

which are in the best of order, and black with all the brilliancy that polish can give. Everything on board, even to most of the cooking, is done by steam, and the system of electric lighting is very complete, the saloon being illuminated by six centre chandeliers of artistic design and six single branches from the side walls, all provided with globes, which mellow and tone the light without detracting from its power and efficacy. The "Alberta" and "Athabasca" cost \$300,000 each, including the machinery. The former is registered to carry five hundred and eighty passengers; her cabin accommodation is excellent, and the table good and well served. The only deficiency I noticed was the lack of camp-stools or other available deck accommodation. Of her qualities as a sea boat I am happy to say I had no opportunity of judging, for our trip to Port Arthur was over a waveless sea, under a cloudless sky.

Saturday night found us well out on Lake Huron, and on Sunday morning after breakfast, we were steaming up the Gardow River which connects that lake with Lake Superior. The scenery along its winding course was very pretty and varied in character, the land falling away from Lake Huron in high wooded hills, flooded with rich purples in the distance and deep greens in the foreground, to low cleared land in the neighborhood of the Sault St. Marie, where the river narrows perceptibly, so that the American and the Canadian towns of the Sault lie exactly opposite one another, and comparatively close together. The American town is situated in the State of Michigan, and to its government belong the locks through which all vessels must pass to avoid the unnavigable rapids of the Gardow River, which toss their foam-crowned heads beside us as we steam slowly through the short canal out into Lake Superior.

It is some time after we leave the Sault, before we really lose sight of land and find ourselves launched upon the bosom of this huge inland sea, the largest lake in the world, with the exception of one in Russia. Some idea of the size of Lake Superior may be formed from the fact that from its two extremities the distance is equal to that from London to the centre of Scotland. In width it is capacious enough to take in the whole of Ireland. It is 900 feet deep, the surface being 600 feet above, its bed 300 feet below, the ocean level. Its water is remarkably pure, with the colour of the finest crystal.

We pass a number of steam barges and deeply-laden vessels, and are now fairly in the lake, with its rugged rocky hills on the north shore ascending to a height of a thousand feet. We are prepared for a slight rocking at the least, but are agreeably surprised to find Superior as smooth and smiling as nature could make it. The air, however, became perceptibly chilly as the land receded, and by six o'clock we were all glad to retire to the warmth and comfort of the saloon, behind closed doors and windows. The night passed quietly and uneventfully; not a suspicion even of fog detained us; and on Monday morning at 9 o'clock we were off Thunder Cape, which reared its magnificent mass of rock close above the vessel. I never saw anything more exquisite than the purple lights on its rugged wooded sides as the "Alberta" steamed away from the lofty headland, with its picturesque and invaluable lighthouse, towards Port Arthur, whose houses could be distinctly seen rising in a semicircle on Thunder Bay.

This is the terminus of the C.P.R. boats, which connect here with the through trains from Montreal, east and west. The town is beautifully situated, and seems to be a thriving place. At 11 o'clock we were moored to the wharf, and soon found our way to the Northern Hotel, five minutes' walk from the boat—which should be at some future day a delightful summer resort. It is decidedly ambitious in structure, and its wide verandahs on both stories command a most extensive view over Lake Superior, with its numerous headlands and islands, and Thunder Cape an imposing mass in the distance, whilst a delicious cool breeze sweeps in from over its waters. At 1 o'clock we were provided with a good substantial dinner, and at 3.10 the C.P.R. train from Montreal brought up just in front of the hotel to embark passengers and baggage. We were soon rushing along at full speed, bound for Winnipeg and the far West. A dining-car was attached to the train, which we patronised for tea, and at 9.30 o'clock on Tuesday morning we breakfasted in Winnipeg.

I never performed a more comfortable journey; no time was lost, and no casualty occurred. The only thing I have to complain of is the extremely dreary, barren country which extends between Lake Superior and the prairie region. We traversed long stretches of black, boggy swamp to which the Indian name of "Muskeg" has been given; and elsewhere, as the train moves on, nothing but rock and forest are to be seen in their most rugged forms. The country about Rat Portage, situated at the junction of the Lake of the Woods and the River Winnipeg, is, I believe, extremely pretty and interesting; but we passed it at night, so I had no opportunity of appreciating its beauties; and when I awoke in the morning we were at Selkirk, twenty miles north of the city of Winni-

peg, and had entered on the prairie land of the West. In another half hour the train steamed slowly into the station at Winnipeg, and, a few minutes later, I was comfortably settled at the Leland House for the next two days.

