

greater than that actually required, in order to gain a more intimate acquaintance with their possessor. Under the circumstances the only effort needed was another railway trip, which was quickly decided upon. But, learning that there would be no train till half-past one, we agreed *en attendant* to satisfy our inner man at a bakery, approached by a tall flight of steps hard by the station, it having been first recommended to us by the proprietor of a furniture shop next door, whose aunt owned and kept it. The good man, with true New England courtesy, showed us the way himself, and introduced us to his elderly relative. She, in reply to our modest petition for "some lunch," promised us a "meal." As the event proved, this must be the American abbreviation for a full course dinner all the way from tomato soup to apple pie and cheese. The charms of the good spinster's cooking and conversation made us forget all about the train till it dashed into the station. We were then only saved from losing it by the impetus gained in our toboggan-like descent from the tall "stoop."

Back again to Newburyport—another wait in the station, and at last we found ourselves in a "local" jogging lazily across country to Danvers. The weather though cloudy had so far favoured us, but now the rain began to fall in torrents, and we reached our destination in a deluge to find neither cab nor conveyance of any kind at the station. A lanky man of doubtful countenance "guessed we might get suthin' at the livery." On learning, however, that the way to the livery was "out the station, turn to the right, then to the left, then down the lane and through the archway," we requested our friend to order a carriage for us, and stimulated his ardour on our behalf by means of a quarter. He set out. We waited. We read all the advertisements and time tables on the walls of the waiting room. Time glided on. We speculated, unfavourably, on our messenger's probable character as portrayed in his face. Then we studied the railway maps and still waited. Things were becoming depressing, when at last the cab did arrive, and we occupied the drive in reconsidering the lanky man's physiognomy. Judging by our own experience and the general air of the town, Danvers has arrived at such a state of advancement that further progress is impossible. So the inhabitants have naturally no need for the proverbial American hurry.

Oak Knoll, Mr. Whittier's Danvers place, and his real home, is very different from the Amesbury residence. The house stands in grounds of very considerable extent, with well-grown trees about it, and is larger and has, to an English mind, a much more homelike air than the other establishment. On entering, the first creature to greet us was a splendid collie, who, advancing from the back of the hall, laid his nose cordially in my hand, while a gay little terrier frisked towards us, in a way which showed plainly he was accustomed to nothing but kindness from human beings. Within doors the cheery blaze of a brisk log fire in its wide old-fashioned fire-place offered a most warm and grateful welcome to anyone coming out of the wet and semi-darkness of a dull December afternoon. The rooms had been transformed into bowers of roses through the tributes of friends and admirers. Though in one instance the offering had taken the form of a basket of fruits most artistically arranged, the basket itself being almost hidden by large bunches of grapes hung over the sides, and the whole surmounted by a right royal pine apple. Amongst the guests were several "Friends," whose quaint use of the second person singular and that beautiful old word "farewell" at parting, together with their somewhat antiquated fashion in dress, made me almost forget that we were all in the nineteenth century and not many hours' run from New York city.

Mr. Whittier himself, though of so slight a figure as to suggest delicacy, seemed wonderfully active for a man celebrating the eighty-third anniversary of his birth, while his mental faculties could not have been brighter forty years ago. He discussed the present Irish crisis with interest and a knowledge of the points of the case such as few men outside our own country could be expected to possess. This he explained afterwards by saying that he had corresponded with the late John Bright for some years previous to the latter's death. Like so many of his countrymen, Whittier is a great admirer of Mr. Gladstone. Indeed his chief concern in the present political troubles seemed to be that no discredit should reflect upon the G.O.M. in the matter of the Hawarden Conference disclosures. In speaking of Irishmen he showed a keen sense of humour, and told several amusing anecdotes from his own experience, illustrative of their race peculiarities. He also appears to keep well up with the magazine literature of the day. As a Canadian, I was much gratified by some highly complimentary remarks he made about a recent publication in an American journal by one of Canada's most gifted writers, one whose name should be familiar to readers of THE WEEK. In noble proportion with the great poet's mind is a heart, whose extended sympathies are shown not only in his writings, but in his ordinary conversation and simplest actions. Even his dogs never seem to appeal in vain for a caress or kindly glance, while of all that day's experiences, the picture that remains most clearly impressed on my memory is that of the venerable old man seated in an armchair in the dim twilight, a little girl of eight nestled at his side, from whose account of her childish life and doings he appeared to be deriving the keenest pleasure.

