

is still another test. What character in any novel written since the "mid-Victorian" days has become a household word? Who is the Becky Sharp, or the Sam Weller, or the Pecksniff, or the Colonel Newcome, of the last three decades? Whatever the reason, nobody has struck the chord that vibrates in men's hearts and minds as did the great ones of those days. And perhaps one reason for the change lies in a characteristic of our times that certainly is dominant in other fields and that may have its reflection in literature. Different as possible in all other respects, the great masters of English fiction in the flowering-time of the Victorian age had in common a broad and deep humanity. Their thoughts were not centred on particular problems, either of psychological analysis or of moral or social reform. Particular abuses were, indeed, made the subject-matter of many of Dickens's novels, and Thackeray has been charged with insularity by critics who have not had the faculty to see that the microcosm of English society was for him but a representation of all human nature; but, whatever the medium they employed, the thing with which they really worked was the fundamental passions and longings and weaknesses and affections of mankind.

#### WHAT TO EAT.

It is exasperating to the normally healthy man to be informed by some self-constituted authority what diet he must adopt. Yet such authorities and such diets confront one at every turn. This form of gastronomic introspection is peculiarly American; while the Frenchman eats his half-chicken with much the same sauce as did Montaigne and the Englishman untiringly orders beef and puddings, the American must experiment with predigested wheat or raw celery and nuts. Then the novice gives up everything, in order to devote himself to spreading the new-found gospel of longevity.

The arguments advanced by enthusiasts in favor of their diets are often interesting, even when absurd. Predigestion is advocated on a pre-supposition, to wit, that the human stomach is no longer capable of performing its proper function—so degenerates the body where the spirit grows. Propagandists of raw food rest their case on man's descent: our simian ancestors could pro-

cure only raw foods, hence it must be the best form of nourishment for the human anthropoid. But why draw the line short of snakes and lizards, the true delicacies of the simian age? All these food conceits spring from two causes: first, a disordered digestion, without which no one ever experiments with foods—on himself; secondly, a little knowledge, worse than ignorance, of human physiology and anthropology.

In the homo-simian period evolving man lived on raw vegetables; as his increasing intelligence made the capture of animals less difficult, his diet became more and more carnivorous, and he gradually discarded acrid roots and seeds from his bill of fare. It was not, however, until he learned the art of hunting and fishing and setting traps that meat assumed more importance than vegetables. During the ages that mark the transformation in human nourishment, the digestive functions also underwent adaptive changes. With the decrease in the use of raw vegetable matter, for example, the power to digest uncooked starch was lost, because it was no longer essential; and doubtless many other functions were modified to meet food environment.

The use of fire marked the final period in the evolution of the human dietary. Cooking not only rendered meats savory, but unlocked vast supplies of heretofore unavailable materials. Roots and seeds too hard even for strong teeth were rendered soft and palatable; and so, in time, it dawned upon the lord of creation that it was less laborious to make his women cultivate the soil and grow these edible roots than it was to hunt and trap. After the discovery of cookery, vegetables slowly superseded meat again, just as previous to that time the painful ascent through the anthropoid and homo-simian period is notable for a gradually increasing animal diet, which reached its height in the hunting stage when man was chiefly carnivorous.

It appears, then, that we cannot arrive at a rational conception of perfect aliments by reasoning from what our forebears ate. Through the ages there has been a wonderful accommodation by man to his food supply, and this is perhaps not the smallest factor in his successful competition with other animals. This adaptability of the human digestion is not sufficiently taken into ac-

count. A common error is to regard the human diet as definite with an ideal suitable for every one, any deviation from which is either morbid or sinful. On the contrary, it is an individual affair; as there are various types of intellect, so there are different types of digestive function. One may thrive on uncooked food. Another feels himself best when he eats no meat. If the chosen food suits the demands of his individual being, it is for him the ideal. And notwithstanding a stupendous amount of scientific research on the subject, we have no completely satisfactory way of estimating what an individual's nutritive demands really are.

