

THE LYONS SILK INDUSTRY.

Work of the Weavers—The Old Jacquard Loom—A Doomed Industry.

(J. H. Hayden's Lyons Letter.)

The three centers of silk weaving in this city are the hill known as Croix Rousse, the suburb of Saint Just, and the plain of Brotteaux. Each one of these sections of the city is filled with tall houses of five and six floors, built of cheap stone and filled with silk weavers. Each floor is occupied, according to the size of the house, by one, two, three, and sometimes even four families, all in separate apartments, which open on a common landing and stairway. The largest of these apartments is composed of two rooms—a kitchen and the "chambre de tissage," or weaving shop. The kitchen is the living room of the family, where the wife of the "canut" cooks the meals, and where husband, wife and children sleep in that disgusting promiscuity engendered everywhere by poverty. The largest of the rooms is always the "chambre de tissage, and here the entire space is occupied by the two, three or four looms which form the most valuable part of the family possessions.

These machines are all, without exception, the old Jacquard loom, long since relegated everywhere except in Lyons, to the company of the spinning wheel of our great grandmothers. With but few exceptions all these looms are old and worn-out; they were erected by the grandfather of the present "canut," who, himself a silk weaver, consented, with much reluctance and many misgivings, to replace the old frame and shuttle with which he, his father and his grandfather before him had plied their trade, by the new fangled invention of Jacquard.

The appearance of a Lyons chambre de tissage has a quaint flavor of antiquity about it; the light enters through windows which have never been washed since they were glazed; of the three or four looms it may contain but one is at work, the others do nothing but wait for the weaver to do. The weaver stands in front of his loom, works with his left hand the spring which drives the shuttle forward, then pulls with his right hand the string that sets free another spring which draws it back from right to left, at the same time pressing with his right foot on a treadle which keeps the threads of the warp moving around the rollers between which they are stretched, and automatically regulates the pattern according to the perforated cardboard pattern design attached to the upper frame of the loom. The weaver bends over his work in silence, never stopping the monotonous and clock-like movements of hands and feet, except, maybe, to tie a broken thread and it seems as though the ghost of Jacquard himself was hovering around and superintending the intricate movements of his invention, the noisy voice of which fills the room with its incessant click! click! click! click!

In some cases they have but one room in which to live, as well as work; here there are never more than two looms—one for the husband, the other for the wife, and the children wind the silk on the shuttles. Where there are four looms one is generally confided to a "companion," that is to say, to a weaver who takes his meals in the house, and receives for his work one-half of the price paid by the manufacturer. The man bending over his old-fashioned worn-out Jacquard loom, can earn at the present prices, something like 60 cents a day. The head of the family receives from the manufacturer the materials—warp and wool—and makes a bargain to weave it into velvet, into satin or silk, at so much per metre, a metre being equal to thirty-nine and one-third inches. This price varies according to the fabric to be woven and according to its quality, more being paid for velvet than for weaving satin, which again is paid for at a higher rate than silk, but as the quantity which can be woven within a given time differs according to the fabric and its quality the average daily earnings of each loom are about the same, depending more on the skill and strength of the weaver than on the nature or quality of the fabric woven.

Ten years ago the silk weavers of Lyons numbered 70,000; five years later their number had fallen to 55,000, and three years ago there were but 35,000. It looks as though the time was coming when Lyons will no longer contain more than 4,000 or 5,000 "artistes-tisseurs" that weave extra fine grades of silks and velvet, the intricate patterns and high finish of which can, so it is claimed by the Lyons manufacturers, never be produced by any other than hand looms.

Origin of the Habeas Corpus.

(Cor. Troy Times.) As the public has been deeply interested in obtaining correct election returns, it may be mentioned in this connection that Great Britain owes the habeas corpus act to an adroit fraud. The reader must not suppose that I am advocating or excusing such things, my object being merely to mention a strange historic fact. The privilege of habeas corpus is contained in Magna Charta, but its operations had been nullified by royal authority, and this was one of the causes which led to the civil war in which Cromwell reached distinction. In 1674 the house of commons passed a bill fully defining the nature and power of habeas corpus, but the house of lords opposed it, and yet it was eventually carried in the above-mentioned manner. In the final vote in that body the yeas were 57 and the nays 55—in all 112; whereas the journal shows that the whole attendance at that time was not more than 109.

The discrepancy is explained in the following manner, Lord Gray, who was one of the tellers, favored the bill, and as a very corpulent nobleman voted Gray exclaimed: "You ought to pass for five. The other teller did not (in the confusion of the moment) notice this, and the fraud escaped detection. The bill to which humanity is so deeply indebted thus entered existence, and I need hardly add that the writ of habeas corpus as it exists in America is a close copy of the bill which was enacted in the above-mentioned manner.

Josh Billings: The hardest sinner in the whole lot to convert is the one who spends half his time in sinning and the other half in repentance.

SCINTILLANT.