Yet despite his interest in the questions of the day and the actions of other men, it is evident his mind is bent more earnestly upon the future world than upon this,

where he has already outstaid the ordinary limits of a lifetime. When at parting I ventured to express the hope that for some years to come we, the public, might still look for greetings from his pen, his answer might have been summed up in the words: "It were better to depart and be with Christ." His great age, his frail form and a certain air of exalted peacefulness, whatever may be the subject absorbing his attention at the moment, all suggest that it can be but a slight tie which binds him to earth, and gives one a deeper insight into—a clearer appreciation of his beautiful lines:—

When on my day of life the night is falling,
And in the winds from unsunned spaces blown,
I hear far voices out of darkness calling
My feet to paths unknown.

Thou, who hast made my home of life so pleasant,
Leave not its tenant when its walls decay;
O love divine, O Helper ever present,
Be Thou my strength and stay.

Be near me when all else is from me drifting,
Earth, sky, home's picture, days of shade and shine,
And kindly faces to my own uplifting
The love which answers mine.

I have but Thee, O Father! Let Thy Spirit
Be with me then to comfort and uphold;
No gate of pearl, no branch of palm I merit,
Nor street of shining gold.

Suffice it if, my good and ill unreckoned,
And both forgiven through Thy abounding grace,
I find myself, by hands familiar beckoned
Unto my fitting place.

Some humble door among Thy many mansions,
Some sheltering shade where sin and striving cease
And flows forever through heaven's green expansions
The river of Thy peace.

There from the music round about me stealing,
I fain would learn the new and holy song,
And find at last amid Thy trees of healing,
The life for which I long.

LENSAR.

FRENCH FICTION AND FRENCH LIFE.

THIS last winter M. Francisque Sarcey gave one of his *causeries* in what the author of "French Traits" calls the little stuffy hall, la Salle des Capucines, in Paris. Seated, and as it were in conversation with his audience, he discussed Bourget's novel of last year, "The Coeur de Femme." And *à propos* he told a story. "M. Sarcey," said a Swedish lady to me, "are you going to have the same sort of book as last time, a book full of social crime and distress? Because, you know, I find it difficult to bring my young *pensionnaires* to hear you. They have formed, from hearing of your novels, extraordinary ideas about France, French society and French life, and to hear such a *causerie* as your last confirms these ideas, which ideas indeed they soon lose when they really get to know the facts of people's existence here. And Monsieur," this lady went on, "will you tell me why your novelists so constantly treat of the exceptional, of the wrongs of life and unfaithfulness in love? I do not wonder at seeing with what astonishment my *pensionnaires* behold France and Paris as they really are: they have not reflected that a society could not exist, if it really were such as they have pictured it; but was their mistake so unreasonable? 'Ma foi, Madame, je ne sais.' Anyway I have not to discuss whether these novelists are right or wrong, wise or foolish: I have first only to bring before you excellent qualities of books, as in M. Bourget's 'The Coeur de Femme,' startling reality in examining at least possible moments of 'dualism' in a woman's heart, and profound reflection after this close analysis; all helping us to know ourselves. As for these subjects of crime indeed I am sure I can say with you how apart from our ordinary existence such things are. I am sure I never had anything to do with such a world"—indeed the *conférencier* is a comfortable easy-looking old gentleman—"and I never knew anyone among my friends who had. As has been said, '*les Français Sont fanfarons de vice*,' and our ordinary bourgeois life, if it does not talk so much about its virtue as do other nations, is certainly no worse than they are, perhaps it is better; and the epithets *upright, honest, faithful, laborious* belong to our hardworking classes as much as to any."

This *fanfarons de vice* partly explains, and Dr. Newman's "Oh! the power of a pre-conceived opinion" explains the rest. As M. Hatevy says, in *L'Abbé Constantin*, "Our poor country is cruelly maligned by certain novelists who give crude and outrageous pictures of its life." And M. Jules Simon, in *Le Temps*, protests in the same way against a journalist, giving accounts of crimes and treating them carelessly and brutally, sitting there and writing about what he knows nothing of, unless that it is the hideous criminality of classes with whom he and his wife and family and friends have no possible point of contact. Then behold the sympathetic understanding and unprejudiced logic of the countrymen of the London throat-cutter and mutilator or of the worst Lynch lawyer. These, they say, is Paris, is France. It is no wonder Parisian journals turn round and say: there is your real beastly Englishman beneath his hypocrisy; there is your real barbarous American beneath his common sense.

