



A DOCTOR LOOKS AT FRANCE, IN 1845

(A continuation of the manuscript diary of Dr. J. H. Causten, Jr., the opening pages of which—published in our March issue—describe his crossing of the Atlantic and landing in Havre.)

Feeling very hungry for the excitement of preparing for landing had not allowed us to eat any breakfast, we went into the Dining room, and called for something for lunch, a bill of fare of sixteen octavo pages was presented to us, which was rather too much to choose from, as it quite confused, but finding after turning it over that a lobster sallad was one of the articles we called for that dish with bread and butter: a small table was soon set, with apparatus for two, and as it gives a good idea of french style I may as well describe it. A plate, knife, fork and spoon, napkin and bread for each. Casters in which are vinegar, oil, Anchovy sauce, Walnut and mushroom catsup; a jar of mustard and a vase of salt, and another of pepper. Then came the lobster beautifully prepared and tastefully arranged with anchovies, water-cresses, lettuce and cabbage; you were left to choose your own taste in preparing condiments, and are asked what wine or other liquer you prefer, a bill of fare of wines, liquers and malts being also handed: we chose a little brandy, and a vessel about the size of a vinegar cruet was brought to us, and we commenced eating and with such zest that everything was soon despatched. We were told that dinner would be served at the table d'hote at half past five, and asked if we would dine there or in our own room; we chose the former as most agreeable and least expensive; and sallied out to see the town, as it was only a little past eleven in the morning.

The most striking object which presents itself to the mind of an American on landing in France is the immense number of military that meet you at every turn. Their uniform most generally consists of a pair of crimson pantaloons, blue coat and small round military cap, with a pompoon of scarlet: and a belt and small sword. You meet at every turn a couple, and generally there are as many as twenty within view at once. Our first object was to reach the high ground environing Havre on the north; we walked therefore towards that direction; we passed up the rue de Paris to the Theatre in front of which is a boulevard of small beech trees with benches and seats scattered around, and is a place of great resort in fine weather for the people of the town to meet, to partake of ices from the Cafés in the vicinity, to chat and see the amusements of the days. Passing onward we reached the old church of Notre Dame, which was commenced in the sixteenth century and completed in 1681. Tis a small low very antique looking building, nearly surrounded by a grave yard. The church was not open at the time so we could not enter; the graves in the yard were mostly headed with black wooden crosses, on the arms of which were hung wreaths of natural flowers, or of artificials; and the tops converted into flower beds, which with their rich blossoms gave a very beautiful appearance. Continuing our walk we crossed a wooden bridge thrown over the parapet walls of the fortifications and ditches and found ourselves at the declivity of the high (*word omitted?*), which we ascended by steps, or stairs of stone to the number of perhaps a hundred and fifty. Here we reached a large space of table land, covered with verdure and sprinkled with beautiful country houses, with elegant lawns in front, covered with flowers, of every hue. A very beautiful species of the flowering thorn, having large clusters of red flowers, and attaining the size of an ordinary apple tree, presented a very rich and luzuriant

appearance; and the sweet odor of its flowers combined with the rose, geranium, heliotrope, and many others new to me, tended to give the whole the character of a fairy scene, especially as we had just landed from a sea voyage, and had not seen a flower for weeks. Turning our view southward, we beheld the town which seemed much larger than from the sea, a forest of masts belting it towards the river and the fortifications defining its outline towards us: to the right was the sea stretching out beyond the limits of vision and to the south west the bold high grounds of the southern bank of the Seine; on every side the fields covered with verdure and flowers, among which the bright scarlet poppy figured profusely, together with the daisy, ragged robin, laburnum with its beautiful pendant yellow blossoms and a countless variety of other most showy floral productions. Altogether it was the most beautiful scene that I had beheld for a long time: and but that our time was limited we could have spent several hours in contemplating its charms. The houses of Havre are constructed of a hard kind of Horn-stone—some pieces of which present all the characters of chalcedony. I picked up a few pieces and could have easily filled my pockets with beautiful specimens.

Returning to the city, we saw several of the women of Havre with the antique Norman cap of white muslin which stands up at least a foot above their heads, and seems to be three caps one put on after the other: it is very becoming, and neat. The horses of Normandy are enormous, and draw most extraordinary loads: I observed one drawing in a cart or waggon fourteen bales of cotton; and he did not seem to be distressed. The Norman horses are not mutilated: Their collars are extravagantly large having the hames of wood with projections of about a foot on each side, to protect the horse from injury should he come in contact with a vehicle of any kind;

the collar would ward off the blow from his body. The ass is much used in Normandy as a beast of burthen. They are very small, and look as though they could carry but small burthens, but their powers of endurance are very great; they are usually laden with panniers which reach nearly to the ground, and the driver, generally a woman, takes her seat between them, so that the animal is almost hid from the view, and they trot very fast. The children in Havre all seemed to be very small, no youth, but the extremes of childhood and adults: whether it was that after twelve or fourteen the youth put on a mature appearance or what, I cannot say, but I saw nothing but children apparently of all ages up to ten, and then grown people.

