

## HOME LIFE IN FRANCE.

IN the good old times when international ill will was even stronger than it is to-day, English travellers and linguists made their countrymen believe that the French had no notion of a home, because the English word cannot be rendered by any single French equivalent, but requires an article, a preposition, and a pronoun, "*le chez soi*." If one were inclined to go into verbal subtleties, it might be argued that "*chez*" means a house (it is nearly related to *casa*), and that "home," of which "hamlet" is a diminutive, means a village. The truth is that words prove nothing, as all depends upon association. The sentimental significance of "*οἶκος*," or "*domus*," or "*casa*," or "*chez nous*" depends upon habits formed in the mind by the slow influence of the dwelling place. For me, I have only literary associations with the Greek, Latin, or Italian words, but the French "*chez nous*" and "*chez moi*" have living associations for me, like the English "home," and I find, having equal experience of both, that there is no perceptible difference. "*On n'est nulle part aussi bien que chez soi*" seems to me a full equivalent for the English "there is no place like home." Indeed, I may go a little further and say that the expressions "*chez moi*," "*chez soi*," "*chez nous*," have an element of cosy selfishness that seems to exclude the outer world even more decidedly than the English "home." A young French married couple employ the "*chez nous*" with a peculiar significance, the "*nous*" being their own two dear selves and nobody else. In both countries these expressions have an extended sense with reference to the nation; as we say in England "the Home Government," "the Home Secretary," and as Londoners say "the Home Counties" for the counties nearest the metropolis, in France "*chez nous*" is constantly used for the nation, and in a more restricted sense for the district or neighbourhood where the speaker lives.

Much of the home feeling depends upon the dwelling place

itself, and upon the situation of it. I will briefly consider this influence of the dwelling place before studying the life of the inhabitants. Imagine a large, rough old house belonging to a French country squire. I do not mean to imply that all country squires have large, rough old houses, but some have still, especially in the remote rural districts. Do not think of it merely as a farm house—it is better than that; but in the case I am thinking of, which is not an uncommon one, the house is rough and without art; still, you see that it is a gentleman's dwelling. The floors, perhaps, are of red brick, except that of the drawing room, which is probably of oak. Those of the bedrooms may be of plain deal. There are few carpets, and those are small ones, showing the nature of the floor all round them. The ceilings are likely to be disfigured by huge beams. In some of the principal rooms there may be wainscot painted grey; in others, cheap wall papers, very seldom renewed. The windows are tall, the small panes separated by thick wood, the shutters cumbersome and inelegant. The furniture is most of it of the eighteenth century, with some more modern things interspersed. The entire habitation is full of light, space, and air; but it is very likely to be ill-arranged, and perhaps you may have to go through one room to get into another. The farm buildings are close by; perhaps the back windows of the *château* look out on the farm yard. The stables are spacious, like the stables of a large farm; so are the barns and other outhouses. The gardens are vast and productive, but not ornamental. The lawn before the house is, in reality, a meadow.

Now, what is likely to be the influence of a habitation of this kind? The squire feels no restriction as to space, and he is not afraid of spoiling anything; he can spread himself and his belongings. His dress, like his house, is simple, strong, and unpretending. He will come, perhaps, with his nailed boots and his gaiters, into the dining room, and smoke his wooden pipe everywhere except in the saloon. As for margin, there is no end of margin—everything has margin; there is room to go round everything, room to put everything, room for exercise and sport. Besides half a dozen farms, there may be a thousand acres of woodland to wander over with a gun. It is a healthy existence

with its space and its liberty; and there may be culture too. Montaigne lived this country life, which did not prevent him from having a book room in one of his towers; and in our times there is the daily postman with his news of the outer world.

Now, for a contrast, think of life in a little Parisian apartment. Suppose it is in one of the very pretty and elegant new houses. The courtyard is as clean and tidy as possible; for no tenant is allowed to leave anything there, not even a deal board. The entrance is quite sumptuous with its panels of cut stone, its pilasters, its sumptuous oak doors with heavy panels and carvings and great nickel-plated handles set in marble. The staircase—I am supposing a good new house—is of oak, and is hung with some stuff to imitate tapestry. All this seems spacious enough, but it is only a passage. The apartment is a marvel for economy of space and for high finish in everything: the floors are of waxed oak, the latest inventions are applied to windows and fireplaces, the furniture is elegant, to suit the rooms, and the people are dressed like the prints of the fashions. Is it not easy to see that the two residences I have sketched must affect habits and character quite differently? The French are an impressionable people, and they receive, in course of time, an influence from their habitations which becomes permanent. It counts for a great deal in the peculiarity of the Parisian type. Not that in the provinces all people are even relatively so spaciouly lodged as my squire. On the contrary, in the country towns the lodgings are often very narrow, and ill ventilated, and unwholesome; still, on the whole, provincial life has space and a certain roughness, whilst Parisian life is cramped by want of room and has gone into the direction of elegance as a sort of compensation. Both are perfectly French, for it is in the French nature to be very rustic or very urban. You have the two extremes quite faithfully reflected in French painting.

