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HENRY CLAPP, JR., Editor.

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A NEW PORTRAIT OF PARIS: PAINTED FROM LIFE.

By HENRY CLAPP, JR., Editor.

CHAPTER VI.

From Amsterdam street to Corneille street is, according to the Surveyors, about a mile and a half, or, according to ordinary pedestrians, half-an-hour's walk; but according to the writer, who seems all "mean calculations," the distance between any two places, and the time requisite to travel it, depends upon who you are, who you are with, where you are from, and what you are about. Time and Space are no more to me than Gog and Magog; Day and Night are as indifferent as Day and Night. The ground I was about to travel, then, could not be measured. I was taking my first daylight view of Paris, and meant to enjoy it at my ease. Baptiste kept by my side to answer questions. His knowledge of English was not very profound, but it was deeper than mine of French. I knew the city language by sight, but had no speaking acquaintance with it. I could say *oui*, but couldn't give the native sequel even to that. Moreover, the first time I drafted the little monoglossable into service—which occurred during our walk—it cost me a shilling; and it was evident that if I got even a tolerable vocabulary on duty at the same rate, it would soon run me. The incident occurred on the "Bridge of the Holy Fathers"—an elegant bridge crossing the Seine from the Place du Carrouvel, near the Tuilleries, to the Quai Voltaire, which, by the way, changes its name in disgust at the approach of the Holy Fathers, and suddenly becomes Quai Malaquais. A well-dressed Frenchman, who it seems was stationed on the bridge, and could distinguish a foreigner half a mile off with the naked eye, approached me politely the moment we had set foot upon his premises, and asked what seemed to me like a peculiarly civil question. Baptiste nudged me to go on; but for fear of being rude in the "polite city of the world," I turned round and replied to the gentleman with a double discharge of my best *vous*. Whereupon the Monsieur took me quietly by the coat, which I had noticed him crying all the while as if it had a snake coiled round it, turned down the collar carefully, as if for fear of getting bitten, rubbed a soft sponge over it two or three times, then nicely adjusted it again, gave me a satisfied look, (as if he had scotched the snake,) inclined himself to the ground, and, foisted with a soft-spoken remark which I had interpreted to mean "Good day, Sir, I am only too happy to have been enabled to render *vous* a service." I accordingly touched my hat in return for so much civility, thanked the Monsieur in bad English—the American's usual substitute for French—and continued my walk. But the fellow (how soon some men sink from gentlemen to fellows!) followed me up, and repeated his remark, which I had evidently misinterpreted, with more and more vivacity at every step. I turned to Baptiste, who had been looking on all the while with great glee, for an explanation, which was given to me thus:—"De Monsieur, *vous* call him, *hab* clean your palette from the grease, and demands—spreading out his two hands like fans, that I might count the fingers—ten sous. Oh to him—withdraw one fan altogether, and shutting up three parts of the other—give him two."

But the coat-cleaner was not to be fazed out of his pay so easily. In fact he protested so violently, and shrugged so desperately, and moreover seemed so bent on following us to the end of the world, (we were already at the end of the Holy Fathers,) that to rid myself of his company, and prevent him from fore-burdening himself into a lamppost, I threw him ten sous, whereat he gave a final shrug, like a tadpole, and hopped out of my way. *Merci*—Never say *adiou* to a Frenchman, unless you know what he is talking about.

It was on the Bridge of the Holy Fathers, also, that I got my first view of a French beggar. Thomas Hood used to say that he never knew what the English beggars did with their cast-off clothes till he saw the beggars of Ireland; from which I infer that the Irish beggar is the antipode of the French one. But to our Paris friend; one thing at a time, or, at any rate, one beggar at a time is as much as we can manage. The Beggar of the Holy Fathers, then, like the Beggar of the Holy Fathers, is an individual. He is licensed by the Government. He is seventy years of age, and is blind. He has a wife and a dog. The wife lingers behind his neck; the dog—judge and them. He has a