There is no food that is particularly adapted to repair worn-out brain cells or increase brawn. Sausage and black bread have furnished the nutriment for thinkers as stalwart as any that ever broke their fast on cereals and fruit. This suffices to disprove Savarin's "*Dis-moi ce que tu manges, je te dis ce que tu es.*" There are, aside from salts and water, only three nutrient elements—proteins, fats, and carbohydrates—and these in different proportions occur in all foodstuffs, whether they be of animal or vegetable origin. So far as science knows to-day, there is not a special food for the man who exercises his wits and another for him who uses his muscles; at most it is a question of quantity—the brain-worker needs less. The whole sum and substance of diet for the healthy man is "know-thyself" and be temperate. Every man over thirty not a fool understands what foods agree with him; this is individual and obeys no law but idiosyncrasy. The common sin is to refuse to cease eating when one has had enough.

The worst thing about fads when they encroach upon the festive board is that they kill all festivity and change what should be a pleasant occasion into something of almost funereal solemnity. The habit of introspection so engendered is at the base of many a deranged digestion. The normal man does not ponder the advisability of partaking of some toothsome dish unless it recalls unpleasant memories of a past experience. And who has not suffered at table, tormented with hunger and eager for the tardy roast which is delayed that his neighbor may have leisure to masticate and thoroughly insalivate his soup? Beneath our napkin our thumbs deride while

we endeavor to see the funny side of life, and we say with wise Montaigne, "I hate those remedies that importune more than sickness."

#### NEW FRENCH FICTION.

PARIS, January 6.

"La Croisée des chemins" (Plon), the new novel by Henry Bordeaux (who is not yet forty), sets him still further on in the straight way to the Academy. It is well written and composed; the story is dignified and attractive, and the descriptions, while frequent and pleasant, take no undue place; and the moral of the book transpires from the events without any preaching pages. It is the exact contrary of the French novel in the foreign sense. Aside from its literary *tenue*, it is as Christian as are the stories of René Bazin; it is redolent of the old French worship of the family as the essential unit of society, far more truly than the works of converted Paul Bourget; and in the one fatherland of France, it excites to the love of the home province most, as does Maurice Barrès.

All this is to note the illuminating growth of yet another conservative power in the newer French literature. It is a phenomenon worth noting, this revival in a people's head and heart of all that Revolution and Romanticism, Naturalism, and the uprootings of Paris centralization, of fashion and politics and irreligion, were supposed to have quenched finally in French life. Naturally, critics complain that Henry Bordeaux is a Puritan in his reverences and a bourgeois in his attitude toward respectable people with homestead and property. Even critics admire the human movement in his stories and their thrill of feeling, which is most often a pathos for men rather than a stirring of women to tears.

Fifteen years ago, his hero, Pascal Rouvray, was a rapidly rising young doctor of the Latin Quarter, where the unending advantages of Paris (faculty and schools and hospitals and—publicity) work together for medical celebrity. The death of his father, a Lyons doctor, discloses to the young man one of those family secrets that touch to the quick that traditional French life in which all the members of a family stand together in defending the honor of each. To Englishmen and Americans who think Frenchmen have no homes (while Frenchmen think we have no families) this tragic obligation of the grandfather's debts, which the father's labor of a lifetime had not sufficed to clear away, comes strangely to break the young man's career and his love. For the ambitious modern girl, Laurence Avenière, who willingly betrothed herself to a coming man of Paris, will never bury herself with him in the provincial city. Yet there alone he can do his duty to

his family name; to his mother who, French-fashion, has offered the sacrifice of her *dot*—her own and only fortune—for the payment of the debts of the family into which she married; and to younger children who would be left straitened and without their own opportunity in life, if he should selfishly pursue his Paris career. He suffers, but he gives up science and love for family and takes up his father's practice in Lyons.