How absurd it all is. What is the truth? That M. Hatevy, of course, is right about many novelists, though no doubt he was thinking of the baser sort, who have little else than baseness, and not of the novelists of the standing of M. Bourget, who, whatever faults are found

in him, has a right to claim from his readers attention to Ruskin's "read a book for what is in it, not for what is out of it." Is it not true what Ruskin adds, that the folly of a weak book, however "good," depraves the taste and debases the intelligence; and is it not further true, with Ruskin's divinity, Sir Walter Scott, that it is not the plain spoken book with strength and intelligence which does nearly as much harm as the really lewd book, false in sentiment, false in action and in reflection? Are there none such admitted to English readers to whom Bourget is refused? I wonder if the Swedish young ladies have any, in their northern country of sentiment, with extraordinary statistics of immorality.

But even admit that the best novels would be even much better by not maligning their country, in suggesting that the exceptional is a rule; admit that, and leave them; and even still there is "the power of a preconceived opinion." English, so-called "Anglo-Saxon," opinion has settled certain things about French; and these things are so. The French have settled things too about the English; but that is not our business. But "we know the French are cruel, unfit to govern themselves, fickle, frivolous, immoral. Mr. Browning indeed said: 'the English have a way of calling the French light,' and added: 'the lightness is in the judgment'; but Mr. Browning (even for those who read him) had a bias of anti-patriotism. It is not an opinion of ours; we feel it; it is a sentiment; and '*les opinions se discontent, les sentiments ne se discontent pas*.' The French have a knack of saying things, we allow that; but they can't have any solid qualities."

That is just it, *les sentiments ne se discontent pas*; you can't argue with a man about his feelings, his instinctive enthusiasms for home or country, his affections for some, or about his prejudices. A good many men perhaps are really like C. Lamb: "How could I hate him if I did know him?" But not all, not nearly all: "Knows" him or them—hated individuals or disliked or despised nations—strengthens prejudice. Knowing them? He cannot know them. In a humble way, like M. Bourget, it is worth noticing facts. And so just look back to well-known events in the past. Was not James II.'s throne shaken by the persecution of French Protestants, though the indignant English supported a worse penal code against Catholics, with this difference that, in Ireland any way, it was "an indictment against a nation," while in France all estates of the realm, and the majority, high and low, applauded? Was it not the execution of Charles I. which was in men's minds in France when they executed Louis XVI.? but how indignant above all was the nation that set the example. What people but the French would burn their capital? When? Just a hundred years, gentlemen, after the Lord George Gordon Riots, was it not? But these rioters cannot have been English, if only in this century we could say they were the foreigners in London; or they were Papists, as at the Fire. In truth anything is possible when you get into this world. So to-day English and American tourists who "love Paris," do not they abuse it when they get to their own Puritan bourgeois homes? "Homes, yes; that is the real thing to love. Paris is all very well, but there are no homes!" Is not the fact rather that the French make the entry to their homes too difficult, that in a sense they are not hospitable? There can be no doubt that some of our tourists think the French live as they do; in the morning, drive sight-seeing, eat and drink, sight-see again, drink, idle at cafés, dawdle about, go to theatres, public balls, and so on, and so on till they reach entertainments of the baser sort, supported largely by foreigners. That is what they think of "France when industry, sobriety, measure, good sense, hold remorselessly unremittent sway." Does Mr. Brownell in his "French Traits" exaggerate? To be sure, they say, we hear the workmen work on Sunday as well—how idle as well as wicked!—that girls are brought up more strictly than with us, that there are schools, and that some English ladies are doing a great deal of good. But we have seen the general idleness and frivolity and badness.

What have you seen in your own city of London, for example, when, as the *Morning Post* admits, you see more public licentiousness in one street than in the whole of Paris? But those *tu quoque's* are idle. What have you seen at Paris, or rather what have you not seen? You have "done" Notre Dame and La Madeleine in a Baedeker "day," seen a tricolour flag over a *lycée*, seen Christian Brothers and Sisters of Charity, and perhaps wondered superstition still went on, and, being so hardworked yourselves, moralized for a minute over French idleness.

Have you seen a congregation of thousands of men only at Notre Dame, and hundreds at Lent *conférences* in many other churches? Have you seen Communions made by hundreds of young men, clerical and lay, when going to serve in the army? Have you seen all classes without mutual insolence or imitation attending free evening classes for technical teaching in sciences in agriculture, in handicrafts, classes in music, literature, drawing, and sculpture; have you gone to cheaper seats at theatres and found real sensible criticism among the poor, and intelligent approval of excellence both of acting and sentiment? Have you been to Parisian crowded libraries and reading rooms? Do you know French at all? Did you ever reflect what the French mean by comedy? Would it be a paradox to say it is the most serious dramatic literature in existence, as serious, more serious than most tragedy, and demanding even too much of the didactic, and too much criticism of life?