

ENGRAVED ON WOOD BY G. W. CHADWICK.

ON THE QUAI DE CONTI.

## ALONG THE PARIS QUAIS.

BY STODDARD DEWEY.

WITH DRAWINGS BY LOUIS J. RHEAD.

THERE is a walk in Paris to be taken properly only by those initiated into the mysteries of this City of Light. No one walks abroad in Paris except to satisfy the desire of the eyes. On the boulevard it is the life of the present which passes in endless variety. Along the book-stalls of the Seine, in the midst of a setting such as comic opera never knew, the spirits of the past come forth to greet the saunterer at every step.

The books are in big square boxes, clamped firmly to the top of the stone parapet of the embankment. The river wall sinks down for a dozen feet or more to the beach, which is planted with poplars, and paved for the multitudinous uses of the waterside. Within the parapet is the wide curb, on which the walkers by ones and twos, never crowding, never hurrying, make their frequent stops to look and handle, to read a page turned idly, and then to ruminate, while gazing across the river at the architectural profile which distinguishes Paris, and which London has not, says Alphonse Daudet. Along the pavement, cabs and lumbering omnibuses rattle over the blocks of

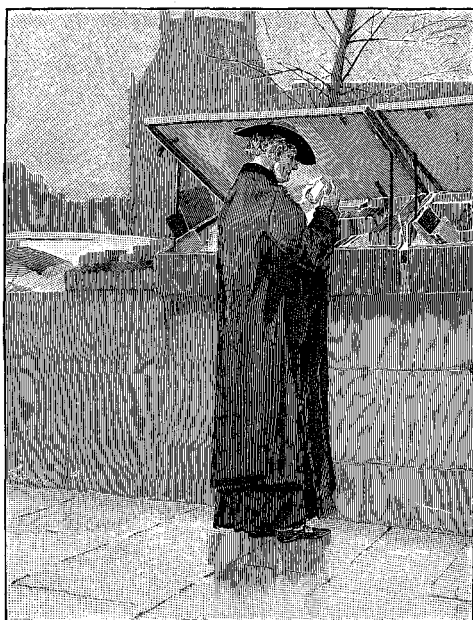
stone on their way to and from the bridges of the Seine. This is no silent or secluded part of the great city. Here the river runs from east to west, through all that is oldest or most famous in the history of Paris. The street along the quais is a thoroughfare from the world of business and fashion, which stretches back from the right bank of the Seine, to the noisy student world and sedate bourgeois quarters of the left side.

It is the left bank of the Seine which, by some process of natural selection, has secured, and held for well on to a century, the monopoly of these old-book stalls. There must be something in the neighborhood, for the houses on the other side of the street from these convenient parapets have old-book and general curiosity shops on their ground floors. Before the embankment walls were built, shops and stalls alike were about the cathedral church of Notre Dame, between the buttresses and along the cloisters and parvis of which all manner of little industries flourished, mixing the human with the divine, after the fashion of past ages.

It was principally there, and at the movable stalls set up daily on the Pont Neuf,

that collectors came on the marvelous finds of which we read, and which mistakenly inspire us with vain expectations in looking through the present prosaic boxes. Then the Revolution had scattered to the winds the treasures of art and letters stored away by monks and nobles. Whatever did not serve the corner grocer for the wrapping of his wares might find its way to the stalls. Charles Nodier, for six sous, bought one of the original volumes from the Aldine Press of Venice, and sold it for four hundred and fifty times as much, which would also be little nowadays. For a single sou was bought the first letter of Amerigo Vespucci to Lorenzo de' Medici, with its wood-engraving of naked savages above, and the fleet arriving in the New World below. The pencil-drawing of Moreau, "La revue du roi," which was lately sold for a little less than thirty thousand francs, was picked up at that time by the Goncourt brothers for ten francs or so.