The present tendency is to carry Parisian finish into the remotest provinces. This is chiefly the work of the architects, who are now very numerous in France and also very accomplished. They build on a smaller scale than their predecessors, but with more intelligent arrangements for convenience and more perfect finish. There is very little elegance in the old rural houses and

not much luxury of any kind—except in the great *châteaux*—but houses built within the last fifteen or twenty years show a marked improvement. The internal arrangements are now as convenient as they formerly were awkward and uncouth. I went through one of these modern country houses lately and found every imaginable convenience, a dressing room for every bedroom and a certain English closet (in a round tower) on each floor. Polished floors of marble or oak gave no encouragement to hob-nailed shooting boots, and the dining room was so genteel that it seemed a necessity to dress for dinner. Can we suppose that children bred in this elegance could be the same as those brought up in the rough, spacious *châteaux* of former times? Here, instead of guns and boars' heads, the walls are adorned with cabinet pictures. And the modern elegance goes into every detail. The carriages are delicate and light, and if the owner has a sailing boat on the river it is brilliantly varnished. Parisian perfection requires a corresponding perfection in all things, and I am of Emerson's opinion that in the country a certain roughness has its advantages. Rural life is better without the superfine.

The effect of wealth on the home life of all countries is, of course, enormous; but in France it is, perhaps, even more marked than elsewhere. Here are two main points: the poor, or even the middling Frenchman, is very narrowly lodged and very stationary, seldom leaving his own little town or village; the very wealthy Frenchman has plenty of room everywhere, and he is migratory. Here is an example known to me: Baron D. has a large town house in Paris—an old family mansion, worth in itself three millions of francs—and besides that he has half a dozen or more *châteaux* on his country estates. He goes from one to the other when it is not the Parisian season; he pays visits in *châteaux* belonging to his friends; and he stays with his family the obligatory weeks at the seaside; all this without leaving France. He goes abroad also, but less than an English nobleman. In the existence of this family the principal luxury is change of place; for although they have a full staff of servants, they live quietly and reasonably. Amongst so many houses have they a home? They may have preferences for one

residence amongst many, and even for part of a residence. In these cases the preference is usually for rather humble and plainly furnished rooms, never for state rooms.

The smaller French aristocracy, the inferior gentry, still keep up the old custom of wintering in some provincial capital, in the chief town of a department or even in the most important little town in a district; but those of the great nobility who are still wealthy have almost entirely abandoned this custom. They all winter in Paris, unless they go to the south for greater warmth. There is, for example, the distinguished old family of de Vogüé. The chief of that house has a noble old *château* at Commarin, where the great round feudal towers are connected together by many habitable rooms, the whole still surrounded by a large moat and in a richly-wooded park. He comes and stays at this *château* still for some weeks every year, and he also possesses a very fine old mansion at Dijon. I myself drove from one to the other in 1889, through some of the finest scenery in France; and I thought how happily situated the family was to have its country house within a day's drive of its town house, and both so interesting. The town house is a delightful old residence containing rich examples of domestic architecture from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century. There is a noble tapestried guard room that might serve as a banqueting hall. The courtyard is adorned with a magnificent marble arcade rich in sculpture, and in the interior are several fine rooms, including a library with hundreds of noble folios still in well-preserved old bindings. One of these rooms, the saloon, seemed strangely bare, and my guide said: "The wainscot here was extremely beautiful, so M. de Vogüé had it removed to Paris, where he has built a new mansion. The family never come here now; this house is abandoned." Dijon no longer offers a sufficient variety of interest for a *grand seigneur* of the present day. There is no king to call him to Paris, but there is still society.

I have mentioned aristocratic living, *la vie de château*, because it still exists amongst the wealthier families of the *noblesse* and is imitated with more of modern luxury by the rich financiers and leaders of industry. M. Eiffel paid two millions of francs lately for a town residence, and when life is established on that scale

everything is usually in proportion. I was in Paris last year when M. Eiffel made his purchase, and was told that a price of that kind was not extraordinary for a private mansion of some importance. Still, if we look upon France as a whole, it is not the life of the rich that represents the nation now so much as that of the middle class, and that of the very numerous rural gentry of limited means. Middle-class life is worth study, because all the inferior classes make it their object and ideal, and their prudent and successful members are continually rising to swell its numbers. The poorer gentry are also continually dropping down into the middle class, so that it becomes more and more numerous. And in the course of one or two generations it is very easy to foresee that the farmers will be middle-class men instead of French peasants, as they used to be, so that the force and importance of the *bourgeoisie* will be enormous. In fact, it is this class which has succeeded in founding the Republic.

