

culative Aldermen have had a hard time of it. And owing to his persistent efforts to clean the Augean stable, this element has for the most part been eliminated from the Council. He has been blamed for handling his subjects somewhat roughly regardless of personal feelings. But his attacks have been made openly, and without malignity. He has been very roughly handled himself, in return, but his opponents for the most part have been unsuccessful. His sole politics and creed seem to be to defend the public interests against all evil designs. He is a thorough Canadian and protectionist. Son of a wealthy father he has sought to show to his class a field where they may earn distinction and do good service to the State. It is to be regretted that our young men, who find themselves favorably situated, do not devote themselves to public life and the practise and study of the arts of statesmanship. There is no lack of good material in our country, and there is a vast field open for the sons of wealthy men in politics. Relieved from the anxiety of earning their daily bread, or making a provision for the future, this class of our community, instead of wasting life in idle dissipation, or the mere pursuit of pleasure, should devote themselves to the task of serving their country simply for fame. Ours is not a country for drones; all should be workers.

PARTED.

Earthly hopes may vanish, darling,
Life's brightest joys fade with the past,
But thy voice hath said at parting
"I will love thee to the last."

Though every other gladness
From out my life should pass away,
I will let no shade of sadness
Mar the hope thou gavest that day.

God will keep thee for me, dearest,
Till my time of exile's past,
And I claim thee to be nearest
Through all life's journey to the last.

Montreal.

JOHN B. BURLAND.

WEARINESS:

A TALE FROM FRANCE.

BY RUDOLPH LINDAU.

Monsieur Casimir Vincent, the old and very wealthy Lunel banker, had been for more than thirty years the regular and honoured frequenter of the Café de l'Esplanade. There he might be seen twice a-day without fail: in the afternoon about one o'clock, after his breakfast, to take his cup of coffee, glance over the newspapers, and exchange a few words with his old acquaintances; and again towards eight in the evening, after his dinner, to play his game of piquet, which generally lasted till about eleven.

Every one at Lunel knew M. Vincent. He was a small thin man, with marked features, large dark eyes, short thick hair that was turning grey, and a calm indifferent expression of countenance. M. Vincent was of a taciturn nature, and when he spoke, it was slowly and thoughtfully. Notwithstanding his unmixed southern blood, he was sober in gesture, and nothing in his movements betrayed the proverbial vivacity of his countrymen. He dressed simply and very carefully, and paid particular attention to his linen, which was always of dazzling whiteness.

M. Vincent's story was as well known to the inhabitants of the town as his appearance or his mode of living. His grandfather, during the first Revolution, had been the founder of the house of Casimir Vincent. There were old men living who still remembered him, and spoke of him as a man who had possessed no common share of intelligence and energy. In a short time he had amassed a large fortune by his banking business, and also as an army contractor. His son had carried on the business under the Empire and the restoration. In his turn, the Casimir Vincent of our story, who had been brought up in the paternal school, after having spent a few years in Bordeaux, Marseilles, and Paris, settled at Lunel in the year 1840. His steadiness inspired his father with such confidence that he at once admitted him to partnership. The firm was thenceforward styled "Casimir Vincent and Son."

Vincent junior was then about thirty. He was considered a dandy, and the young beaux of his little town copied his dress, and asked him for the addresses of tradesmen.

The wealthy citizens who had marriageable daughters used to get parties and picnics in his honour.

On two occasions there had been rumours of Monsieur Vincent's marriage. Soon after his return to Lunel he had paid his addresses to Mademoiselle Coulé, and his proposals had been joyfully received by her family. All the gossips of the place were already busy reckoning up the large fortune that the young couple would have, when bright, pretty, joyous Caroline Coulé suddenly fell ill, and almost immediately died. Casimir Vincent wore no mourning for his affianced bride, but her death grieved him deeply. For several years he remained in strict retirement, entirely occupied with his father's business. The old man died in 1844, leaving by his will "all he possessed to his only and well-beloved son Casimir Vincent."

Three years after this event, Vincent came forward as a suitor for the hand of Mlle. Jeanne d'Arfeuille. He was then thirty-six, but looked much older; his hair was turning

grey, and the lonely life he had led since Caroline's death had made him taciturn and gloomy. It was not, therefore, very surprising that a girl of eighteen should look upon him as an old man. Jeanne d'Arfeuille uttered a scream of affright when her mother, all radiant with joy, announced to her that the wealthy banker had done her the honour to make her the offer of marriage. She declared at once that she would rather die or shut herself up in a convent, than marry "that ugly, little, old man."