Generations of gleaners, trained and alert, long since exhausted the store of notable treasures. At most you can now hope to find some good edition from foreign literatures which has dropped unappreciated into this French morgue of books. Odd volumes, of little value by themselves, may appeal to personal tastes, and copies of desirable works, from the sixteenth century down to the latest novels, may be had cheaply. But apart from this convenience for scant purses, which is the same as that of the old-



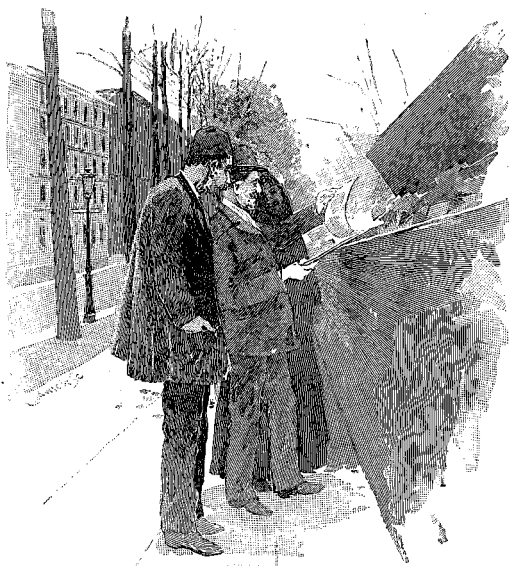
ENGRAVED ON WOOD BY C. W. CHADWICK.

OPPOSITE THE TUILERIES, QUAI VOLTAIRE.

clothes shop, the book-stalls of the Seine are chiefly interesting from the human sympathies which center about them.

The quais change their name where the bridges divide them. The book-stalls, which give to the quais their "physiology," as M. Octave Uzanne, their natural historian, terms it, reach essentially from the Pont Royal, crossing from the Tuileries, to the Pont Saint-Michel, up by the Island and Notre Dame. There are elsewhere insubstantial overflows; but it is along these six quais—d'Orsay, Voltaire, Malaquais, de Conti, des Grands Augustins, and Saint-Michel—that the true *bouquinneur* takes his leisurely promenade of a leisurely afternoon. The *bouquin*, which it is his favorite occupation to thumb over rather than to buy, is any book sold after it has been read—or even without reading, as the uncut volumes, bearing the author's presentation inscription, too often testify. The word must come from our own "book," and may show the early existence of the passion among Englishmen, who chiefly garnered the treasures of these stalls in the past. The seller is the *bouquiniste*.

Few members of the French Academy issue forth from their sessions under the great dome of the Institut de France without a friendly look at the stalls, where so many books of Immortals like themselves—sometimes their own productions—lie wait-



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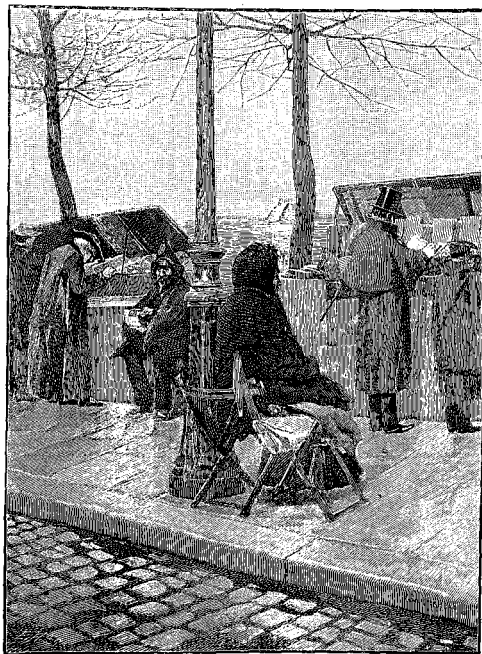
PICTURE-LOVERS ON THE QUAI D'ORSAY.



ing a last recognition from a world which has moved beyond them.

Xavier Marmier was the most devout of these bouquineurs, munching bread and fruit from his luncheon over the books, slyly putting his own works, so evil tongues asserted, into positions of advantage, making purchases according to a haphazard fancy that left no complete collection behind him, and talking through the long afternoon with the bouquinistes. When his last will and testament was opened, it was found that he had provided for a dinner to be offered to the booksellers of the Seine.