An Englishman who begins to know France is struck at first by the small number of servants in the middle classes. The incomes are usually limited, and the French *bourgeois* has long since come to the conclusion that a small house, few servants, and few children are the practical solution of the question how to save money out of a small income. I have often been struck with the patience of the French middle class in putting up with incredibly inconvenient residences—an undesirable inheritance from preceding ages. The private dwellings of shopkeepers are often ill arranged, badly lighted, and insufficiently ventilated. Some are so dark, so confined and malodorous, that one hardly knows how children can be brought up in them. No doubt in many cases the mortality is diminished by personal cleanliness; still it is frightfully high in some of the picturesque old towns, exceeding fifty in the thousand in such places as Morlaix and Douarnenez. This fact is almost entirely due to the bad construction of old houses, to insufficiency of space and air, and to defective drainage. Many French physicians and journalists are now fully alive to these evils and are using their influence to diminish them. Even Marseilles is going to have an efficient system of drainage; but that, although decided upon, is still in the future. Awkwardness in the internal arrangements of houses

and the absence of provision for natural necessities were so common in old France that any good modern house is more habitable than the Versailles of Louis XIV. And the number of good modern separate houses is increasing with great rapidity, especially in the outskirts of the towns. There has also been much improvement during the last thirty years in the condition of the country houses belonging to the smaller gentry. They are kept with a stricter neatness and are more habitable.

The reader who knows France only by hotels and restaurants can hardly judge of the way of life in private houses. It varies much with individual tastes, but, speaking generally, it may be said that in private houses the living is at once simpler and better than in the hotels. There are fewer dishes and they are cooked more carefully. The middle classes live better than the poorer gentry for the following reason: a wealthy nobleman can afford to keep a *chef*—an experienced male cook with subordinates—but a poor squire has to trust to female cooks, and any woman will call herself a *cuisinière*. In the middle classes the wife always understands cookery, and in the poorer middle class she does all of it that is delicate and difficult with her own hands, bringing to the task an amount of culture, care, and cleanliness—besides economy—that no ordinary servant will ever give. The consequence is that the middle-class man has generally a better and more regular table than those immediately above him in the social scale. I have said that, as a rule, living in the middle classes is simpler than in the hotels, as well as better; but if the master is a *gourmet* and has not much else to interest him, the living may be elaborate enough.

Children being nearly always at table in France, and conversation often being animated amongst their elders, they hear a great deal that was never intended for them, and they get a sort of education in talkativeness by mere example. They may make little use of this in the presence of strangers during boyhood or girlhood, but it bursts out when they get to a talking age.

It is recognized by custom that when a family is in private every one has a right to talk or not as he pleases, and silence being permitted, the taciturn will take advantage of it; still, nothing is more national in French life than talkativeness at



meal times, even when the family alone is present. This does at least keep up the national power of talking, though the mill wheels of conversation have frequently very little grain to grind. Talk of this kind has some use as a stimulating exercise of the lighter faculties, which in other countries are often left unexercised. The merits of it are its facility of expression and its ample choice of language; the defects of it, in France, may be included under the one head of insufficient or inaccurate information. Still, in the middle class you will find the most accurate knowledge of special subjects. All the university professors, most of the men of letters, the artists, the scientific men, belong to the middle class so far as they can be said to belong to any definite class at all, and though in home life they are surrounded by women and children who know little, they will often throw a strong light upon a subject for a moment.

French politeness to women and French kindness to children have placed men at a disadvantage in home life since the old paternal authority has died away. There is a clatter of small talk, and unless the father can take a share in it, he may sometimes feel solitary at his own table. After a day of business, he may come home tired and may not feel equal to the innocent but rather light babble of a French family, and then the talk will go on without him. Or he may make an effort to be amusing and not be quite successful, from the lack of youthful elasticity; or he may want to talk about something that interests him, but that is beyond the family audience. In former times the father had the paternal dignity and could take a becoming refuge in that; in the present day he is but one of the members of a little democratic home parliament that receives or rejects his opinions without deference. Again, in French families, particularly of the middle classes, the preponderance of the mother is very strongly marked. It is easily explicable by very evident causes. She rules the house in detail, she gives orders to children and servants, so that the father appears infrequently as an acting authority. She wins power by her activity and attention to detail, and by her presence. The father is away during the daytime and is considered to have but two duties in life, regularity in monthly payments for household expenses and regularity at meal times.



