

PITTSBURGH SUNDAY NOVEMBER 8, 1891.

HERE'S MARK TWAIN.

The First of His Series of European Letters to The Dispatch.

OBSERVATIONS AT AIX.

Utility of the Crowned Heads of the Continent as Advertising Agencies.

PLENTY OF FULL-GROWN NOISES.

Disappointed With the Prince of Wales' Favorite Game and the Happiness of Gamblers.

EXPERIENCE IN THE DOUCHE-BATH.

A Prescription of Drinking Water That Recalled the Burial Place of the Army of One of the Cæsars.

THE PLEASURES OF A TRIP TO LAKE ANNEY.

Letter No. 1.

REPORT OF THE DISPATCH AT AIX-LES-BAINS, FRANCE, Oct. 25.

ERTAINLY Aix-les-Bains is an enchanting place. It is a strong word, but I think the facts justify it. True, there is a rabble of nobilities, big and little, here all the time, and often a king or two, but as these behave quite nicely and also keep mainly to themselves, they are little or no annoyance.

And then a king makes the best advertisement there is, and the cheapest. All he costs is a reception at the station by the Mayor and the police in their Sunday uniforms, shop front decorations along the route from station to hotel, brass band at the hotel, fireworks in the evening, free

convincing air of quiet and repose. But just across the narrow street is the little market square, and at a corner of that is that arch that is neighbor to the Roman arch, and that narrow street, and that billiard table of a market place, and that church reable on a belt, to turn out more noise to the cubic yard at the wrong time than any other similar combination in the earth or out of it.

A Great Place for Noise.

In the street you have the akull-bursting thunder of the passing hack, a volume of sound not producible by six hacks anywhere else; in the back is a lunatic with a whip, which he cracks to notify the public to get out of his way. This crack is as keen and sharp and penetrating and ear-splitting as a pistol shot at close range, and the lunatic believes it in volleys, not single shots. You think you will not be able to live till he gets by, and when he does get by he only leaves a vacancy for the bondhu who sells La Pêche guard to fill with his strange and awful yell. He arrives with the early morning and the market people, and there is a dog that arrives at about the same time and barks steadily at nothing till he dies, and they fetch another dog just like him. The bark of this breed is the twin of the whip volleys, and stabs like a knife.

By and by, what is left of you the church bell gets. There are many bells and apparently 5,000 or 7,000 town clocks, and as they are all five minutes apart—probably by law—there are the multitudes of fashionable folk striking all the time—at least, after you go to bed they are. There is one public clock that strikes the hour, and then strikes it over again to see if it was right. Then on Wednesdays and Sundays there is a chime—a chime that starts in pleasantly and musically, then suddenly breaks into a frantic roar, and boom and boom and boom till he dies, and makes you think Paris is up and the revolution come again. And up, as I have said, one sleeps here—sleeps like the dead. Once he gets his grip on his neck, he neither back nor whip, nor nose fend, nor dog, nor bell cyclone, nor all of them together can wrench it loose or mar its deep and tranquil continuity. Yes, there is indeed something in this air that is death to insomnia.

The Style of Entertainment.

The buildings of the Cercle and the Villa des Fleurs are huge in size, and each has a theatre in it, and a great restaurant, also conveniences for gambling and general and varied entertainment. They stand in ornamental grounds of great extent and beauty, and are the resorts of fashionable folk sitting at refreshment tables in the open air, afterwards, and listen to the music, and it is there they mainly go to break the Sabbath. To get the privilege of entering these grounds and buildings you buy a ticket for a few francs, which is good for the whole season. You are then free to go and come continually, and to sit at the tables, free, except on special occasions, gamble, buy refreshments, and make yourself symmetrically comfortable.

Nothing could be handier than these two little theatres. The curtain doesn't rise until 8:30; then between the acts one can idle for half an hour in the other departments of the building, damaging his appetite in the restaurant or his pocketbook in the baccarat room. The singers and actors are from Paris, and their performance is beyond praise.

There was never in a fashionable gambling hell until I came here. I had read several volumes of descriptions of such places, but the reality was new to me. I very much wanted to see this animal, especially the now historic game of baccarat, and this was a good place for Aix ranks next to Monte Carlo for high play and plenty of it. But the result was what I might have expected—the interest of the looker-on perishes with the novelty of the spectacle; that is to say, in a few minutes. A permanent and intense interest is secured in baccarat, or in any other game, but you have to buy it. You don't get it by standing around looking on.

A Flexible Car in Baccarat.

The baccarat table is covered with green cloth and is marked off in divisions with chalk or something. The banker sits in the middle, the croupier opposite. The cus-

tomers fill all the chairs at the table, and the rest of the crowd are massed at their backs and leaning over them to deposit chips or gold coins. Constantly money and chips are flung upon the table, and the game seems to consist in the croupier's reaching for those things with a flexible sculling oar, and raking them home. It appeared to be a rational enough game for him, and if I could have borrowed his car I would have stayed, but I didn't see where the entertainment of the others came in.

This was because I saw without perceiving and observed without understanding. For the widow and the orphan and the other do win money there. Once an old gray mother in Israel or elsewhere pulled out, and I heard her say to her daughter or her granddaughter as they passed me, "There, I've won six louis, and I'm going to quit while I'm ahead." Also there was this statistic. A friend pointed to a young man with the dead stub of a cigar in his mouth, which he kept munching nervously all the time and pitching \$100 chips on the board, while two sweet young girls reached down over his shoulder to deposit modest little gold pieces, and said, "He's only fun-

ning, now; waiting a few hundred to pass the time—waiting for the 'gold room' to open, you know, which won't be till well after midnight—then you'll see him beat! He won \$14,000 there last night. They don't bet anything there but big money."

No Candidates for Suicide.

The thing I chiefly missed was the hard-gard people with the intense eye, the hunted look, the desperate men, candidates for suicide and the pauper's grave. They are in the descriptions, as a rule, but they were off duty that night. All the gamblers, male and female, old and young, looked abnormally cheerful and prosperous. However, all the actions were there, clothed richly, and speaking all the languages. Some of the women were painted, and were evidently shy as to character. These items tallied with the descriptions well enough.

The etiquette of the place was different to master. In the brilliant and populous halls and corridors you don't smoke, and you wear your hat, so mother how many ladies are in the thick throng of drifting humanity; but the moment you cross the sacred threshold and enter the gambling hell, off the hat must come, and everybody with his cigar and goes to suffocating the ladies.

Standing Out the Night Bath.

But what I came here for, five weeks ago, was the baths. My right arm was disabled with rheumatism. To sit at home in Amer-

ica and guess out the European bath best fitted for a particular ailment or combination of ailments, it is not possible, and it would not be a good idea to experiment in that way, anyhow. There are a great many curative baths on the continent, and some are good for one disease, but bad for another. So it is necessary to let a physician name your bath for you. As a rule, Americans go to London to get this advice, and South Americans go to Paris for it. Now and then an economist chooses his bath himself and does 1,000 miles of railroading to get to it, and then the local physicians tell him he has come to the wrong place. He sees that he has lost time and money and strength, and almost the minute that he realizes this he loses his temper. I had the rheumatism, and was advised to go to Aix, not so much because I had that disease, as because I had the promise of certain other things. What they were was not explained to me, but they are either in the following menu or I have been sent to the wrong place. Dr. Wakefield's book says:

We know that the class of maladies benefited by the water and baths at Aix are those due to defect of nutrition, liability of the

nervous system, or to a gouty, rheumatic, herpetic or syphilitic diathesis—all diseases extremely debilitating and requiring a tonic, and not a depressant action of the remedy. This is seen to find here, as recorded experience abundantly testifies.

According to the line of treatment, followed particularly with view to the temperature of the water, the Aix water can be made sedative, exciting, derivative or alternative and tonic.

The Temple of the Baths.

The "Establishment" is the property of France, and all the officers and servants are employees of the French Government. The bath house is a huge and massive pile of white marble masonry, and looks more like a temple than anything else. It has several floors, and each is full of bath cabinets. There is every kind of bath—for the nose, the ears, the throat, vapor baths, tub baths, swimming baths and all people's favorite, the douche. It is a good building to get lost in, when you are not familiar with it. From early morning until nearly noon people are straining in and streaming out without halt.

The majority come afoot, but great numbers are brought in sedan chairs, a sufficiently ugly contrivance whose cover is a steep little tent made of striped canvas. You see nothing of the patient in this diving bell as the bearers tramp along, except a glimpse of his ankles bound together and swathed around with blankets or towels to that generous degree that the result

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After my first douche I went to the chemist's on the corner, as per instruction, and

asked for half a glass of Challa water. It comes from a spring 16 miles from here. It was furnished to me, but, perceiving that there was something the matter with it, I offered to wait till they could get some that was fresh, but they said it always smells that way.

Water of Shady Reputation.

They said that the reason that this was so much ranker than the sulphur water of the bath was that this contained 32 times as much sulphur as that. It may be true, but in my opinion that water comes from a cemetery, and not a fresh cemetery, either. History says that one of the early Roman Generals lost an army down there some where. If he could come back now I think this water would help him find it again. However, I drank the Challa, and have drunk it once or twice every day since. I suppose it is all right, but I wish I knew what was the matter with those Romans.

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As thick as one's wrist playing upon me while they kneaded me, stroked me, twisted me, and applied all the other details of the scientific massage to me for seven or eight minutes. Then they stood me up and played a powerful jet upon me all around for another minute. The cool shower had come next, and the thing was over. I came out of the bath house a few minutes later, feeling younger and fresher and finer than I have felt since I was a boy. The spring and cheer and delight of this exaltation lasted three hours, and the same uplifting effect has followed the 20 douches which I have taken since.

After my first douche I went to the chemist's on the corner, as per instruction, and

asked for half a glass of Challa water. It comes from a spring 16 miles from here. It was furnished to me, but, perceiving that there was something the matter with it, I offered to wait till they could get some that was fresh, but they said it always smells that way.

Water of Shady Reputation.

They said that the reason that this was so much ranker than the sulphur water of the bath was that this contained 32 times as much sulphur as that. It may be true, but in my opinion that water comes from a cemetery, and not a fresh cemetery, either. History says that one of the early Roman Generals lost an army down there some where. If he could come back now I think this water would help him find it again. However, I drank the Challa, and have drunk it once or twice every day since. I suppose it is all right, but I wish I knew what was the matter with those Romans.

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