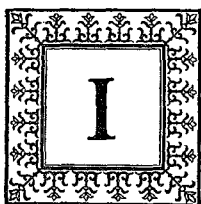


Memories of Some Parisians

BY H. C. CHATFIELD-TAYLOR



IN the days of my childhood the kaleidoscope was a popular toy; and during many an hour I marvelled at the figures of colored glass formed in a long black tube by the mere turning of a handle. In a way, memory is a kaleidoscope; only its reflections are not symmetrical like those of the optical instrument; nor are they changeable at will. Moreover, in looking through darkened years upon the faces of Parisians I knew in the days of long ago, I find that of some a bare outline of the face, or only the suggestion of a trait, remains, while of others there are full-length portraits in memory's halls, even though the name of the subject may have been obliterated by the ravages of time. In fact, while the recollection of many with whom I was once on terms of intimacy has become dimmed, that of others whom I merely looked upon with admiration or curiosity at the age when impressions are deepest, remains vivid to this day.

Thus, I remember the tawny face of Marshal Mac-Mahon, with its high cheekbones, grizzled mustache, and tuft of beard beneath the lower lip. Attired in baggy trousers and an epauletted tunic, I see him leaving the Elysée Palace in a stately carriage surrounded by troopers whose breast-plates glisten in the sun, while I, a boy of ten, stand on the sidewalk watching him go forth to grace some occasion, the purport of which I have forgotten.

Both Gambetta and Victor Hugo I saw, as well; but there is a confusion in regard to their bearded faces which renders them indistinct the one from the other. Thiers and Ferdinand de Lesseps, too, are Frenchmen I gazed upon in those days of boyhood; but I was of an age when men of action appealed to me far more than men of parts; so, while the recollection of these great men of France

is hazy, that of a *beau sabreur* whom I watched with awe and admiration as he took his daily constitutional aboard an ocean liner, is as vivid as if I had seen him yesterday. General de Charette, who led the Papal Zouaves in vain, but valiantly, to battle on the Loire, is the soldier I have in mind, and I can see him planking the deck hour by hour, slim of limb as a greyhound, straight as an Iroquois brave.

General de Galliffet I remember, too, though I met him long after he had ridden to glory upon the field of Sedan; for, while the plain about him was strewn with the corpses of his azure-coated Chasseurs d'Afrique, he had struggled from it in a dying state, to be saved for a ripe old age by the skill of a surgeon, who placed a silver plate within him where the wall of his stomach had been. Like General de Charette, this hero of Sedan remains in memory as my ideal of the aristocrat to whom fighting for France is a dutiful tradition.

"Le brave Général Boulanger," made the hero of an hour by a march sung by Polus, a music hall idol of the eighties, was a soldier of another ilk, whom I once saw in the Champs Elysées acknowledging the plaudits of the crowd, but lacking in the courage to turn his popularity to political account. He had been in America to attend the centenary of the surrender of Yorktown, and had sat at a club in my native city drinking with a few young sparks until the early hours of morning; so, even upon a black charger, he appeared far from a hero in my eyes, an opinion justified by subsequent events.

Opéra bouffe soldiers, however, such as Boulanger, are not alone in their failure to display courage and tact at crucial moments; in fact, if those who are intrusted with the management of international relations were endowed more frequently with those faculties I would not have been tempted, as happened not long ago, to declare, during the course of

an argument concerning the European outlook, that our ambassadors ought to be chosen from among the criminal lawyers of the land. Yet no sooner had this cynicism passed my lips than I was both shamed and heartened by the recollection of two French diplomats I had known in years gone by.

One of these Frenchmen was Monsieur Jules Cambon, Ambassador of his country in our own land for a time and, during a fateful period, its representative in Berlin. Only a few weeks before he was handed his passports by a brutal enemy and, at the same time, denied the courtesy, customary in such circumstances, of a safe conduct to the French frontier, my wife and I happened to pass through the German capital on our way to take ship at Hamburg. Years had gone by since we had known Monsieur Cambon in Washington; yet the thought of annoying one in his arduous and exalted position by attempting to recall to mind Americans, whom he had quite likely forgotten altogether, did not occur to either of us. He happened, however, to hear a few days after our departure from Berlin of our visit, and even in those fatal days found time to write reproaching us for having passed through that city without making "an old friend," as he expressed it, aware of our presence. Small wonder that he appears to me as the embodiment of French courtesy.