Phyllis made a pretty cake To please her papa's palate, Her parent put it on a stake And used it for a mallet.

On the rollers he glides like the cars, But an accident his happiness mars; As so swiftly he is sped, He sat down on his head, And he saw about ten million * * *

The man who does the brain work Gets the glory and the dash; But the man who lends to business Holds a mortgage on the cash.

Here lies old Jones, Who all his life collected bones, Till death, that grim and bony specter, That all-annoying bone collector, Bonded old Jones, so neat and tidy, That here he lies, all bona fide.

HISTORICAL RELICS.

Some of Those on View at the State Department.

(Washington Cor. Cleveland Leader.) Though visitors seldom enter it, the library of the state department contains some of the most valuable historical relics in the possession of the government. Here is kept the original draft of the declaration of independence, and within the past few years the identical desk upon which Jefferson wrote it. Jefferson's desk is a small mahogany box-like writing desk, about eighteen inches wide, two feet long and three inches thick. One might easily take it on his lap to use it, but it was probably laid upon the table while the declaration was penned upon it. It has a series of small compartments on one side for pens and writing material, and when opened its top is covered with green baize. Pasted upon one of its inner leaves is a note in Jefferson's own handwriting, dated at Monticello, in which he says the desk was made by a Philadelphia carpenter, and that it was the one on which he wrote the declaration. This note closes with the following sentence: "Politics as well as religion has its superstitions; these, gaining strength with time, may one day give imaginary value to this relic for its associations with the birth of the great charter of our independence."

In the case containing this desk, on the shelf above it, lie the staff of Benjamin Franklin and the swords of Washington and Jackson. Benjamin Franklin's cane is a thick gold-headed stick of knotted crab-tree. It is painted black, highly polished, and on its end it has a brass ferrule. Its head is designed, as says Jefferson, in the form of a cap of liberty, and its gold is very yellow and shows but little alloy. This cane supported Franklin during his last years upon all state occasions, and when he died he willed it to Washington, saying, "If it were a scepter, Gen. Washington has merited it, and it would become it." Washington prized it highly, and at his death he willed it to his nephew, Charles Washington, and the grandson of Charles Washington gave it to the United States.

George Washington's sword, shown here, is the one which he wore when a colonel, and the one which hung at his side throughout the Revolution. It is not a flashy article, and there is no glitter of gold about it, but its edge looks very sharp, and its blade, slightly tarnished, not over an inch wide, was evidently made to do good service. Its sheath and belt lie beside it. This belt is of yellow buckskin, the plain silver clasp of which is marked with the letters, "G. W.," and the sheath is of a dark leather, stamped with different figures. George Washington mentions this sword in his will, in which he gives one to each of his nephews, with the request that "they be not unsheathed except for self-defense and the defense of their country and its rights." Andrew Jackson's sword is a very expensive article. It will weigh twice that of Washington's, and it has a heavy gold handle, and its sheath is of gold and steel. Its wide blade, slightly curved, shines like a mirror, and at the middle it shows the evidences of having been broken in two and welded together again. Its sheath is somewhat scratched, and it has evidently been pretty well used.

Another curiosity in this room is an immense shell or torpedo from six to eight inches in diameter and over a foot long, which Elihu Washburne, our minister at Paris, picked up during the bombardment of Paris and sent to the state department as a relic. It is a murderous looking shell, and its description says it was thrown into the city during the siege. Just below this, in a box about two feet wide and three feet long, is a plaster cast of one of the first treaties on record. It is a copy of the treaty between the Athenians and the Chalcidians, made 446 years before Christ, when Socrates was 22 years old and Pericles was in his prime. The original of this was engraved on a slab of Pentelic marble found in the south wall of the Acropolis at Athens.

Spanned by Three Lifetimes.

(Buffalo Courier.) An illustration of how long a period can be covered by three lives, if they happen to be long ones, was recently furnished in Buffalo. Within two years a person going up Delaware avenue could have caught a glimpse through a window of a hale old gentleman who in his youth had seen an old man who had when himself a boy known Peregrine White, the first white child born in New England, having come into the world on board the good ship Mayflower while that vessel lay in Provincetown harbor before the landing on Plymouth Rock had been made. Theodore Parker once said that eighteen old men touching each other's hands carried us back to Christ.

Florida Lemon Growing.

(Chicago Times.) On Lake Apopka, Florida, there is a lemon grove containing 3,000 trees, all of the choicest varieties. They are all budded upon orange stocks. It is claimed that lemon raising will soon rival orange growing as a Florida industry, and that lemons promise to be a more profitable and easier matured fruit than oranges.

A Barrel of Gravel. A Norwich, Conn., gentleman made a most remarkable shipment to the Bermuda Islands the other day. It was a barrel of ordinary gravel. It seems that his father is a resident of the Bermuda islands, and a raiser of poultry. There is no gravel on the islands suitable for the "biddies' digestive organs, hence the shipment.

The Italian Image-Maker.

(Philadelphia Times.) "I make a plaster figure in winter, sella dem in street in country in spring and summer," said Guisepe Antonelli, looking up from his work in a third-story room in a tenement house. "I make only sella figures; no can sella larcha ones—too heavy. Leeta ones put in basket, on tray, carry easy. Make all myself."

"Do you make the models yourself?" "Model? Oh, for models? No; I buy de figura and maka de cass from figura. Image in plaster just so good as clay model—all same; not quite so fine; but I can make fine with knife. Ze mold in many pieces—every picca different; one picca for face, noder for handa, noder for drap. See?"

"What are the favorite figures?" "Differen' time differen' figura. Some time sella lot, some time not at all. One time maka figura lazee going to dive; not can maka enough. Zen people get tired, not can sella zem. Differen' heads, busts, zep sella all time. Venus, Clytie, Proserpina, good; maka zem always. Angels, head of Christ, Santa Madonna, all ze time; sella zem every-where. Zen maka bracket for place vase; always sell bracket if pretty."

"We don't send out any canvassers from here," said Lucrenti, the figure molder. "Our trade is a custom one. We make no models, we buy them. We only make the plaster casts and molds. When I came to this country, more than thirty years ago, there were very few Italians over here and very few people in this business. The men who sell casts of images and figures on the streets generally make them themselves or act as agents for a man who makes them. There are now quite a number of these plaster-cast makers in Philadelphia, and it is a flourishing trade. Some of the work turned out is really good, but most of it is not well finished; is too smooth. It is done quickly and often without proper tools."

Loggers of the Redwood Regions.

(Mendocino Cor. New Orleans Times-Democrat.) Of the men engaged in logging it may be said that they are strong and hardy, but not so inured to hardship as their brothers of the Northern pineries. Here the work is done in the summer time, beneath fair skies and in a bracing and salubrious atmosphere. The strong sea breeze penetrates the deepest forests and lowers the temperature, so that it is seldom uncomfortable, even at mid-day; while at night two or more blankets are always required. The life they lead affords but little variety. They are early risers, hence retire early, as there is nothing to keep them up but the recreation of a game of cards or the telling of threadbare stories. But on Sundays the majority go to the mill town and have a "good time," as they call it, which too often means a drunken orgie.

Many of them have been seafaring men, and retain the habits of their former calling, one of which is that their wages are perpetually mortgaged to some rum-seller. Work in the redwoods is full of risk, and the accident insurance companies have agents who visit all logging camps to solicit patronage. Statistics show that the insurance companies are "away behind" on the redwoods, the annual losses paid being three or four times in excess of the premiums received.

But, although many of the woodsmen are improvident, there are instances where, by close economy and union of purpose, men who began life as "swampers" have grown to be mill-owners. The opportunities for "making a stake" by speculation in timber lands have been numerous, the pre-emption and homestead laws of the United States having been liberally taken advantage of by woodsmen. Quarter-sections of land, costing the pre-emptor \$200, have been sold for \$3,000, \$4,000, or \$5,000, when available for or near a mill site.

A Painter's Story.

(Paris Gallant.) The Figaro tells an amusing story of the tricks of the trade in pictures. A broker named D— had signed a contract with a poor member of the brush to take all the latter could produce, the consideration being two francs an hour. The line of the painter was military subjects. As soon as he had finished painting the broker took it away, changed the signature to that of "A. E. Gaubault," and sold it at a handsome profit. The consequence was that while the poor artist slaved during ten hours of the day at the rate of two francs an hour and remained unknown to any but the rascally broker the fame of "Gaubault" kept rising apace, and his pictures fetched higher prices every year.

The painter happening to stroll into the salon one day recognized his handiwork—but not the signatures appended. Consulting his catalogue he discovered "Gaubault's" address at the rooms of M. Bernheim, the well-known dealer in the Rue LaFite. Hastening there he introduced himself to the dealer as "Gaubault." "Ah," exclaimed M. Bernheim, "I congratulate you; you have achieved wonderful success. I have been wishing to make your acquaintance for the last six years." "O," replied the artist, "but my name is not 'Gaubault,' but Beauquesne;" and he forthwith acquainted the dealer with his little contract with D—. Since then the latter has vanished, and Beauquesne signs the canvases which made his pseudonym famous, and which in turn brought him to the notice of those who had been admiring them at the salon for the last three years.

Water on the Staked Plain.

The Fort Worth (Tex.) Gazette says of the Staked Plain, a plateau in northwestern Texas and the eastern part of New Mexico, covering 40,000 square miles, that its steeples "are no longer the barren deserts of the geography. Wells of splendid water are being dug, and the welcome fluid springs up at any time after twenty feet has been dug. This water not only supplies stock, but enough is expected to be obtained to use successfully for irrigating purposes."

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1849 Springfield of Springfield 2,585,623 00

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