chair, which has a cushion. His back is protected from the draft by a board partition attached to the iron railing. He wears cowhide shoes, and yarn stockings. His head is covered with a fur cap, and his legs are enveloped in a blanket. Moreover, he has a cane, an umbrella, and a foot-stool. He doesn't smoke—the blind rarely do—but he takes snuff, and drinks half a bottle of claret per day. His money-box, which looks like a coffee-mill, is securely made, and rests upon his knees. He attracts customers to it, by playing lively airs on a fiddle. His chief supporters are poor folks, women, and children. The first coin of the day is touched to his lips, and consecrated with the sign of the cross. The last one furnishes him with tobacco. His post is near the North end of the bridge. When tired, he gropes his way to the South end, and makes a visit to a professional brother without legs. He has sat on the Holy Fathers ever since they first became a bridge in 1834. He rejoices that the Revolutionists of 1848 abolished the toll, as the State's loss has been his gain. He regrets that he cannot see the marble statues of Industry and Abundance seated as comfortably as himself (save that their iron chairs have no cushions) at the North end of the bridge, and wonders if other people think, as he does sometimes, that Industry and Abundance are not always found so near together. I added my mite to this comfortable beggar's treasury, and having thus cast a crumb upon the waters, made a son in my sketch-book, which I have since extended into the following note:—

The French nature is tender; the English tough. The fact that a man is old and blind moves the sympathies of a Frenchman at once; but to move an Englishman's, he must also be ragged and have sore legs. The various persons who appeal to your compassion in Paris are all tidy. The straggling signers are all neat and well-dressed; so are the mountebanks; so are the "nice small children and one at the breast" draws up in graduated line on the Boulevards; so are the organ-grinders; the man who blows "Home, sweet Home," through a German flute; the flower-girl who thrusts violets into your button-hole; the infant-Gin who sweeps the streets on his own hook; the poor mechanic who has been "out of work, Sir, this six month, and hasn't eaten a meal for a fortnight;" and the old lady who walks into your pocket on two wooden legs, and fiddles you out of stanzas. Rags, and dirt, and bristles, and sores, wouldn't help their case in the least; but in London they are the beggar's stock in trade. A good thriving heel on the leg, or a sprig of hair in the neck, is capital to him; a flourishing fungus is a fortune.

Baptiste began to think we should never get to Corneille street. I had stopped him at every turn, and queried him out of his patience. "I did never see one such Englisher for so ask questions," he exclaimed, shrugging up his shoulders. "But, I am not an Englisher, Baptiste. I am a Yankee."

"But, Monsieur, the Yankee speaks the English. Why for he so spike the Yankee?"

"There is no Yankee language, yet, Baptiste, but we are getting one up fast."

I then explained to the astonished Commissionaire that the inhabitants of the United States spoke English (to say nothing of spiking them) for the same reason that the inhabitants of Algiers spoke French.

"Vell, Sure," he replied patronizingly, "after all I like de English very much; it's a very comfortable tongue."

Our word comfortable, by the way, has smuggled itself into the French vocabulary with a slight change in orthography, but doesn't know what to do with itself there. We passed one shop where "comfortable pastry" was advertised, and another which rejoiced in having a fresh supply of comfortable ink. Madame Bompas, Michodiere street (of whom more anon), has comfortable pumpkin pie.

I lingered on the Bridge of the Holy Fathers at least half an hour, working on Baptiste all the while like a section-pump. The observing schoolboy who described a bridge as "a thing for boats to sail under" must have got his idea from the bridges on the Thames; for take your stand on any one that spans that bountiful river, and the number of steamboats racing up and down its turbid waters—each dacking its jointed funnel as it passes under the arched thoroughfare, and coolly puffing a pipet of smoke into your eyes, is incredible. But a steamboat on the Seine would surprise the people like a sea-serpent; still such things have been seen on the river, for, in fact, Baptiste informed me that he had seen one "with his own eyes" (placing an emphasis on the words as if he generally used the eyes of other people), and that in the summer, persons had been known to travel on it as far as Montreuil—fifty miles up the river—and back. On Sundays, too, in fair weather, it seems there is something not unlike a steamboat which runs between Paris and St. Germain, stopping to take breath at Mantes and Berny; and we have it on the authority of Gallani that "a whole steamboat may be hired for the day for a hundred and fifty francs." The price of a fragment of a steamboat—a paddle, a boiler, or a shaft, for instance, the usually minute author neglects to state. But the fact that a "whole steamboat" can be procured in Paris at any price or for any service, is what none but the most observing tourist would ever have discovered. Were the Seine an English or American river, it would be alive with steamers from Montreuil to Havre. I ventured to say so much to Baptiste, who replied with an air of hollow importance:—"But, *vous*, *vous* shall soon hab one steamboat from Montreuil, and *deu*," he added, giving a big haunch of the Frenchman's hand-borne power of indignation. "and *deu* Paris will be one grand *voiture* more big *deu* London."