The other diplomat I had in mind is Monsieur Jusserand, "Ambassador of the Republic of Letters," as he was aptly called when representing his land in Washington, and who, by the tact and understanding shown during trying years, endeared himself to American hearts. In the earlier weeks of the war, when it became apparent that the enemies of his land were conducting an unscrupulous propaganda in our midst, I had the temerity to write Monsieur Jusserand suggesting the name of an American correspondent who had recently been expelled from Berlin as that of a man well qualified, both by sentiment and experience, to direct an Allied Press Bureau. His reply was to the effect that neither the British Ambassador nor he had any funds at their disposal for such a purpose, and, furthermore, that he doubted the

advisability of inaugurating a press campaign, it being his belief that the enemy would do more harm than good to himself by the underhand methods he was pursuing, since in a land of truth and justice such as ours the righteousness of the Allied cause would surely prevail in the end. If there were more diplomats possessing the prescience and tact of Monsieur Jusserand there would be less reason than appears, alas, to be the case at present for concurring in an opinion held by Grotius centuries ago that diplomacy is either useless or mischievous.

From distinguished diplomats to an American painter is a far cry, yet a vision of a lofty studio filled with the likenesses of noted men and women comes to mind without rhyme or reason. "A beautiful disorder," runs a French proverb, "is an effect of art"; and this describes the impression I retain of the studio of G. P. A. Healy, as well as of the man himself; for I recall him in ill-fitting clothes, wearing one of those flowing ties which the French term so aptly *une cravate flottante*. But I remember him too as one of the most courtly of men and also as a painter of more skill than he has been generally accredited with possessing. He was an artist, moreover, who painted not only his own generation in his own land but many of the crowned heads and great men of Europe as well; his chivalrous personality having made him a sort of courtly ambassador-at-large of the United States at a time when our land was looked upon abroad as a wilderness inhabited by boors and savages.

Puvis de Chavannes, Bonnat, and Carolus Duran I knew in the humble way in which a young man knows the exalted of a generation older than his own; but when I try to recall their personalities, only the shiny bald head of Bonnat and the suavity and ample beard of "Carolus," as he was familiarly called, stand forth with any distinctness. Of Puvis de Chavannes, the only one of this trio whose work I look upon to-day in the light of greatness, not a trait remains in memory. Raffaelli and Madrazo, too, were painters whom I knew with some degree of intimacy, yet the memory of them has been sadly diminished by the years. Of dan-

dified Whistler, with a glass in his eye and spats on his ankles, the picture is more distinct. He came into a Parisian restaurant one morning and spoke to a friend with whom I was lunching. I believe I was introduced to him, and he deigned to extend a hand; but in those days of joyous youth I was more interested in driving a coach to Versailles or a tandem in the Bois than in meeting great artists.

In fact, I blush while thinking of a dinner at which I sat beside a dumpy man with a low forehead, a big nose, and an unkempt reddish beard that reached halfway to his waist. Because of the sententious remarks about questions of the day he occasionally let fall and the interest he seemed to take in his food and drink, I thought him either a lawyer or a *fonctionnaire* of the bourgeois class; and I am constrained to confess that when the hostess asked me at the moment of leaving if I had made the most of my opportunity of talking to Rodin, I was forced, while thanking her for a privilege I had failed to appreciate, to simulate a knowledge I did not possess.

Not long ago I visited the museum in the old Hôtel Biron which bears the name of the great sculptor who was my neighbor that evening, and there I saw examples of his skill that made me feel him to have been both the most modern and the most classical artist of our day. Faithful to the traditions of his craft, he had been frankly true to nature, as well; and as I viewed his handiwork it seemed to me that his genius united the present age to that of both Michael Angelo and Phidias. At the same time I felt that in sensuality he was an utter pagan, spirituality, or shall I say faith, being the one quality that was lacking to make him, perhaps, the greatest sculptor of all time.

But I am straying into a perilous by-way; therefore let me cross without delay the threshold of a palace where Madame de Pompadour, Murat, and the Napoleons, both great and little, once dwelt and where the President of France now lives both in splendor and simplicity; for while there are helmeted sentries without and a host of liveried flunkies within, as well as gorgeous tapestries upon corniced

walls and crystal chandeliers hanging from frescoed ceilings, there was in the manner of both Monsieur Millerand, who was President of the Republic at the time, and his beautiful wife a democracy genuine in its simplicity. The occasion was a reception given during the tercentenary celebration of the birth of Molière in honor of the *délégués étrangers*, as the foreign guests of the nation were styled. Monsieur and Madame Millerand received their guests cordially at the door of their drawing-room, then moved among them as unceremoniously as any host and hostess in private life. Meanwhile officers of their military household, wearing war medals on their breasts and wound or service stripes upon their arms, politely engaged us foreigners in conversation while helping us to refreshments with their white-gloved hands.

When Madame Millerand asked my wife, in English charmingly spoken, if she would take tea, and, after handing her a cup, stood talking with her while she drank its contents, I became convinced that the spirit of hospitality pervading the Elysée was due to the tact and good breeding of its hostess rather than to any democratic tradition of the land. In fact, never have I met in an official position a more gracious lady than the wife of the eleventh President of the third French Republic, a woman whose charm and simplicity upset entirely a prejudice I had long entertained against the wives of *les politiciens*.