Passing through the town to clear our luggage at the Custom House, we were much amused at seeing the Chiffonniers or rag and paper gatherers collecting their supplies. They have a large basket strapped on the back, and shaped like a potato-hamper; in their hand they carry a short stick, armed with an iron hook with which they rake and examine all the dirt in the street, dexterously catching up the rags and paper by the hook and throwing it by a sleight of hand over their head into the basket. The custom house being situated near the water or quay afforded us an opportunity of observing the vast difference in the depth of the harbour during the flow and ebb of the tide. When we entered in the morning at ten o'clock there was thirty feet of water in the dock, and ebb tide having supervened, we now at four o'clock found most of the vessels upon the dry sands of the bottom of the quay, and we could have walked from one to another to the number of twenty without wetting our feet; such great difference in the appearance of the quay could not fail to be very remarkable, and is owing to the immense ebb and flow of the tide. On the 18th April 1796, the English admiral Sir Sidney Smith, wishing to seize a privateer at anchor in this port was drawn by

the current into the Seine, and taken prisoner. There are four other docks or basins in Havre, besides the one just mentioned called Vauban, which are not so large. Its commerce is carried on by four to five hundred vessels of every tonnage.

From the quay we entered the custom house, where we found our trunks had been conveyed from the vessel: our keys were demanded, and we were asked if we had any tobacco, cigars, or other dutiable article. Fortunately we had none, having given the remains of our cigars, which were very bad, to the mate of the vessel: having received our keys and paid a franc for the examination we went to the Hotel and prepared for dinner; at half past five we went into the dining room where dinner was served in the french style. There was nothing on the table but the table furniture, a bottle of claret for each guest, and the dessert of fruit and nuts: the substantials being in the kitchen, directly adjoining. Soup was served first, pretty good; then boiled fish; boiled beef and potatoes, roast mutton and peas; boiled chicken and some other vegetable; and then salad, somewhat like our lettuce, but less bitter, and more pleasant tasted. A plate of each is brought to each person successively, and he takes it or declines it as he pleases: if he decline, he waits for the next course. Then follows the dessert, of pudding and pastry, with the apples and fruit, and a finger bowl, which is the signal that dinner is over: and you find that you have been at least an hour at table. After dinner we found our captain in the court yard, who introduced us to Capt. Crawford of the *Silvie de Grasse*, who proposed a walk; we went down to the fashionable promenade, a pier extending about a hundred yards from the mouth of the quay into the sea, with a small light house on the extremity; it is built of the horn stone found in the vicinity, of which all the houses in Havre are constructed, is some twenty feet above high water, and protected by the walls on each side being three feet higher

than the pavement: Capt. Crawford told me that during bad weather the sea breaks over this pier and completely sweeps it, rendering it dangerous for any others than sailors to make an attempt to walk upon it. We found the pier covered with people; women with caps on; soldiers in abundance, and every variety of costume: the red pantaloon being common however to all.

We remained upon the pier merely long enough to gather a general idea of the appearance of the people, and then walked down to see the walls of the town, which commence near the pier and extend upon the west, north and eastern, sides of the town, the south being protected by the river; these walls are about thirty feet high, constructed of solid masonry having on their outside a wide and deep ditch, at present dry, but which can be filled with water very readily; they form part of the military constructions of Napoleon, and are worthy of him; at several points which he deemed the most accessible, there are double walls with a deep moat between them. On the southern part of the town washed by the waters of the Seine is the famous tower of François 1st full of historical souvenirs. It is a round building with facets of circular and diamond shaped projections, about fifty feet in height, and of the most solid construction, but now fast falling into ruins from neglect. Here it was that the roi-chevalier was magnificently feasted by the citizens of Havre—the banquet having cost thirty livres, an immense sum for that period, about 1530. From its battlements was thrown the missile which mortally wounded the grand-uncle of the famous Cardinal Richelieu, who laid siege to la Rochelle. Near this tower is the site of the Citadelle, an edifice constructed by the same Cardinal Richelieu, in which were imprisoned, by the orders of Cardinal Mazarin, his successor in the premiership, under the regency of Anne of Austria, the princes of Condé, Conti, and de

Longueville, accused of treason. This edifice has been recently destroyed to make room for modern improvements.

Further in the heart of the town is the new Hotel de Ville, built in 1753; the entrance door is ornamented with an escutcheon bearing the Salamander surrounded by flowers, surmounted by fleurs de lys: these are the arms which François 1st gave to the town. The Custom house or Douane, is a building of neat construction, designed by Nicholas Lecarpentier, a distinguished architect of Rouen in 1754. The Palais de Justice, or Court house, is also a neat handsome, building, but presents nothing remarkable. The Bibliothèque publique or Public Library is also a neat building, having the market in front. The number of books is about twelve thousand; the most attractive object of curiosity in this building is a beautiful marble bust of Bernardin de Saint Pierre, who was a native of this city, and well known from his pathetic romance of Paul and Virginia. We also saw the house in which he was born, which was a great deal like the generality of the houses in Havre, and nothing to distinguish it but this interesting incident.