The monthly payments are not seen by the children, still less the labour and intelligence that go to the earning of them, but they feel the maternal power. The servants are usually women, and a man cannot command women; he may ask for services, gently—he does not give orders as he would to a man servant.

Rather overpowered at home by the feminine and infantine, or puerile, majority, the Frenchman often, though not always, seeks refuge in the *café*. There he meets with men of his own age, often of another class, but he does not look very closely into that, and he spends his evening sipping beer and smoking. Such excitement as there is in the delights of a *café* in a small country town is surely of a very mild kind, yet it may be better mental entertainment than any enjoyed by the wife who sits alone and tries to read or knit when the children have gone to bed. There are husbands, perfectly irreproachable as to all serious duties and obligations, who leave their wives every evening just after dinner, to stay at the *café* till eleven. They see nothing wrong in it; they do not go for the drink and are never tipsy; they go for a little intercourse with mature minds of the male sex. They are merely keeping up a bachelor habit; still, it is a kind of semi-separation. Taking French life as it is, with the predominance in home life of the feminine and the immature, and the rarity—in comparison with England—of hospitality in the house, the *café* seems to be a necessary institution. The explanation of it is not the need of drink, which might be had at home, but the want of masculine society.

The smallness of French dwellings is probably answerable for the tendency to put infants out to nurse and to send boys to boarding school. In a small apartment boys are noisy, troublesome, and in the way; and owing to French indulgence of children, they are likely to become unruly. Now, in France the facilities for getting rid of boys are very great and very tempting. The state has *lycées* and colleges all over France, where board and education are given below cost price, and if a father is a Republican, or simply a Liberal, he will send his son to one of these. I have seen an absurd statement in an English periodical that only very poor people send their boys to the *lycées*. M. Eiffel, who bought a town residence for two millions of francs,

sends his son to the *Lycée Janson*, and there are many other similar cases. If a father is clerical in his tendencies, he has the ecclesiastical schools. The Church is even more hospitable than the state; she gives food, lodging, and education for less than the cost of the food alone. Again, the Church relieves parents even more effectually than the state, as she keeps the boys longer and more vigorously away from home. She has her own reasons for this: she desires to substitute her own authority for parental authority and her own influence for the contagion of "the world"—that is, of the few occasional lay visitors who may spend an hour or two in the father's house. With all these facilities, there is every temptation to insure quietness in the narrow home by the simple process of banishing the boys. The class in which home education is most frequent is the wealthier part of the nobility. Being anxious to avoid the association of their boys with the sons of their social inferiors, they often have them educated at home by private tutors, always either priests or strictly Catholic laymen. This, no doubt, is the best way of preserving some degree of parental influence, and it is healthy, physically, for the boys, who escape from the confinement of the schools and live, instead, in various country houses. Unfortunately, this home education in a narrow and exclusive class, full of reactionary prejudices, has an evil effect in fostering social and political illusions and in preparing men who might have been suitable for the eighteenth century, but who will be out of place in the twentieth.

A home education in the wealthy French nobility is, however, much better in one respect than such an education could ever be in the middle class, for this reason: the nobility see a good deal of society, though it is almost exclusively amongst themselves and quite exclusively amongst people of their own way of thinking. Home-bred boys in the *noblesse* are, therefore, not so much shut up as they would be in middle-class existence. The rich nobility, by change of residence and by travel, also see much more of the world and get a sort of education through their eyes.

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## THE AMERICAN COPYRIGHT ACT.

So much has been already written on this law that I propose in this article to confine myself chiefly to an examination of its general policy, and to draw attention to the effect of the act in European countries.

A very definite intention pervades all previous legislation, and the object of its enactment is clearly set forth. In the United States it is "to promote the progress of literature and art by securing for limited times to authors and artists, the exclusive right to their respective writings and art productions." In Great Britain it is "to afford greater encouragement to the production of literary works of lasting benefit to the world." In other countries of Europe the intention, though not defined, is obviously the same, and nowhere do we find the subject of book manufacture mixed up with copyright-property protection except in Holland.

That this policy should be departed from by the United States will not surprise those who have watched commercial legislation in that country during the last twenty years. Under the specious guise of "protection to native industry," all sorts of monopolies have been promoted there. But though France, Germany, and Spain have based their commercial policy on similar principles, yet one and all of them have recognized that the civilizing and humanizing influence of literature and art is far too precious to be tampered with by manufacturing restrictions. The United States, however, could not resist the temptation to try to move the literary centre from the Eastern hemisphere. That this has been the object of the manufacturing clauses in the new law appears from the evidence of Mr. Kennedy before the House Judiciary Committee at Washington on behalf of the International Typographical Union. He says: "Its effects will be to greatly stimulate printing in the United States," and, indorsing the opinion of the London "Times," adds: