PITTYPAT AND TIPPYTOE.

By Eugene Field.

All day long they come and go—
Pittypat and Tippytoe;
Footprints up and down the hall,
Playthings scattered on the floor,
Finger-marks along the wall,
Tell-tale smudges on the door—
By these presents you shall know
Pittypat and Tippytoe.

How they riot at their play!
And a dozen times a day
In their troop, demanding bread—
Only buttered bread will do,
And that butter must be spread
Inches thick with sugar too!
And I never can say "No,
Pittypat and Tippytoe!"

Sometimes there are griefs to soothe,
Sometimes ruffled brows to smoothe;
For (I much regret to say)
Tippytoe and Pittypat
Sometimes interrupt their play
With an internecine spat.
Fie, for shame! to quarrel so—
Pittypat and Tippytoe!"

Oh the thousand worrying things
Every day recurrent brings!
Hands to scrub and hair to brush,
Search for playthings gone amiss,
Many a wee complaint to hush,
Many a little bump to kiss;
Life seems one vain, fleeting show
To Pittypat and Tippytoe!

And when day is at an end,
There are little duds to mend:
Little frocks are strangely torn,
Little shoes great holes reveal,
Little hose, but one day worn,
Rudely yawn at toe and heel!
Who but you could work such woe,
Pittypat and Tippytoe!"

But when comes this thought to me:
"Some there are that childless be."
Stealing to their little beds,
With a love I cannot speak,
Tenderly I stroke their heads—
Fondly kiss each velvet cheek.
God help those who do not know
A Pittypat or Tippytoe!

On the floor and down the hall,
Rudely smutched upon the wall,
There are proofs in every kind
Of the havoc they have wrought,
And upon my heart you'd find
Just such trademarks, if you sought;
Oh, how glad I am 'tis so,
Pittypat and Tippytoe!

THE STRANGE STORY OF OUR VILLA.

"'Villa de l'Orient, Avenue des Citronniers, Nice.' Really, our address looks uncommonly well at the head of a letter," remarked Mrs. Brandon, contemplating, with her head on one side, the effect of the words she had just written.

"It really does," we agreed in chorus. We always agreed with Mrs. Brandon; it saved trouble.

We were three "lone-lorn" females—two spinsters and a widow—who had agreed to share a house, or, rather, part of a house—for we occupied but one story—at Nice for the winter.

First there was Mrs. Brandon—our chaperon, housekeeper and directress in chief—tall, blond, majestic, with a calm, suave manner and a quietly distinct voice, which always made itself heard and obeyed; then came Miss Lucy Lester, a plump, good-tempered little lady of a certain age, with a round, smiling face, kindly blue eyes, and not an angle about her either moral or physical. Lastly there was the present writer, who modestly prefers to leave her portrait to the reader's imagination, trusting that he will paint it in the most attractive colors at his disposal.

The supplementary members of the party were Mrs. Brandon's daughter Georgie, an overgrown schoolgirl of thirteen; Georgie's inseparable companion, "Chum," a small, sharp and extremely impudent fox-terrier; and Josephine, our stout French bonne, who inhabited a microscopic kitchen, which her capacious person entirely filled.

In spite of its name there was nothing in the least Oriental about the appearance of "our villa." It was simply a good-sized, square, pink-and-white house, looking, Georgie said, as if it were built of naught, with green balconies and shutters and a semicircular flight of steps to the front door. It stood in the midst of an extensive garden planted with orange and lemon trees, and sheltered on one side by a rocky hill, which rose above it, sheer and straight like a natural wall. At the end of the garden was a rustic bench sheltered by a gnarled old olive-tree.

The house was furnished with remarkable taste. The house agent, through whom we took our appartement, informed us that the landlord, M. de Valeyre—a gentleman of good birth, though not of large means, who was now on a shooting tour in Corsica—had spent many years of his life in the East, and our rooms contained not a few souvenirs of his travels in the shape of ornaments, rugs and draperies, to say nothing of his own clever oil sketches of Oriental life and scenery which adorned the walls.

The rooms, though decidedly small, were bright and airy, and the outlook on the garden, where the oranges were ripening under their glossy leaves, delightful. Altogether we felt we might congratulate ourselves on our good fortune.

"Yes," proceeded our "chief," glancing complacently around her—we were sitting in the dining-room after lunch on the third day of our arrival—"it is really a trouvaille. So charmingly situated, so well furnished and so cheap! We might have looked all over Nice and found nothing to suit us so well."

"We might, indeed," assented Lucy Lester, who generally echoed the last speaker. "One could wish, perhaps, that the bedrooms were a little larger ——"

"And that they did not open one out of the other like a nest of boxes, of which mine is the inside box," I ventured to add.

Mrs. Brandon glanced at me austerely over her eyeglass.

"If we, whom you disturb by passing through our rooms, do not object to that, I think you need not," she observed reprovingly.

"But it seems you do object," I returned. "Every morning I am greeted with anathemas 'not loud, but deep,' half smothered under the bedclothes."

"Why will you persist in getting up at such unearthly hours, waking people out of their beauty sleep?"

"I don't mind that," put in Georgie, who was teaching Chum to balance a pencil on his nose; "but I do wish the woman upstairs would not make such a noise at night; I can't go to sleep for her. The ceilings are so thin one hears every sound."

"The woman upstairs?" her mother repeated. "What do you mean, child? There is no one in the house but ourselves. The upper stories and the ground floor are unlet."

"There is some one in the room above mine all the same," Georgie persisted. "She keeps me awake by walking about overhead, sometimes muttering and laughing to herself, and sometimes sobbing as if her heart would break. Last night I stood up on the bed and rapped the ceiling with my umbrella to silence her, but she kept on all the same. Chum heard her too—didn't you, sir?"

Chum, glad of any interruption to his lesson, barked an emphatic assent.

"Well, now, that is very strange," Miss Lester remarked, dropping her knitting. "I have fancied myself, do you know, that I heard some one moving about overhead—not only at night, but in the daytime."

"Perhaps there is some servant or caretaker left in charge of the rooms," Mrs. Brandon said after a pause; "I will ask M. Gillet when next I see him."

We saw M. Gillet, the house agent, the following day. He called, as he explained politely, to ask after the health of "these ladies," and to ascertain if we were satisfied with our "installation."

He was a round, fat, oily man of middle age, with a bland manner and a propitiatory smile.

"We are quite well and perfectly satisfied," Mrs. Brandon replied graciously, answering for us all, as usual. "But I thought you told us, M. Gillet, that the upstairs rooms were unoccupied?"

"So they are, madame. There is no one in the house but yourselves and your servant."

"Then who is it my daughter hears at night in the room above hers?" He raised his eyebrows, glancing inquiringly at Georgie.

"I hear a woman walking about and talking to herself," she explained. "I can't understand what she says; it is not French."

"Ah!" His face changed from smiling incredulity to startled gravity. He drew in his lips and looked perturbed.

"It must be Madame de Valeyre," he muttered; "it can be no one else. Just like her to turn up again in this mysterious fashion without a word of warning! Monsieur will be furious when he knows she is here, and I shall certainly think it my duty to inform him at once."

"Are you speaking of our landlord's wife?" I inquired. He assented.

"But why should he be displeased? Has she not a right to occupy her own house?"

"Well—no—that is just it. When they separated by mutual consent a year ago it was expressly stipulated, as a condition of his making her an allowance, that she should not return here, or in any way molest him. I had it from his own lips."

"Why did they separate?" Miss Lester inquired curiously.

He shrugged his shoulders.

"'Incompatibility of temper' was the reason given, but, of course, there were others. The fact is, it was one of those madly romantic marriages which never do turn out well—except in novels. She was an Arab girl whom he picked up somewhere in Algeria, and insisted on marrying, to the scandal of his family and friends. That is her portrait," he added, nodding toward a picture on the wall; "painted by Monsieur himself soon after his marriage."

We looked with interest at the canvas; a slight but clever oil sketch of a young Arab girl, with an oval, olive-tinted face of striking beauty, and strange, passionate dark eyes with a smouldering fire in their depths. Under it was written "Ayesha" and a date.

"Yes, she was handsome then," he admitted, in answer to our comments, "but half a savage, and more than half a heathen, though supposed to have been converted. I heard that in the early days of their marriage she spent most of her time concocting charms and potions to keep her husband's love. Apparently they were not the right sort," he added dryly; "he soon wearied of her; then there were scenes, tears, upbraidings. Madame was jealous—(with cause, if report spoke truly); Monsieur had a temper—entin, no one was surprised when, just a year ago, M. de Valeyre announced that they had separated by mutual consent, and that Madame had returned to her friends. Since then he has been travelling, and, no doubt, is much happier without her."

"While she, poor soul, is fretting her heart out," Mrs Brandon put in; "though I have no doubt he was a brute to her."

The agent shrugged his shoulders with a deprecating smile.

"There were faults on both sides, Madame; but it was hardly possible for any man to live in peace with such a toquee as she is."

"Toquee?" Mrs. Brandon repeated; "do you mean that she is mad? If so, it is certainly not pleasant to have her in the house."

"Mais non, Madame!" he protested; "she is not mad; only eccentric, erratic, capricious. Her returning in this mysterious way is a proof of it. Of course I have no right to interfere with her, but I shall certainly let M. de Valeyre know at once that she is here. You must not be subjected to this annoyance."

After a few more words he took his leave.

The days that followed were fully and pleasantly occupied in exploring Nice and its environs, which were new to all of us. We sunned ourselves on the Promenade des Anglais; drove on the Cornice Road; heard the band in the Jardin Public, and loitered among the tempting shops on the Place Massena—all in due course. The weather was glorious. Sunny days and moonlit nights succeeded each other in uninterrupted splendor, and made it difficult for us to believe that we were actually within a few weeks of Christmas.

The presence of the mysterious Madame de Valeyre in the house was no longer a matter of doubt. Not only had we all heard her restless footsteps overhead, and the unintelligible muttering which sounded so strangely uncanny, but more than once we had caught sight of her—a tall, slender figure clad in a loose, white wrapper—pacing to and fro in the shadowy garden alleys, or sitting on the bench under the gnarled old olive tree. Once, at dusk, I met her on the staircase flitting silently upstairs to her own lonely rooms, but she passed me quickly without returning my salutation or even glancing at me.

"C'est drole!" Josephine often remarked; "to shut herself up like that, without even a servant. And how does she get her food? She never seems to go beyond the gates."

We agreed that it was "drole," but did not trouble ourselves greatly about the matter, having more interesting occupation for our thoughts.

One evening, in the third week of our tenancy, the others were gone to the theatre, and I, pleading letters to write, had remained at home with no companion but "Chum," having given Josephine permission to go out.

Chum, by the way, was the only one of the party who did not appear to like his winter quarters. He had not been in his usual rude health and spirits since we came to the villa, but seemed restless and depressed. Even now, as he lay curled up on my gown, he could not sleep quietly, but kept waking up with a start and a shiver, looking uneasily about him.

I sat in the dining-room, out of which the other rooms opened. To the right was the curtained doorway (doors there were none) of the salon—to the left, that which admitted to Mrs. Brandon's bedroom, leading out of which was Miss Lester's. The dressing-room of the latter had been converted into a bedroom for Georgie, and the last of the suite was my own chamber.

The evening was warm and very still. Glancing through the open window, which was shaded by a tall eucalyptus, I caught a glimpse of a sky full of stars, and over the treetops a line of tremulous silver showed where the sea lay sleeping.

As I lowered my head to my writing again my eye was arrested by a slight movement of the portiere which screened the drawing-room doorway. I looked up quickly, but seeing nothing unusual, concluded I had been mistaken. I was writing busily again, when the dog stirred uneasily, growled, then suddenly sprang to his feet, gazing, with dilated eyes and ears erect, toward the door. As I involuntarily looked again in the same direction I was startled to see a hand—the long, slender hand of a woman—put forth from within to draw the curtain back. For a moment it remained motionless, grasping the portiere, and I had time to note every detail of its form and color: the fine but dusky skin, the delicate taper fingers, on one of which gleamed a quaint snake-shaped gold ring. Then the curtain was abruptly withdrawn, and a figure appeared in the opening: a tall, slender woman enveloped in a loose wrapper of some gauzy Algerian stuff.

It was Madame de Valeyre. I had never had a full view of her face before, but I recognized her at once as the original of the portrait: thinner, older, with a wild and troubled look in her lovely dark eyes, but the same.

Too startled to speak, I stared at her, and she looked back as silently and as fixedly at me. Then, before I could rise or address her, my strange visitor crossed the room with a calm and leisurely step and passed through the opposite doorway.

Recovering from my surprise, I caught up the lamp and followed her. She had already traversed Mrs. Brandon's bedroom and was passing into the one beyond.

"Pardon, Madame ——" I called after her; but she neither paused nor turned till she reached the threshold of my own room, the inner one of the suite.

Drawing back the portiere with one hand, she looked at me over her shoulder—a look that thrilled me, so earnest it was, so imperious, so fraught with meaning to which I had not the clew—but uttered not a word. Then she passed in, and the heavy curtain dropped behind her.

In a second's space I had followed her into the room.

To my utter astonishment she was not there. I looked round blankly, raising the lamp above my head. There was no other door but that by which she had entered; no closet, no cupboard, no recess in which she could be concealed. And yet she was gone—vanished, it seemed, into thin air. For a moment I stood, looking about me in utter bewilderment; then a sort of panic seized me—an irrational fear of I knew not what or whom.

I hurried back through the empty and silent rooms, not daring to cast a glance behind me; and feeling a sudden distaste for the dining-room, took refuge in the tiny kitchen, where I sat with Chum on my lap, starting nervously at every sound, till the others returned.

I had decided to say nothing of what had occurred to Miss Lester or Georgie lest it should alarm them, but Mrs Brandon I must tell for the relief of my own mind, though I hardly expected she would believe my story. In fact it seemed, even to myself, so incredible that I could well excuse her scepticism.

It was as I anticipated. She heard me out with a look of mingled astonishment and incredulity.

"My dear Edith," she said when I had finished; "excuse me, but—are you quite sure you did not fall asleep and dream all this?"

"I am quite sure that I was as wide awake then as I am now."

"But it is so utterly unaccountable," she objected; "not only her disappearance, but her appearance. How did she get into the drawing-room in the first instance? She was not there when we went out I am certain, and she could not have entered it afterward without your seeing her. Why did you not ask her what she wanted—what she meant by it?"

"I was too startled at first, and when I recovered myself she had vanished."

"Well, I hope I shall encounter her myself," Mrs. Brandon remarked resolutely; "she shall not 'vanish' again till she has explained the matter, I promise you. We can't have her prowling about our rooms like a Banshee."

But the days passed on, and we caught no further glimpse of Madame de Valeyre.

. . . . . .

It was the last day of the old year—a day so brilliant, so warm, serene and sunny that it would not have disgraced an English mid-summer. Long after Georgie had retired for the night we three elders sat round the handful of wood fire which we kept in more for the sake of cheerfulness than warmth, talking of old times, old friends and old scenes in that retrospective mood which falls on most of us at set seasons.

"I wonder if that poor woman upstairs will have any one to wish her 'Bonne Annee' to-morrow?" Miss Lester remarked during a pause in the conversation. "Fancy how triste to be spending New Year's Eve alone! I thought I heard her crying just now."

We listened, and sure enough a sound of suppressed sobbing, inexpressibly sad and forlorn, reached us from the room above.

"Poor soul!" Mrs. Brandon exclaimed compassionately. "I feel strongly inclined to go upstairs and see if there is anything I can do to help or comfort her, but there is no knowing how she might take it. She is evidently more than a little toquee, as M. Gillet told us. If that husband of hers——"

She left the sentence unfinished, and we all started as a sound of wheels reached us, coming rapidly up the garden drive, and stopping at the door. The next moment there was a loud peal at the bell.

"Who can it be at this hour? it is past 11 o'clock!" I exclaimed.

"Perhaps it is Monsieur de Valeyre," Lucy Lester suggested suddenly. I rose, and, cautiously opening the window, glanced down into the garden. The moonlight showed me a tall man's figure just alighting from a fiacre, the driver of which was handing down a guncase and a portmanteau.

"It is our landlord, sure enough," I said, closing the window. "Monsieur Gillet's information has brought him home, I suppose. I hope there will be no 'scene' upstairs."

"Dear me, I hope not!" Lucy echoed; though the anticipated excitement seemed not altogether unpleasing to her.

"He is evidently not remarkable for patience," was Mrs Brandon's comment, as another still louder peal rang through the house. "If Madame does not choose to admit him one of us must go down. Josephine is in bed long ago."

I volunteered for the task, and, Lucy offering to accompany me, we descended, noisily escorted by Chum.

The fiacre was driving away as we opened the door, and the visitor stood on the step, looking out at the moonlit garden.

He turned, and, expecting no doubt to see a servant, was beginning an impatient exclamation at the delay, but checked himself on perceiving us.

"A hundred pardons, Mesdames, for disturbing you at this untimely hour," he said, raising his hat, "but I have only just arrived from Corsica. I am Monsieur de Valeyre," he added.

I bowed, and drew back to admit him, trying in vain to silence Chum, whose bark was now exchanged for a low, angry growl.

The visitor was a tall, well-built, bronze-complexioned man of six or seven and thirty, with a face which would have been strikingly handsome but for its worn and haggard look, and something repellent in the expression of the bold dark eyes.

"Your dog objects to strangers, apparently," he said, with a glance of no great favor at the terrier, who responded with a snarl which showed all his little sharp white teeth.

"He is a capital watch-dog," I said, apologetically; "he would soon let us know if there were thieves in the house."

"Ah, that reminds me——" He turned as he spoke, to put up the door-chain. "I hear from Gillet, my agent, that you were alarmed on your arrival by strange noises in the upper rooms. Do they still continue?"

"We were not alarmed exactly, but they puzzled us till we knew that Madame de Valeyre had returned."

He let fall the door-chain and turned to look at me.

"Madame de Valeyre?" he repeated.

"Yes; did not M. Gillet tell you, Monsieur, that she was here?"

"He told me you had said so, but I could not believe it; I cannot believe it now. She—my wife—is with her family at Algiers, and it is not likely she would have returned without letting me know."

"She is in the house at this moment," I said, quietly; "she has been here for the last month. We have not only heard but seen her repeatedly—have we not?" I added, turning to my companion, who echoed, "Repeatedly!"

He looked from one to the other of us with a frown, but said nothing; and having secured the fastening of the door, took up his portmanteau and followed us upstairs.

"May I ask you to lend me your light for a moment?" he said, when we reached the landing; "I will return it presently."

Nearly a quarter of an hour elapsed before he descended. We heard him going from room to room, opening and shutting doors and windows, but no sound of voices reached us.

At last he reappeared at the open door of our sitting-room, candle in hand. Mrs. Brandon herself went forward to take it from him, looking at him scrutinizingly as she did so.

"Many thanks, Madame," he said, relinquishing it to her with a bow. Then, turning to me, he added, coldly: "You were mistaken in supposing that my wife had returned. There is no living creature in the rooms upstairs, nor have they been entered since I left them."

"But we have seen her——" I began.

"Whoever you may have seen, it was certainly not my wife," was his reply.

Before I could speak again he added:

"I have the honor to wish you good-evening, Mesdames," and, with a comprehensive bow which included us all, he left the room.

We looked at each other bewilderedly. What did it mean? What had become of the woman?

"She must have heard his voice, and hidden herself somewhere in fear of him," Miss Lester suggested.

"Depend upon it, she has reason to fear him," Mrs. Brandon remarked. "He looks like a man who would use his power mercilessly. It is dreadful to think of that poor half-demented creature being left unprotected to his anger, perhaps violence."

Lucy Lester drew her shawl closer around her with a shiver.

"I feel as if something terrible was going to happen," she said nervously.

The same uneasy presentiment weighed on my own mind, together with some other shadowy fear which I could not have put into words.

Feeling too anxious and excited to go to bed, we gathered round the fire again, talking in whispers, and listening apprehensively to every sound from above. For a time we heard M. de Valeyre moving about; then there was silence, only interrupted when the time-piece, chiming midnight, reminded us to wish each other a Happy New Year.

After that I must have fallen into a doze, from which I was aroused by a touch on my arm.

"Edith," Mrs. Brandon whispered, "do you hear?"

I started and sat upright, looking about me in the confusion of a sudden awakening. "What is it?" I asked.

Keeping her hand on my arm, she pointed upward. The light restless footsteps we had grown to know so well were once more pacing to and fro overhead, and we heard the low intermittent murmur of a woman's voice. Suddenly it was interrupted by a cry—a man's hoarse cry of mortal anguish or terror, such as I trust I may never hear again.

Mingling with the cry came a peal of eldritch laughter, then the sound of a struggle, and a heavy fall which shook the house.

"Come, or there will be murder done," Mrs. Brandon exclaimed, and she hurried from the room and upstairs, followed by Miss Lester and myself.

We found the outer door of M. de Valeyre's apartments closed, but not locked, and passing through the ante-chamber, entered the first room of the suite. A lamp on the chimney-piece showed that it was in strange disorder; the furniture displaced, the carpet upturned, the cloth half dragged from the table.

Its only present occupant was the master of the house, who crouched against the wall at the further end in an attitude of abject terror.

Never while I live shall I forget the face he turned toward us when we entered. With strained dilated eyes and parted lips, it looked like an image of incarnate fear. I stopped short over the threshold, feeling a shrinking reluctance to enter. But Mrs. Brandon without hesitation advanced to his side.

"What is the matter? what has happened?" she asked.

He looked at her vaguely, but seemed incapable of uttering a word, and put his hand to his throat as if suffocating. There was a carafe of brandy on the table. She filled a liqueur glass and held it to his lips. Presently he drew a deep sobbing breath and half raised himself, glancing round the room with a haggard look of dread.

"Is she—gone?" he asked hoarsely.

"There is no one here but ourselves," Mrs. Brandon replied. "You——" She broke off, recoiling from him with a stifled cry.

He had started convulsively, and was gazing with a look of speechless terror at some object on the opposite side of the room. Involuntarily we followed the direction of his eyes, but to us nothing was visible.

"There she is—look!" he gasped. "My wife—dead, yet living. Keep her from me—keep her hands from my throat! Ayesha—mercy—pardon! Oh, heaven."

He crouched against the wall again, putting out both hands to repel some invisible assailant; struggling desperately as if with an actual bodily antagonist, and apparently using all his strength to keep the murderous fingers from his throat.

Mrs. Brandon had fled from him in a panic, and we all three stood on the threshold, watching with horror-struck eyes that ghastly struggle. It did not last long. With a dreadful choking cry he dropped his arms; his whole figure collapsed and fell in a heap, face downward, on the floor.

Strangely enough my fear had now utterly passed away. While the others hesitated I approached him and lifted his head, and turned his face to the light. After one glance I laid it down again with a shudder. "Has he fainted again?" they asked me. "He is dead," I answered, as I rose.

Yes, he was dead; but how had he died? What was the meaning of those livid finger-marks which, for a moment, I had seen plainly printed on his throat? That is a mystery which has never been solved.

. . . . . .

The sudden death of the master of the Villa de l'Orient caused a sensation in Nice, where he was well known, and it was intensified by a rumor that Madame de Valeyre had mysteriously disappeared. There was no trace of her recent presence in the house, and it was ascertained that her relatives in Algeria had had no news of her for more than a year. Some other facts came to light which threw a sinister suspicion on the dead man. Search was made in the garden and grounds, and finally her body was discovered buried under the old olive tree. An Algerian scarf, tightly knotted round her throat, showed what had been the manner of her death.

It need barly be said that we took flight as soon as possible from the ill-omened house, which was shortly afterward demolished by order of the Valeyre family, so that not a vestige now remains of what we once called "our villa."—(The Argosy.

TOURS TO FLORIDA VIA PENNSYLVANIA RAILROAD.

The first Personally Conducted Tour to Florida via Pennsylvania Railroad leaves New-York at 9:30 a. m., January 21, 1893. There are still accommodations on this special train for 15 or 20 persons. Early application for space should be made by those desiring to join this tour.

OYSTER CULTURE IN FRANCE

MR. DEAN'S OBSERVATIONS ABROAD.

GREAT NATURAL DIFFICULTIES SUCCESSFULLY OVERCOME BY THE FRENCH CULTURISTS—A LESSON FOR AMERICA.

Washington, Jan. 20.—The United States Fish Commission has issued a report on the present methods of oyster culture in France, written by Bashford Dean, who is at present engaged in the biological department of Columbia College. Mr. Dean is a specialist in this line, and was sent abroad in the summer of 1891 under instructions from the United States Commissioner of Fish and Fisheries to study oyster culture in France with the view of gathering information which might be of value to the oyster culturists of this country. It is becoming more apparent every year that something must be done if the American oyster supply is to be kept equal to the demands upon it. Mr. Dean's report is liberally illustrated. He pays a tribute to the patient toil of the French in overcoming great natural difficulties and persevering until they have created a great and profitable industry in the culture of oysters for market. He says that when one has carefully examined oyster culture in France it appears more than ever manifest why the industry at home has been a profitable one. He says:

"If the present condition of our industry must be improved, there are, fortunately, but few natural obstacles to overcome, and we may well be hopeful. Our oysters are of a hardy and prolific species, our coast is a natural collecting place for seed, and the conditions of our oyster-bearing grounds are practically as good as ever. We have in no degree the adverse

PREPARING THE SEAL OYSTER.

conditions that the French have so successfully encountered. Their coast regions, in the first place, favorable to a natural growth of oysters are both few and small. Their waters, even in some of the best-known localities, are often turbid, accumulate sediment, and give rise to shiftings of muddy bottoms. Culture has had to bring into use the softest flats and mud-banks, crusting them over with gravel and sand; it has had to devise every possible way of protecting its oysters from sediment, mud-burial and enemies. Finally, there are but two points along their entire coast where seed oysters occur in any natural abundance. Skill in culture, however, has enabled Auray and Arcachon to supply readily the great home demand for seed, and even to furnish in large part the parks of the Low Countries and England, a success the more remarkable when we consider how recently was the French coast so depleted that for the first experiments in cultivation the oysters were actually purchased from other countries."

The methods adopted by the French culturists are described in great detail in the report. Natural difficulties have caused them to study division of labor in the industry. One locality furnishes the seed, another raises the oyster to maturity, a third will flavor or color it, and sometimes even a fourth prepares it for transport. The growth of the industry has been specially under the care of the Government. The reservation of the natural grounds as State property and the forbidding of general public dredging are regarded as the keystone of French oyster culture. These grounds, once exhausted, now flourishing, are regarded as the permanent capital of surrounding areas, whose profits in the form of seed-oysters are shared by all alike.

A half-century ago the natural oyster beds of France were deemed inexhaustible, and were allowed to be dredged even by foreign vessels. The French Government at length realized, however, that state intervention was necessary to save the industry from extinction. In 1853 M. de Bon, a commissionaire of marine, at St. Servan, made experiments upon the fixation of oysters upon bits of sticks and wood, and found that by suitable arrangement the oyster growth might be rendered far more rapid. The practical importance of these "collectors," as the bits of sticks and stones were termed, was taken up for demonstration by M. Coste, a professor in the College of France. M. Coste's experiments failed, and "he died blind, in disgrace,

DREDGING AT CANCALE.

and looked upon almost as a charlatan." But others that came after Coste fully demonstrated the utility of the idea, and these collectors are to the oyster culturist of France what the net is to the shad fisherman of the Hudson. They are of several kinds, but the most numerous form is that of a curved roofing tile, with the concave surface turned down. This inner side is coated with a prepared cement, to which the swimming fry of the oyster attaches itself. These tiles are arranged in piles, or held in crates, submerged at low water mark. It was found that the slime and sediment, which in other kinds of collectors often gathered and smothered the seed oyster, formed on the top or outer surface of the roofing tile, while the fry, attached to the under concave surface, thrive unharmed by these sea-accumulations.

When sufficiently grown these seed oysters are gathered, scraped from the tiles and sold to the eleveur, who raises the seed for market. The latter's arrangements for raising the oyster in parks or tidal ponds, protected from shifting mud bottoms, crabs, boring snails and starfish, by wire-gauze rearing cases, are described with valuable attention to detail by Mr. Dean. He also gives a full description of the parks at the various centres of the industry along the French coast, tells of the extreme limitations of the growers as to space, and describes the famous claires of Marennes, or the ponds where the oysters are fattened, or are specially treated for the greenish color so highly prized in the restaurants of Paris. It might almost be said that in the hands of the French the oyster receives a liberal education between the time it first attaches itself to the cement-coated tile and the final moment when its thread of life is cut short by the Parisian chef.

The natural beds cannot be compared in importance with the product of the artificial culture, but at some points, as at St. Nalo, Granville and Cancale, these beds have again become valuable after once being exhausted. Dredging within prescribed limits, as at Cancale, is granted so seldom that such occasions have become like holidays. The "chaloupes" (three to ten tons) are drawn up ready for work, and the beach is filled with spectators. At a cannon-shot the little vessels start as in a regatta, each striving to be first on the ground. The dredges, four or five to a boat, are operated by half a dozen fishermen. A cannon-shot closes the dredging in a few hours and the little fleet returns shoreward, usually well-laden. The vessels are beached and the cargo is thrown out upon the sand as the tide descends. The mass of oysters is at once attacked by women and children, who sort them out and place them in oblong wicker baskets, ready for sale to the growers and the owners of neighboring parks.

Mr. Dean reaches the conclusion that the Washington Government, in view of the rapid exhaustion of the American oyster beds, by reason of the enormous drain upon them, should follow the example of the French Government and acquire ownership and control of natural beds. He strongly recommends the use of tile collectors and wire-gauze rearing cases by American oyster culturists.

SPOKANE THE AUDACIOUS.

PROSPERITY OF THE EAST WASHINGTON METROPOLIS.

THE MINING AND FARMING DISTRICTS THAT PAY HER TRIBUTE—HER ENTERPRISE FELT IN BRITISH COLUMBIA.

Spokane, Wash., Jan. 7.—Old Chief Spokane emphasized my ante-prandial walk along the Wickenham Road this morning. There was faltering snowstorm, and every footfall charmed, for the snow and I have been separated now ten years. The Indian camp was in confusion. The warriors were listless enough, but the squaws were rolling up their odorous gay blankets and tepee-poles, and fastening the same in their own inexplicable way on the little broncos. It is the latest uniting of the tribe away from the noble river which bears its name to join Saltese and his 500 self-supporting braves on the Coeur d'Alene Reservation. The old chief stood in front of his handful of fire, his short, thick body apparently misshapen on account of the difference in the length of his legs. The face, sagacious and seamy, like Chief Joseph's, relaxed slightly as I approached, and, observing me fixedly, he stooped down, crossed both hands over his knees and then raised them slowly to his middle, across which he drew them significantly, accompanying the gesture with his laconic prophecy of the length and severity of the winter at hand: "Heap cold, heap snow!"

My last visit to Spokane was in 1889, just after its great fire, which left nothing of the business portion of the city save a few small frame buildings of temporary character (that had been constructed to meet immediate and pressing demands) and the falls of the Spokane River!

Now the business district has been greatly enlarged, and is well covered with brick and stone structures, some six stories high. Three banks have doubled their capital stock during the last year, and all the city's financial institutions are on a substantial basis and prosperous. This pleasant state of affairs is explained by Spokane's relation to the resources of the country surrounding and the construction of railroads.

The Northern Pacific was the first to come, and four of the eight railroads that centre here are under the control of that company, which foresaw the great possibilities of a city at this point, and, after the completion of its main line in 1882, inaugurated a large branch system, which reaches all the neighboring mining, agricultural and timber reserves, and which is being extended into remoter regions. About twenty passenger trains come into and go out of Spokane every twenty-four hours, more than half of which are under the control of the Northern Pacific.

The main agricultural district is opened by the Northern Pacific's "Spokane and Palouse Railroad," which extends from this city to Kendrick, Idaho, about 135 miles, through that most prolific country known as "The Palouse." As I rode over this and the Crab Creek and Assotin lands three months ago they appeared to be simply a gigantic grain field. The farmers were threshing, and there were thousands of acres unharvested, with the unshipped fruitage of as many more stored in the open. A well-informed resident told me that the crop in East Washington alone is over 1,000,000 bushels. If so, its entire value at market price is just about equalled by the amount realized the present year from the cedar shingle output of West Washington. So the two sides of the State keep hand in hand. There has never been a failure of the wheat crop here. The yield averages twenty-five bushels to the acre. This wheat bears a high repute at the centres. Over 60,000 bushels were lately purchased from a single farmer by a milling company in Minneapolis, which makes a feature of such food products as rolled wheat and farina.