That afternoon I was introduced to a number of Parisian intellectuals who were either members of the Academy or incumbents of posts such as the directorship of the Comédie Française or the presidency of *La Société des Gens de Lettres*; but it was in the perfunctory way of a courteous bow and the exchange of a polite word or two, as I had met, in years gone by, other Parisians of literary fame, such as Anatole France and Victorien Sardou.

For the recollection of a French man of letters of more import than the gratification of an idle curiosity, the pages of memory must be turned back fully thirty years, to a time when Monsieur Paul Bourget was in my own land. He asked me to translate an article he had written

for an American magazine and in discussing my version with him line by line I learned that his knowledge of English was of no mean order. I learned, too, that, apart from literary mastery, he possessed the rare quality of generosity, which he displayed by reading, without any solicitation, a first novel the critics had scored unmercifully. Not only did he point out its faults with kindness, but in its jejune pages he found virtues to praise such as even the pride of authorship had not led me to suspect them of possessing. "Pay no attention to the critics," he said, "but study unremittingly the writings of Thackeray, George Eliot, Stendhal, and Flaubert."

To find George Eliot in so small a galaxy surprised me, I confess, but having re-read several of her novels of late I begin to understand her appeal to this great analyst of the human heart. Too little attention, alas, was paid by me to his advice. I repeat it here in the hope that it may be heeded by some young writer of to-day who chances to read these lines. That he may be heartened in his darkest hour by so helpful and kindly a master as Monsieur Paul Bourget is my fervent wish.

But all French men of letters do not possess the generous qualities of this great novelist. In fact, I have in mind an Academician whose genius I had admired even to the extent of acclaiming it in print, and whose acquaintance I had been more anxious to make than that of any Parisian writer of the day. Yet when this desire was gratified not long ago, in the drawing-room of a mutual acquaintance, his greeting was so condescending and his manner so supercilious that he became antipathetic at once.

A few weeks later I chanced to attend a notable meeting at the Sorbonne. When the President of the Republic, preceded by black-clad mace-bearers and the Doctors of the University in their gorgeous robes and followed by the orators of the day, entered the huge amphitheatre, I found not only that the man I have in mind was to be one of the speakers but that his seat upon the platform was directly in front of my own. Instinctively I slipped into a chair that stood vacant a few steps away, and when

this "Immortal," attired in his *habit vert*, trembled like the proverbial aspen leaf while reading in a faltering voice the manuscript of his address, I experienced a secret delight at seeing him ill at ease before so vast and distinguished an audience.

How different is my recollection of Jules Claretie, director of the Comédie Française for over a quarter of a century. Although his work as manager, dramatist, novelist, and publicist was manifold, this lovable Academician never failed to return a call, answer a letter, or write the line of encouragement or appreciation he felt to be due, even when the fulfilment of such a courtesy necessitated the laying aside of the task in hand. During Monsieur Claretie's directorship of the "House of Molière" I was his guest, not only at *répétitions générales*, but at preliminary rehearsals as well, when the actors were in street dress and the scenery for the play of the evening was leaning against bare walls.

How free those rehearsals were from rowdyism! No swearing on the part of the scene-shifters, no boorish shouting by a stage-manager with a cigar in the corner of his mouth and a hat on the back of his head; but a courtesy and an artistic earnestness such as I have never seen in any other playhouse. Yet what other theatre has the traditions of centuries to inspire its players? And what other theatre possesses a green-room adorned with portraits of the notable actors of its past, a foyer filled with statues of the dramatists whose plays have held its boards, or an entrance-hall hung with tapestries representing the crowning of its greatest genius? What other theatre, moreover, has a library containing every work of value concerned with its history, presided over by a librarian of the attainments of either that ardent Moliériste, the late Monsieur Georges Monval, or Monsieur Jules Couet, his scholarly successor? Only in good ventilation is the Comédie Française excelled by any other playhouse. In fact, after many an evening spent within its walls I have been led to suspect that the air in its auditorium had not been changed since the year 1799, at which time the *sociétaires* and *pensionnaires* of the national troupe

took possession of the theatre known till then as the Variétés Amusantes, to remain until the present day.

Not long ago I sat in this classic play-house at an hour when the seats were empty. A scene for use that evening had been set; in the wings a light burned dimly; and upon the deserted stage I seemed to see a grotesque figure seated in an armchair, while twirling a ribboned cane with one hand and with the other the end of an incipient mustache. Where the small-clothes of this apparition met his silken hose were canions of fantastic shape; and beneath a hat of many plumes, perched upon a huge peruke, I imagined I saw the round face with little pig-like eyes, at once so melancholy and so mirthful, of Constant Coquelin, the most companionable Frenchman I have ever known.