"He might be my father," added she, bursting into tears. "I shall never love him, and I won't marry him."

At first the mother tried her eloquence to convince her daughter that it was madness to refuse the best match of the department; but as Jeanne persisted in crying, and rejected all idea of yielding, Madame d'Arfeuille at last lost patience, and ended the debate by exclaiming, "I order you to marry him, and marry him you must."

Something, however, occurred on the occasion of M. Vincent's first official visit at Madame d'Arfeuille's that ruined all the plans which that lady had formed. Vincent noticed the red eyelids and downcast air of the girl he was to wed, and leading her up to the window, spoke to her for a few moments in measured tones. Madame d'Arfeuille, who was seated at a little distance, saw with secret anxiety her daughter burst into tears, and heard M. Vincent, to her intense surprise, say in a gentle serious voice—

"Calm yourself, my dear child—I only wish for your happiness; I was mistaken."

Then going up to the mother with his usual slow, steady step, he said, in a tone which imparted singular dignity to his small stature,

"I must thank you, Madame, for the honour which you have done me; and it is with sincere regret that I relinquish the hand of your daughter."

So saying, he bowed low to the mother and went away, leaving them both in amazement at what had happened.

Madame d'Arfeuille, as was her custom when she found herself in an awkward position, began by fainting; then, coming to herself, she got into a violent passion with Jeanne. When at last she recovered her composure, she hastened to the banker's, and vowed that there was in all this merely a deplorable misunderstanding, and that her daughter would be proud and happy to become Madame Vincent. But the little man had some peculiar notions of his own especially on the subject of matrimony. He let Madame d'Arfeuille speak as long as she liked without interrupting her, though he caused her no little embarrassment by looking at her steadfastly all the time. When at last she came to a stop, after stammering out for the tenth time, "What a deplorable misunderstanding!" Vincent merely repeated the words he had uttered an hour before—

"I have to thank you, Madame, for the honour you intended me; and it is with sincere regret that I relinquish the hand of your daughter."

Madame d'Arfeuille could not believe her ears; for one moment she had a mind to faint again, but the icy deportment of the banker deterred her from that bit of acting. She displayed great cleverness in trying to alter M. Vincent's resolve; she even stooped to entreaty. But it was of no avail; M. Vincent remained unmoved, and looked more gloomy than ever. Then Madame d'Arfeuille flew simply and frankly into a rage; she accused the banker of having caused the misery of a poor innocent girl, and of striving to bring shame on her mother. Vincent remained as insensible to her fury as he had been to her prayers; till at last, at the end of the half hour, thoroughly worn out and defeated, she retreated from the field where she had thought herself sure to achieve victory.

A few months later, pretty Jeanne d'Arfeuille married a young country gentleman of a neighbouring department, who was both well-born and wealthy. Her mother was delighted at a marriage which realized all her fondest wishes; but she retained a bitter resentment against the banker who had offended her, and never forgave him. Her southern imagination enabled her to fabricate, in respect of this affair, a whole story, which she repeated so often to her friends, that she ended by believing it herself. According to this version, M. Vincent, whom she styled "a vulgar, forward parvenu and money-lender," had had the "audacity" to aspire to the hand of an Arfeuille. "Fortunately," she would add with magnificent dignity, "my daughter had been too well brought up not to know how to teach a fellow like that his proper place. Then he came to supplicate me to intercede with Jeanne on his behalf, and I really thought I would never be able to shake him off."

This strange story was repeated on all sides by Madame d'Arfeuille's family and friends, and came at last to M. Vincent's ears. He took no trouble to contradict it, and merely shrugged his shoulders. Some one, more curious than the rest, asked him pointblank, whether there was any truth in it. He answered quietly, "you are at liberty to believe this story, if you like; as for me, I have something better to do than to trouble myself about gossip."