And, sure enough, about two years after my conversation, I saw in the *Seine* an enormous steamer, which had just arrived all the way from Montreuil, and lay quays by the river side, after the ten days' labor, like a dying whale. Excepting the *deu* Havre, and the patent ship balloon which was to

"*Put a globe round the world in forty minutes.*"

This wonderful steamer, so "very like a whale," was the greatest curiosity of the season. It was moored in front of the Tuilleries, directly under the droppings of the Imperial palace; and the official newspapers—which all came out with flaming articles, that would have done credit to Baptiste, pompously headed, "Paris a Steamboat"—announced that "His Imperial Majesty had graciously condescended to look at her, exhibiting, in this touching manner, his lively interest in all that concerned the welfare of his people, or the commerce of France." As for his "people," they flocked down to the craft with as much curiosity as so many Low Ohio Islanders swimming out to a steamer from America.

But I see that the reader is getting as impatient as Baptiste, and wishes to be conducted to the Hotel Corneille. Behold us, then, fall in sight; and as the house is to form an important feature of our New Portrait of Paris, it shall have the honor of commencing a new chapter.

CHAPTER VII.

Hotel Corneille.—The author descends his Quai—Indicates a Door—Describes apartment.—Points that the Holy Fathers have traveled France—Shows his practical sense of mind—Describes another apartment—Is relieved by an Englishman—Runs up to the world—Shows a most boring Frenchman on the stairs—Explores the quarters—Arrives at the French Bazaar—Saves his new quarters—Shows another apartment—Shows a Frenchman's pipe with him—and winds up with a discourse on tobacco.

The Hotel Corneille, like most French hotels, is in the form of a very hollow square. It is built of red-colored brick, stuccoed over in a most imitation of white marble. It is about a hundred feet through, and has an indefinite number of stories. Each story has ten or twelve folding windows in front, coming down to the floor. The attic consists of an independent wooden story, looking as if it had fallen from some other planet, and didn't feel quite at home. Crowding the edifice are numerous the-chimneys scattered promiscuously over the roof, and looking like stacks of retired and disconsolate flower-pots. The building is of so particular style, but appears to have been put up before architecture was invented. It has a hospitable, well-to-do, make-yourself-at-home kind of look, however, which is worth all the architecture in the world. The chief entrance is by a massive double door with a small door cut in one wing, resembling one of Newton, or some other philosopher, who had a big hole and a little hole in his head, and for the sake of the other he had the little hole made through a spacious carriage-way to the courtyard. One wing is private entrance leading respectively to two large coffee-rooms which occupy the whole of the front ground floor, and have their chief entrances on the street. In the center of the courtyard is a pretty little fountain enclosed in a circular garden plot.

Corneille street, on the East side of which the hotel is situated, is a narrow thoroughfare, about two hundred feet long, separated by the magnificent Odéon Theatre from a parallel street of the same length, name after Moliere. Near the South end of these streets, and in rear of the theatre, are the elegant palace and gardens of the Luxembourg. The front of the theatre opens on a spacious square, surrounded by shops, *cafés* and cheap restaurants. As I gazed attentively at the frank good-natured face of the hotel; at the commanding theatre in front, with its dark cloister-like piazzas, crowded with one or two old clock-stalls; and the crowded palace with its beautiful garden overlooking the whole scene, no longer a mystery.

I descended the impatient Baptiste at the foot of the hotel, and saw him a moment after returning with a brother-commissionaire, a 1,001, whom he found smoking a pipe on one of the stone gate posts, and to whom he so obligingly gave an embowered account of our long and picturesque portrait of the uncomely Yankee. Acting under the delusion that France as in England, a visitor's status was calculated by the number and violence of his coughs, I thoughter half-dance dance with my cough, Duke-fusion, upon the commissionaire, which, after giving a sharp click, drew him to his knee like a magnet. I looked down at the man who had so politely asked me to come, and saw him as a moment after returning with a brother-commissionaire, a 1,001, whom he found smoking a pipe on one of the stone gate posts, and to whom he so obligingly gave an embowered account of our long and picturesque portrait of the uncomely Yankee. 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