and polite of companions, and learning that I was from Canada plied me with questions about our fair land. Is there, indeed, anywhere in Europe to-day a place where people are not curious about Canada?

J. H.

10th August, 1905.

ZINC IN BRITISH COLUMBIA.

Under the auspices of the Dominion Government, a party will leave shortly for British Columbia to investigate into the extent and character of the zinc deposits of that Province. It will be under the charge of Mr. W. R. Ingalls,

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