Thirteen years pass and the work which duty imposed is done. Pascal is free to return to Paris and take the place in the central Faculty which his talent and attainments warrant. He finds Laurence married to an *arriviste*, who, from the start, broke with family and provincial ties to enter politics, and has become a Minister of the Republic. With all her ambitions filled, she has no peace until she has brought to her feet again, from his own wife and children, her old lover. She has never forgiven him for preferring the honor of his family to worldly honor with her. She has no longer a heart. The scene is striking where she derides him and tastes her revenge. Contrite from this final, belated lesson (which should have been needless), Pascal returns homeward, never more to waver in that family faith to which he has sacrificed so much and which is so high above all fleeting passion. Note that in each of the three really great novels which Henry Bordeaux has given to the world, a woman who has been unwilling to sacrifice to duty is sacrificed in the end to family, which holds or conquers the man. This is another upset to English prejudices of French life.

"Aimer quand même" (Plon) is a harmless love story—also of a doctor, who *quand même* is faithful and clears his betrothed of a charge of murder! It is from the lady who signs herself Jean de la Brète, a signature which scarcely enters into literature, but which secures a heavy sale for her books. They are well and pleasantly written and reflect faithfully the literary ideals of middle-class people like the greater number of us; and they can be read in families. "Les Naufrages du 'Jonathan'" (Hetzl—two volumes), is a posthumous *voyage extraordinaire* by Jules Verne. During his whole lifetime, this most popular of authors worked in virtue of a contract made with his publisher at the beginning of his career, binding him to so many volumes a year. He was in advance of his work, which explains this continued output after death.

"La Mère Patrie" (Lemerre), by Maurice Montégut, is a more than usually interesting sample of this author's work, which is very well known in France. Here he crosses not only the frontiers, but the Atlantic Ocean. In Canada, members of the hostile races, French and German, meet and make

"un tumulte de peuples." Such books, in which the story is more important than the literature, are beginning to find an English-reading public. As the publisher sagely observes, "they reject the sub-romantic which makes our contemporary literature so anæmic." "Totia" (Messagerie des Journaux), by Jean Box, is a "colonial romance" of unusual background—a French colonizer's romantic adventures along the Black River far back in Tonkin.

"L'Amie lointaine" (Plon), by Raymond Casal, is another novel likely to upset the average English idea of French high life. The hero is as great a sportsman as he is distinguished in all the walks of life. On Scotch moors, in Albania and the Pamir, he shows his prowess—and this is not improbable, for all mighty hunters know such deeds of Empress Eugénie's nephew in more varied and distant regions. The book is full of the charm of healthy nerve and muscle, in spite of its dazzling people of quality.

"Rôman pour ma fiancée" (Calmann-Lévy), by Henri de Noussanne, is a thrilling Nationalist plea that Frenchmen should marry French and not foreign women, but with cosmopolitan chapter-headings from Sterne and Theocritus, Goethe and Montaigne. English Josy does not marry the handsome French officer, when she finds she would be but an apple of discord in the closed circle of his military family. There is emotion, and, strange for such a book, real and plentiful humor scattered through the pages.

With Camille Lemonnier's "La Maison qui dort" (Fasquelle), we have Belgian robustness and much idyllic grace, careless of worldly distinction. Of the other two stories of the volume—"Au beau pays de Flandre" and "Un Mari"—the last leaves a certain Flemish Rabelaisian taste in the mouth, rather than that odor of the human beast which has infected, off and on, this writer's work, since, at the age of fifty, he was seduced by Zola's worst methods. He is now past seventy; and his literary production of forty years is, in many ways, the strongest in Belgian fiction, and very high in French.

"Afrancesada" (Fasquelle), by Tan-crède Martel, a younger writer of historical romances, leads off like the best stories with which G. P. R. James held breathless some of us when we too were young. Only the Frenchman's story is swifter, more explosive, among Napoleon's dragoons in Spain; never was a heroine of war more hawk-like in danger, more dove-like in fast faith and sheer self-sacrifice of love; and all the heroes are much more than six feet tall. The historical part of the book has been worked enough to allow the author to dedicate it to Frédéric Masson, who knows all about Napoleon and his men.