In the part of Mascarille, and upon that very stage, I first saw this inimitable actor; but it was in my own land as a reporter for a daily paper that I first conversed with him. He was touring at the time with Madame Jane Hading. A temperamental quarrel between this actress and himself had reached such a height that neither spoke to the other except in the words of the play they happened to be acting together, and to induce each of these warring stars to denounce the other in print was the malevolent object of my assignment. In regard to one another I found them studiously circumspect, yet I did succeed in making them express quite opposite views about their chosen calling.

"Unless an actress," said Madame Hading, "loses herself in her part to the extent of feeling that she is the actual person she is portraying, and that the passions she expresses are her own passions, she will fail to move her audience."

On the morning following this interview with the actress, Coquelin received me at his hotel before he had quite finished dressing. When I told him what Madame Hading had said, a look of contempt crossed his face. A hair-brush in each hand, with which he gesticulated from time to time, he began to pace back and forth excitedly, while expounding his own views.

"Acting," said he, "is neither a knack

nor an emotion. On the contrary, it is a fine art, with a technic which must be learned as patiently and arduously as that of either painting or sculpture. Each movement of the face or body, each gesture, each intonation, must be studied in regard to its bearing both upon the character which is being portrayed and the play as a whole, quite as carefully as the elements of painting, whether of composition, drawing, or color. Indeed, if the actor forgets for an instant that he is an artist, or permits himself to be carried away by any momentary emotion, he becomes the mere plaything of his own feelings; since his art should be the same, whether his public be cold or appreciative."

Although he took this view, so opposite to that of Madame Hading, no finesse on my part could induce Monsieur Coquelin to express for publication his personal dislike for her. While several years later, when he was touring the United States with Madame Bernhardt, I saw him display an even greater degree of gentlemanly restraint at a time when an outburst of righteous indignation seemed fully justified. The occasion was a supper, given by him in honor of an American actor who was playing in English, at the moment, a rôle Coquelin had himself created. After failing to appear for so unpardonable a length of time that the host in despair decided to wait for him no longer, the guest of the evening stalked in toward the end of the first course. Instead of apologizing for his tardiness, he coolly declared that he had been supping at his own hotel in order that he might be certain of obtaining some favorite dishes, it being apparent to all that he had been indulging in his favorite brand of Scotch as well. In fact, no sooner had he taken a seat beside Madame Bernhardt than, with a malign glance at her, he proclaimed himself insultingly in her own language to be the only Thespian at the table who had had the good taste to remove make-up. Aghast at this affront, Coquelin, in an effort to make amends for the rudeness of his guest, began to tell stories of his own stage experiences, during the course of which he said that while it sometimes happened that he fell asleep in the wings,

when waiting for his cue, his servant could always be relied upon to awake him in time for his entrance.

"No, Coquelin," interrupted the guest of honor, "it's your audience, not you, that goes to sleep."

Blushing for their fellow countryman, the Americans at the table hung their heads in shame, while awaiting a just outburst on the part of the host; but he, instinctively the gentleman, merely gave his transatlantic confrère a glance of pitying contempt, while calmly finishing his story.

Never at a loss for a bright or a fitting word, and ever companionable, Coquelin, though in body and soul a man of the stage, was at the same time the epitome of French gaiety. Only a few months be-

fore his death I saw him for the last time at his own table in the Rue de Presbourg. Rostand had just been reading him an act of *Chantecler*, and never, he said, had a part appeared to him so congenial or so suited to his talent. Had he lived to play it, the satire and profound philosophy which are so artfully blended in the vain-glorious personality of a barnyard cock would not have gone over the heads of the audience, as they did in less skilful hands, but would have reached their hearts instead. To his friends this great actor was known as "Coq." To me he is *le Coq Gaulois*, since in the memory I retain of him are embodied the gallantry, good humor, wit, intelligence, and tender sentiment which are the true spirit of France.

Two Songs

BY ANN HAMILTON

I

THROUGH the long dusk my spirit sings
To hear the wind break through the wood
Blowing against the blackbirds' wings,
And in the twilight it is good
To watch the dark come down the hill
And see the drifted oak-leaves blow
Into the stream beside the mill,
For love goes always where I go
And burns within the lost bird's cry—
Love in the naked orchard-trees
Like a late whisper comes; the sky
Flings out two lonely stars, and these
Over the new moon-crescent rise
Ghostly, beneath love's eyes.

II

Sunlight wakens me after dream
And through the day upholds the hours
Like laughter, and the twilights seem
Gentle as flowers
Remembered from a summer's wreath.
The spent moon lifting into gold
Comes kindly, knowing how beneath
Earth's dark indifference, I hold
Love flung across my heart, nor care
Whether a moon be young or old
Or day or night be there.