After Mlle. d'Arfeuille's marriage, Vincent appeared to have given up all thoughts of seeking a wife. Some proposals were made to him,

for there was no lack in Lunel of good and prudent mothers who would willingly have given their daughters to the rich banker. But he avoided rather than sought opportunities of associating with unmarried women. When his friends expressed their regret, he would say, "I am no longer young; I have nothing to offer to a young woman but my fortune, and I would not care for a wife who took me for that. If ever I become foolish enough to imagine that I may be loved for my own sake, you may perhaps see me come forward in the character of a suitor. In the meantime, I hold myself satisfied with the two failures I have experienced, and I mean to try and get accustomed to the life of an old bachelor."

Many years went by; Vincent became an old man, and it entered nobody's head to think of him as a marriageable man.

M. Vincent's mode of life was simple and unvaried. He rose very early, shaved and dressed at once, and started in his *cabriolet* for a small estate in the neighbourhood of the town, which he had inherited from his father. He was no agriculturist, and did not affect to be one: his visits to the *Mas de Vincent*—so his property was called—had no practical object; but he had taken so thoroughly the habit of this excursion, that, summer or winter, in rain or in sunshine, he never failed to make it. His coachman, old Guerre, who sat beside him in the *cabriolet*, was a morose man, who never opened his lips except to answer laconically his master's questions. Such a companion was no restraint on the banker, who could indulge in his own thoughts during the whole journey. These must have been of a serious kind, for the countenance of the old bachelor always preserved the same cold expression of reserve.

On arriving at the *Mas*, he would unbend a little. The manager of the estate came out to meet him, asked news of his health in a few words—always the same,—and then conducted him to the place where the work was going on. *Père Dufour* was a clever fellow, who knew how to interest his master by telling him something new every day. On this hillside, the vines were prospering; on that other, they were attacked by disease. The silk-worms were thriving, while those of the neighbours were merely vegetating. Sheep had been sold at Béziers and it had been found necessary to purchase mules at the fair at Sommières. To all this Vincent listened attentively, and made no objections. As a rule the *père* did exactly what he liked; and his equals and fellow managers round about considered him the most independent and fortunate man of the whole district.

M. Vincent returned to Lunel about eleven o'clock. He went into his office, where an old clerk handed him the letters which had come by that day's post and took his orders concerning the answers. It was not a long business, for the firm of Vincent & Son had been established on solid foundations, and all went with perfect regularity. The business of the bank was chiefly with the wealthy landowners and farmers of the neighbourhood of Lunel, who, from father to son, had had dealings with the firm for the last half century. They used the agency of the bank to discount the bills they drew on the manufacturers and merchants of Certe, Marseilles, Lyons, and St. Etienne, in exchange for their oil, wines, or cocoons. These bills were always "duly honoured;" or if, by a very rare mischance, they were "protested," the drawers always took them back without difficulty. Legal proceedings and lawyers' strife were things unknown, or only known by name, to the firm of Vincent & Son. As the head of this respected house, M. Casimir Vincent had large profits and little trouble. In the space of one hour, between eleven and twelve, he generally found time to do all his business. He then breakfasted—almost always alone; and after that simple repast, went to the Café de l'Esplanade.

That establishment was the rendezvous of the best Lunel society. It was situated on the promenade and occupied the ground-floor and first storey of a rather large house. Jacques Itier, the master of the *café*, lived on the second floor with his wife Mariette and his numerous family. Jacques Itier was a very sharp fellow. He had not been the proprietor of the *café* very long before he perceived he could extend the custom of his establishment considerably by dividing it into two distinct portions.

So he induced his more "eminent" customers to form a *cercle*, or club, by placing the whole first floor at their disposal. Admittance to the club was not absolutely forbidden to strangers; but a chance intruder would not be likely to remain there long, so unmistakably would the demeanour of the habitual guests show him that he was not in his proper place.

On the other hand, the wealthy citizens and merchants of the town, and the principal landowners of the environs, felt themselves quite at home at the "Cercle de l'Esplanade." Every one had his accustomed corner, chair, table and newspaper. For smokers there was a little grated closet, with lock and key, from whence every man could extract his own particular pipe on arriving; the billiard-players had their own particular cues marked, and it was a settled and acknowledged thing that at certain hours the table belonged to a particular set. One would often hear exclamations like this: "Make haste! It is nine o'clock, and M. Vidal and M. Coulé are waiting to play their game." The waiter who attended on the first floor was called by his Christian name of

"François;" and he did not confine himself to merely answering, "Yes, Monsieur," but would say, "Yes, M. Vidal; Yes, M. Vincent," &c., according as the notary, the banker, or any other personage called to him.