The most faithful of all the present members of the French Academy to this promenade of erudite loafing is M. Hanotaux, who for many a long year has passed daily on his way to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Before he was minister or the trusted political friend of Gambetta he was a student of the École des Chartes, which lives from ancient books and documents; and he was already gathering the material of the painfully complete life of Richelieu which he is still engaged in writing, in spite of more modern politics. It must have been then that he acquired the tastes of the true and initiated lover of the Paris quais. From the Quai Malaquais, which faces the Institut de France, down to the last book-stalls, which only within a few years have appeared opposite the government buildings on the



ENGRAVED ON WOOD BY E. HEINEMANN.

ON THE QUAI MALAQUAIS, OPPOSITE THE INSTITUT DE FRANCE.

Quai d'Orsay, he dips into the boxes, drawing out now the tomes of the seventeenth century, in which he is most at home, and now turning over the collections of engravings, for which also he has a weakness.

François Coppée, another Immortal, walked often here, until his health failed him, gazing intermittently at the long line of the Louvre palace and galleries and what is left of the Tuileries across the river, at the slowly moving barges, and the passenger *hirondelles* darting swiftly in the stream, at the long, low bath-houses by the bank, at the fishers dangling their feet sleepily from the docks, and the dog-clippers and washers of horses, who go to make up the life of the riverside.

At many of these stalls you see the bold sign, "Books are bought." The pale student (the adjective is of Washington Irving's time, but it is still true of Paris, where Bohemia has periodical famines) approaches with a few volumes, bought when his purse was heavier, or his ambition of learning higher. The pawnshops, which are government institutions, will not lend on literature.

It is the man who buys, leaving the woman to sell. She passes the time reading from her extensive and varied store of books, or knitting, or chatting with some passer-by, or else, when the wintry wind breathes harshly down the Seine, wrapping herself close and



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THE BOUQUINEUR.

snug against the raw, keen air. When she sees some face alight with interest, she hurries forward, and, in case the price has not been marked explicitly, makes terms according to what she thinks the customer will

This is collected by the city. Their trade is so singular that their origin and destiny alike remain obscure.

One had been at the head of the claque at the Théâtre Français, with a turn as



HALF-TONE PLATE ENGRAVED BY ROBERT VARLEY.

BIBLIOPHILES AND BIBLIOMANES.

pay. Not all the keepers of these stalls have womankind to aid them. Some of them are part proprietors of some shop in the neighborhood; all have some arrangement with the shops for replenishing their stock. Their expenses amount to twenty francs a year for their portion of the quai, and twenty-five or so for their license to sell.

chorister, on holy days, in the churches. Another was a retired customs official. Several had failed as music- or booksellers on their own account. Some, again, work their way up to a shop; others retire to their native country, or go to die in the hospital. The best known of them in recent years is Laporte, the fiery and self-appointed pamphlet-

writer of his trade. He refused to profit by the Marmier dinner, declaring that it was only the posthumous advertisement of a played-out Academician. When Octave Uzanne, whose apartment looks down on the most frequented stalls along the Quai Voltaire, published his work, Laporte wrote at length against the accuracy of the in-

poetry, perhaps, like Longfellow's nuns, "for want of something else." One cold winter's day, in despair at the way the unappreciative world was going, he lighted a fire with his books beside the curb, and warmed himself from their combustion. Uzanne says that Napoleon III just then came by, and stopped the holocaust of old literature with a pension sufficient to supply other means of heat. The present booksellers recount the story, without the moral of a pension, as the freak of one of their number in recent years. It is certain that the third Napoleon passed this way. It was when Baron Haussmann was sweeping old Paris clean that it might harmonize with the new. He had determined to do away with the book-stalls, which seemed to his profane eyes a disfigurement of the noble parapet of the quais. Paul Lacroix, known as the "Bibliophile Jacob," persuaded the emperor to walk with him along the book-stalls of the Seine, and another Philistine reform was happily hindered.

The sequence of human beings along the quais escapes all law. Perhaps they may be divided into three classes, which graduate imperceptibly into one another. There are those who look and linger because they happen to pass and the place invites. There are those who come by design, to vary the cloying round of Paris sight-seeing, to hunt for a book or picture which they fondly pretend to themselves they may find, or even to indulge themselves for once in the passion of the true bouquineur. In the open air, through scenes beautiful and full of human interest, they lounge idly, while the mind is gently stimulated with thoughts arising like some pungent brain-snuff from all this varied literature. Finally, there are the few who pass here daily,—*bibliophiles érudits* and *bibliomanes ignorants*,—to whom the atmosphere of the quais has become a passionately loved narcotic of the soul.

