

THE PALACE OF VERSAILLES.

The visitor in Paris, after having seen the principal sights of that beautiful city, has yet a pleasure in store for him by visiting the suburban village of Versailles. He takes the train at *Montparnasse* station and in less than half an hour is at his destination. If the day is fine, and if he has acquired the Parisian habit of smoking cigarettes he will take a seat in the half-open compartment on the top of the car, whence he can have a better view of the country through which he passes.

Versailles is a village of about 50,000 inhabitants. Its chief attraction, indeed its only attraction, is its magnificent palace and garden. Before the time of Louis XIV. the site of this palace, one of the grandest historic monuments of France, was a swampy marsh, whither the Kings of France with their courtiers went occasionally to hunt. To Louis Quatorze is due the distinction of having converted this wilderness into an Eden. When he conceived the design of building Versailles, he confided the execution of his vast idea to the architect Mansard, who told him that it was impossible. Louis replied with true kingly logic; *Raison de plus*—all the more reason. Mansard and the Prince of gardeners, Le Notre, set to work to execute the King's wish. There was no limit set to the money needed. Voltaire called Versailles the abyss of expenses. It is calculated that the work originally cost \$5,000,000, and that at one time 36,000 men and 6,000 horses were employed. To make the gardens was a more difficult undertaking than to build the palace. The country for miles around was a swamp abounding with reptiles, and reeking with vapours of so deadly a character that the men employed in draining it died like flies. They refused for a time to continue the work, though enormous wages were offered, and it was found necessary at last under pain of abandoning it, to press men into the service as for the army in time of war. Twenty thousand men are said to have perished in the execution of this royal freak.

Le Notre begged the King not to come to inspect the work until it had progressed to a certain point, in order that the magnificent sight should make a stronger impression upon him. Louis good-naturedly consented, and kept his promise in spite of many temptations of curiosity and impatience to the contrary. The day came at last when his forbearance was awarded. Le Notre invited him to enter the closed doors. He went in and found