The members of the club were mostly middle-aged or old men, and three or four young men only had managed to obtain admittance. These were the sons of deceased members, and they did not seem out of place in this exclusive society. Among these young men, the foremost was René Sabatier, whose father had been a goldsmith. René was a good, honest fellow of four-and-twenty, very talkative and very familiar, who used to treat the old gentlemen of the "club" as if they had been his comrades. Nobody took offence, for he was a general favourite. He owed this kind of popularity to his conduct during the war, when he had joined the army as a volunteer, and done his duty bravely. He was considered as the chief of the young Legitimist party in Lunel; and all the members of the "Cercle de l'Esplanade" were fierce Royalists.

On the ground-floor, where the real public *café* was, Republicanism prevailed. The young men of the town met there, and strangers often dropped in. The two waiters who rushed from table to table were merely *garçons* for the customers, and no man cared to inquire what their Christian names were. Madame Itier, who presided at the bar, exercised the strictest control, in order to preserve the reputation of respectability enjoyed by her establishment: now such vigilance if displayed on the first floor would have been utterly purposeless.

Jacques Itier was to be seen alternately in the upper and in the lower rooms. On the first floor, he went respectfully from table to table inquiring, in an obsequious tone, whether "the gentlemen" had all they required; the gentlemen, on their part, treated him somewhat haughtily and allowed of no familiarity. On the ground-floor it was the reverse, and there the master of the *café* was almost a personage. He was on the best terms with many of his customers; would play his game of piquet with one or another; order refreshments for his own consumption, and strip off his coat for a game of billiards. The political opinions of Jacques Itier took the colour of the place where he was. On the first floor he adored the Comte de Chambord; below he swore by Gambetta. He was a man without political prejudices. The Bonapartists of Lunel congregated at another *café*; had they come to his establishment he would no doubt have found something pleasant to say about the Prince Imperial. Casimir Vincent had frequented and patronised the Café de l'Esplanade for many years. He was already considered as an old *habitué*, when the establishment passed into Jacques Itier's hands. That was fifteen years ago; and since then, scarcely a day had gone by in which the little man had been there both in the afternoon and in the evening. Vincent clung to his habits; his visits to the *café* were as much a part of his existence as his morning excursions to *Mas de Vincent*. Every day he met the same faces at the club:—old Coulé, who had remained his friend ever since Caroline's death; M. Vidal, the notary, in whose office were the deeds of half the property in the town; René Sabatier, who was bold enough to apostrophise the banker as "*Papa Vincent*"; Bardou, the corn-merchant; Coste, the doctor; Count de Rochbrune and the Baron de Villaray, large landowners, &c. By all those Vincent was highly considered; he was known to be a rich man, a Legitimist, and the descendant of an old family of the town. All these things entitled him to honour.

Yet no one could boast of intimacy with the old bachelor. Vincent's habitual reserve kept curiosity at a distance, and he neither encouraged nor bestowed confidence. He never spoke of himself or his concerns, and wore, on all occasions, a serious countenance, with a tinge of sadness even. Some people asserted that he had never recovered the death of his fair Caroline, and that solitude weighed on his heart. They quoted expressions which he had let drop from time to time, in which he alluded to a monotonous life "without either sorrow or joy."

As soon as M. Vincent entered the club after breakfast, François, the waiter, hastened to bring him his *demi-tasse*, and a tumbler of water; while Itier presented the "*Gazette de France*," and the "*Messenger du Midi*." Vincent would acknowledge these civilities silently by a nod, sip his coffee and slowly smoke a cigar. He would read the Parisian newspaper all through, cast a look on the quotations of the Bourse as given in the "*Messenger*," and then take his seat on the divan which ran all round the billiard-room to hear the small news of the day from some obliging neighbour. He himself scarcely ever spoke. When his cigar was finished, he walked back slowly to his office, where he worked till five o'clock. Then, in obedience to a habit he had contracted during his travels, he dressed for dinner and took his solitary repast. Now and then he invited a few friends. On those occasions the old family plate shone on the table; and the best wines, the most delicate dishes, delighted the palates of the provincial epicures. But when Vincent dined alone, the fare was of the most simple description. An old woman waited on him; he read during his dinner, and scarcely noticed what was set before him.

After dinner, Vincent went to the *café*, as we have said, for the second time. In a few min-