The Union Pacific built into Spokane in 1890, and the Great Northern, the third transcontinental line, has just arrived, and let contracts for the construction of shops. The Northern Pacific shops will probably be removed here next year. The Spokane and Southern Railway has 125 miles built and now in operation, and surveys completed sixty-five miles further to Nelson, in British Columbia, the centre of that mining region which is now attracting so much attention. At Nelson the road will meet a line of the Canadian Pacific, now building southward through Crow's Nest Pass. It is this junction that will give to Spokane its four transcontinental railroads.

A wealth of coal, iron, gold, silver and lead underlies this northern region. Some of the richest silver discoveries have been made in the last year. The focus is Kaslo, on the west shore of Lake Kootenay. Kaslo is to be the northern Leadville, so it is said. Spokane capital and enterprise have almost complete possession here, and there seems to be no let up to the mining, although to-day the snow is five feet deep. From the eighteen mines now in operation ore is being shipped on sledges, which are compelled to travel thirty miles before reaching Kootenay Lake, at Kaslo. A firm which has one hundred and fifty horses and mules engaged in the contract for transporting this ore, it is said, will make a clean $100,000 this winter. The road to the mines from Kaslo will be completed and opened in the spring. The ore is of high grade, running from $100 to $600 per ton; present cost from mine to smelter, $50 per ton. It is expected that some of the mines will be quoted at high figures next season, when they are more fully developed. Arrangements have been completed for the erection of large smelting works in Spokane, in time for the April ores. Besides the above-named locality there are not less than 1,500 well developed mines and prospects which are now unable to ship to distant smeltings, which will get facile transportation to this point. These mines at present employ a total of 5,000 men, who purchase their supplies here. This demand itself is a stimulant to the growth of farm products, fruits and vegetables. Farmers, gardeners and fruit-growers prosper, and agricultural land has greatly increased in value during the past two years.

It is an audacious city, reaching out everywhere for everything. This great Kootenay country and Slocan mines, we believe, are British property. They belong to British Columbia if to any one; and yet I was present at the November Board of Trade meeting in Vancouver, when the entire evening was occupied in consideration of plans to rescue those colonies from the American grasp.

I can but reflect that hither ten years ago I came, reporting to the Eastern press this Kootenay country, then so new and strange, that I was the second white man in it. Up and down Kootenay river and lake I journeyed in canoes with a party of Indians and Sir William Fernie, gold commissioner of the Wild Horse district, and saw troops of cariboo where now is Kelso. Well do I remember now we pulled up our boats just beyond the rugged outlet of the lake into the forbidding solitudes, where we found the one grassy beach among the 120 miles of rocky shores. Now those low-scalloped and fantastically painted banks, upon which we found the miniature bathtubs filled with warm, delicious water from the springs which had produced the discoloration of the shores, have been transformed into a flourishing town, which has taken the name we gave the locality for its own, Warm Springs. Two banks are there and a railroad, and a line of steamers churns the sluggish waters, which our solitary boat-prow stirred. An object lesson, this, of the changes here.

Spokane seems to have all good things to herself. There is no rival city within 400 miles. Tacoma, on the west, is that distance. On the southwest Portland is 500 miles away, and Helena 400 miles to the eastward. On the north there is no rival whatever, nor is there one on the south. The Columbia River Basin belongs to Spokane, whose growth has been stupendous during the last decade; but this is only preliminary to a still greater growth during the next.

I remember well the original schoolhouse of Spokane. It was a little frame building, 20x44. It obstructed the right of way of the Northern Pacific railroad, and J. J. Browne (who has been called the father of Spokane) and myself surveyed another location for it. This was but ten years ago, and the schoolhouse had been built three years. The county seat was then, July, 1878, in Colville. The county covered 200 square miles, and the entire taxable property within these limits amounted to just $19,575. Now the corporate limits of the city cover the school district, and Mr. Browne's taxes alone are over $22,000, and that little schoolhouse has disappeared in an agglomeration of blocks and factories.

Even the gentle name of the town has gone with the schoolhouse—no more rustic and village-like "Spokane Falls," but brief and bustling Spokane. "All the same," it is the pretty falls that have turned the grain into gold, and their spray that has enabled the big city to astonish all comers with the water of her diamonds.

A writer of plays was reading a new work before a company of the French Society of Comedy, and presently was disturbed by the sight of one of the members, M. Got, fast asleep.

The author stopped and reproved the sleeper. He was reading his play to the committee in order to obtain their opinion. How could a man who was asleep give an opinion?

M. Got rubbed his eyes and remarked:

"Sleep is an opinion."

There was no appeal from this sententious verdict, but it is to be hoped that ministers who happen to read this story will not lay it too much to heart.—(Youth's Companion.

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