E. S.

OUR PARIS LETTER.

THE weather continues sombre. That unfortunate *question des princes* is still awaiting the decision of the Senate. The papers are filled with accounts of the death and funeral of the King of Bavaria. Such being a résumé of the news of the day, it is certainly permissible to contemplate other subjects for the moment.

Everyone knows what an important factor is the café in the sum of a Frenchman's happiness. To the casual observer, he seems to pass his entire existence there; but, believe me, it is not so. Except for that nonentity, the *poseur-flaneur*, it is nothing but a place of momentary relaxation from the labours of the office and the study. In Paris you have every imaginable and unimaginable variation on the given theme—café. Between "Tortoni" and the *brasserie* of the Latin Quarter lies a whole world of variety and interest. To do justice only to each specimen café, space does not permit, but you can glance with me at least into one or two.

The café in France dates from the end of the seventeenth century, and the Café Procope, of which I would speak, from the year 1688. In 1669 the Ambassador of Turkey served coffee to the courtiers of Louis XII. Though the doctors took great pains to prove that this new beverage was one of the strongest of poisons, it became so popular that its price rose to eighty francs per pound. However, Mme. de Sévigné wrote that people would soon tire of it, as of—Racine.

Sauntering down the Rue de l'Ancienne Comédie, so called from the Comédie Française having once stood in it, I caught sight of a white lamp hanging over the door of one of those tall, narrow houses, so closely packed together; the name "Procope" printed upon it, informed me I had found the object of my search. But alas! the shutters were down. By good fortune, however, the proprietor had come to air the establishment, so he allowed us to enter. Within, all was dust and disorder, for repairs were soon to be made; still, in the dim light we could trace upon the walls the portraits of Voltaire and d'Alembert, J. J. Rousseau, Mirabeau, and Piron—

Pauvre Piron, qui ne fut rien,
Pas même Académicien.

In the darkest corner we found a marble table, differing materially from no other marble table, but in reality more precious than them all, as you shall see.

On a certain night of the last century, the Café Procope was more than usually noisy, for the tragedy of "Sémiramis" had just been acted in the theatre across the way, and the critics were flocking in after the performance to discuss it. In the most ill-lighted nook, seemingly absorbed in his paper, sat a sombre abbé—no other than M. de Voltaire, "with spectacles on nose . . . listening to the debate; profiting by reasonable observations, suffering much to hear very absurd ones and not answer them, which irritated him." Neither was this the first nor last time his august elbows pressed the above-mentioned table.

Destouches, Rousseau, Diderot, and many other literati made of this café a veritable ante-chamber of the Academy. Later, when the discussion of plays was supplanted by that of reforms, liberty, and the guillotine, it was converted into a club, with Hébert for president.

When George Sand began her literary career in the Latin quarter, the streets of which echoed not seldom to her boyish escapades, *Procope*, reconverted into a café, was one of her frequent resorts. Under the Second Empire, Vernorel and Gambetta here planned their social reforms. As we now contemplate its silence and emptiness, we cannot help feeling certain twinges of pain; but a clear, mocking voice, a voice we know, I think, rings in our ears: "Why wish us here; we are now in the free air you breathe. True, we have entered the 'House of many Mansions,' not one hidden far away behind the clouds, but one here, in the heart and brain of man."

L. L.

Paris, June 22nd, 1886.

ERSKINE was reproached with his propensity to punning, and was told that puns were the lowest kind of wit. "True," he said, "and therefore they are the foundation of wit."

GEORGE COLMAN was an admirable punster. Sheridan once said, when George made a successful hit, "I hate a pun; but Colman almost reconciles me to the infliction." He was once asked if he knew Theodore Hook? "Oh, yes," was his reply, "Hook and I (eye) are old associates."