After rambling nearly all over the town until quite fatigued, we accepted Capt. Crawford's invitation to enter a café and take a cup of coffee. We found the coffee of France excellent, very strong, and served neatly. A cup and saucer holding a pint is brought to you, and you are asked if you will have it "noir" or "au lait," that is black or with milk; if the latter, the waiter brings a large milk pitcher of boiling milk with which he half fills the cup, pours in about an ordinary tea cup full of coffee, and runs the cup over with the milk—a plate of sugar is set before you and you are asked if you will have a petit verre, or a little cordial glass of brandy, which is taken without water. The whole cost is fifteen sous. All around you at tables are seated parties of gentlemen with their refresh-

ments before them, some reading the newspapers, some talking, some pulling each others ears, or whiskers, or more playing dominoes; indeed they seem more like grown up children, "pleased with a rattle," than anything to which I can compare them.

At ten o'clock we returned to our hotel, and on comparing notes found we had seen as much of Havre as we could find to interest and as the steamboat for Rouen would start the next morning and afford us an opportunity to attend mass in the Cathedral the following day, we determined to go to that famous old city at once. We therefore retired to our chamber, and opening our trunks, found our writing materials, and for the first time since leaving our own shores, had the pleasure of writing to the dear ones at home, and enjoying the only substitute in our power for conversation with them. Midnight came just as we had concluded our letters, which we sealed, and enclosed in a note to Capt. Wheedon, requesting him to put them aboard the *Sylvie de Grasse*, which was to sail on the following Monday: and we then took a look at our room. The most striking feature was the floor, which was paved in hexagonal tiles or bricks, no wooden floor as we usually see at home; the bedsteads were as the french bedsteads usually are, the curtains being suspended in canopy from the ceiling; there was but little furniture, but that elegant in its simplicity. The windows open from top to bottom, with a tremendous iron bolt extending also from top to bottom with hooks at each end, which when the bolt is turned catch into a cavity and perfectly secure it from any attempts from the outside. A very large mirror, a clock, a secretary, and chest of drawers, with a centre table and chairs completed the furniture. We retired to bed, fatigued with the variety of scenes through which we had passed and though heartily, dreadfully tired, twas a long time before I got to sleep, as I missed the motion

of the vessel, which had become habitual and almost necessary, and my sleep was disturbed and uneasy so that I awoke at five o'clock, without the least inclination to remain longer in bed, rose, shaved, and was nearly dressed before my friend Stone shewed any signs of wakefulness.

We descended to the coffee room, ordered Coffee, Bread, butter and eggs for two, for breakfast is never served for all the guests at once, and leaving our letters at the bar, and settling our account, after breakfast, we walked down to the Steamboat which was to take us to Rouen, and to start at eight o'clock; we reached the boat a few minutes before eight, and having purchased our tickets, (ten francs each) and seen our baggage properly disposed of we took our seats on the quarter-deck, and looked at our fellow passengers. One group attracted our particular attention, composed of a mother, grandmother, two daughters and a son; they were English named Mc something but I could not learn the name. The mother was a large, and had been in early life a pretty woman, reminding me in her general appearance of Mrs. Joshua Pierce; the old lady appeared to be about seventy-five, very homely, and was the only one of the party who attempted to speak french, of which she made sad havoc—and the young people, who appeared to be about the age of twenty to twenty-five, were three of the least favored in beauty I have seen for a very long time, and their garb was in real english travelling on the continent style, i.e. the worst in their wardrobe. Their conversation led me to suppose that the mother and daughters and son were making their first visit to France, and that the old lady had been here before, perhaps in early days, and now took the part of interpreter and cicerone. Several other English people were on board, and a great many french: on the forward deck, which costs half-price, was also a great many people, among whom was one of the most forward of our

steerage passengers who had crossed the Atlantic with us—he saluted us very familiarly, to which we paid no attention, and shewed him the cold shoulder, which hint he took at once, and did not speak to us again: I confess I felt rather pained to treat him in that manner, but remembering the old saw, “tell me with whom you are, and I will tell you who you are,” is in full vigor in France for my own sake I felt bound to do so. We were obliged to wait until nine o’clock, before the tide had risen high enough to permit us to leave the quay; this hour was the most tedious I have ever spent, waiting, all ready for our departure, until the tide, which like time, waits for no man, had sluggishly lifted our vessel high enough to float out of the harbor without risk. At last we had the pleasure of hearing the bell ring for the last time, and seeing the helmsman take his post at the wheel, and the boat move along at a snails pace, threading her way between the many vessels moored in the harbor till we reached the pier and were in fact in the river Seine.