A pastry-cook's boy, with snow-white cap and coat and apron, with hands in pocket, and standing straight to balance the long, flat basket of dainties on his head, looks thoughtfully down into one of the cases. It is not at all necessary, to win his attention, that the contents should show uppermost the illustrated first page of the "great romances of France." He looks for the sake of enjoying the consciousness that he loiters while time is still a-flying. Some of the passers-by look only at the engravings, or sample posters, or postage-stamps, displayed on the upturned lids of the boxes. A man in the tall hat with straight brim af-



ENGRAVED ON WOOD BY ROBERT VARLEY.

THE PASTRY-COOK'S BOY STOPS TO READ.

formation of this art critic,—*ce monsieur de l'éventail*,—looking down with disdain on the booksellers *du haut de son balcon*. His last exploit was to gather in a single small pamphlet the objectionable passages from the works of Zola, a copy of which he was careful to present to each member of the French Academy at the time when the novelist was urging his claims to election into that learned but prudish body.

One of these booksellers has already entered into the realm of legend. He was known as Père Foy, and he had written

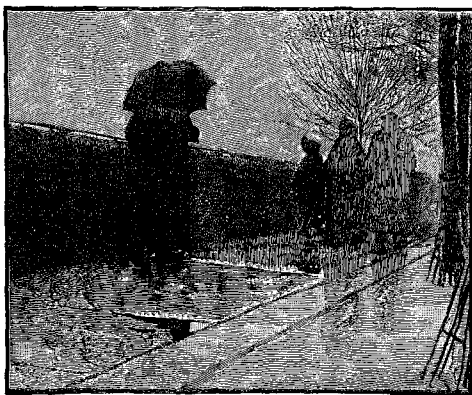


fectured by French architects turns over the loose leaves stacked at the parapet's end—decorative plates, plans, engravings of many a forgotten school, or once costly reproductions from some book of designs. They are five sous apiece for the common, and ten for those thought to be rarer. Priests, with their low, three-cornered hats and square, white-lined neck-pieces, pass frequently. The decorum of their profession leaves them only a scant portion of the usual Parisian amusement; and their education, perhaps, too, their general lack of means, renders this cheap marketing of books a pleasant diversion. The teaching profession is open to their cloth, and I have seen one taking off in triumph a book of descriptive geometry illustrated with many designs. There are men in civil dress, with intellectual faces and worn garments, who may also be the ill-paid *répétiteurs* of students preparing their university examinations. Well-to-do bourgeois stare long and to little purpose. Half-starved Bohemians of literature, irregularly dressed, here forget the morrow. An occasional coachman improves his mind while waiting for a fare. Sometimes a dealer,

spying some stray volume profitable to his shop, drives a hard bargain.

There are few women. A chance one may stop to look over her male attendant's shoulder at an album of pictures; in the familiar French fashion, those who come after look also. Young girls fish forgotten romances from the two-sous box, and young ladies turn over the sheets of music. But the stall-woman, in her snug seat on the curb, troubles not her soul for such as these. There are no *bouquineuses*, as personal knowledge of her sex tells her.

When trees are in leaf, when boughs are bare, the boxes will be opened, if the rain is not actually pouring. In the morning the keeper brings his barrow of new old-books, or carts away the impossible remnant, and strengthens himself by his luncheon for the waiting of the afternoon. In winter also the crowd passes. It is only when the wet weather has set in for hours to come that the *bouquiniste* locks his boxes and disappears down the side streets. Even then the lover of the quai still walks abroad, through gray mist and drizzle, with his shadow cast on the wet, shining pavement as the changing sky lightens.



ENGRAVED ON WOOD BY GEORGE P. BARTLE.

WET WEATHER ALONG THE QUAIS.

## THE COMING DARK.

BY ALBERT BIGELOW PAINE.

DULL, barren lands without, and trailing rain  
That curtains round the world, where winter gloom  
Lies deep upon the fields. A voiceless room,  
And one within who watches life grow dim  
Till day shuts down, and only leaves, for him,  
A night-reflected face against the pane.