

THE WABASH.

CHAPTER THE FIRST.

BORDEAUX.

Residence in a convent—The villa—The climate—The vineyards of Bordeaux—The ex-minister, de Peyronnet, parboiled—The archbishop and the curé—Agen of the fat geese—French doctors—Vessels to America—The plate chests—The Belle Assize—Emigration—The bosquet de Flore—Departure—Working consuls and gentlemen consuls.

BORDEAUX is a magnificent city. Its open squares, its "allées", its "courses" bordered by trees, and its public buildings, make parts of it more imposing than the best quarters of any other town in Europe—excepting, always, Paris. The private houses of its merchants and the magnificent colonnade of its theatre give evidence of the wealth of its inhabitants: and its countless shops of "charcutiers", piled with every delicacy, from Strasbourg and Périgieux pies to the native wines of the district, make the mouth of the stranger water, while he accuses the inhospitality of the préfet (M.

Neveu) which debars him from being introduced there where his excited appetite might be gratified, and the memory of the préfecture embalmed with that of truffles and of fat geese from Agen.

Unlike the holders of most préfectures in France, M. Neveu treats English visitors to the town with marked neglect.

But strangers visit not Bordeaux as a place of residence. Instinct seems to have guided our travellers in the selection of quarters recommended by climate, by scenery, by cheapness of the necessaries and comforts of life, or by the hospitality of the natives; and none of these attract to Bordeaux. In vain, therefore, did we seek through every quarter of the town for a furnished apartment that we might lease for a time; a single room, or even two or three "chambres garnies", were to be had; but a house, or even a large furnished apartment, was no more to be met with than bashfulness in a Gascon.

At length, we turned us to the neighbourhood of the city. Our old banker, M. Gues-tier, told us that he had a château to let in

what was considered the paradise of Bordeaux. We saw it; agreed to his terms; and were about to pay him a year's rent in advance, when he said, "I ought to tell you that I wish to sell the property, and must reserve the right of doing so."

"Be it so," I replied; "in that case, you must return an amount of the rent proportioned to the term which we shall have surrendered."

"Pardonnez-moi," he answered. "If I sell during the first three months of your occupancy, I will do so; but if after that time, I do not return anything."

I made my bow, and took an affectionate leave of M. Guestier.

Fruitless, however, were all our inquiries for a residence; till a good priest informed us that the nuns of Talence, near the banker's château, would let us the main building of their convent, reserving only a wing for themselves. We inspected and engaged it for a month.

"And why," asked the curé, when, at the end of the month, we removed to another

house, "why have you quitted these good nuns?"

"I was fearful of growing into a nun myself, M. le Curé. I met nuns at every corner. Instead of having that wing of the house to ourselves, as covenanted, we found that the garret above us was the dormitory of the holy sisters; and there was, consequently, a continual rush of *religieuses* from the bottom to the topmost story. Was I going to the cupboard in the anteroom for a bottle of choice wine, a nun was sure to pop out of her neighbouring laundry upon me; on the staircase, I met a couple of nuns, with a plate of milk, coaxing a cat to follow them up to their dormitory; and once, in the dusk of the evening, as I was hurrying down to tea, I came full tilt against a veiled lady in black who was rushing towards the stairs, and to whom, mistaking her for my daughter, I opened wide my arms."

The Curé laughed amazingly.

"But I hope you parted from them on good terms?" he asked.

"On the best in the world," I replied. "Many little acts of politeness had passed be-

tween us and the reverend mother. Once upon a time, for example, our footman had, with much ceremony, introduced to our sitting room two of the nuns, bearing between them, like a royal crown upon a cushion, a small glass vase, about the size of a coffee cup, which they presented to us with much solemnity, and with the compliments of the reverend mother, who prayed that we would accept a 'pot de confitures' of their own making. Of course, we received it with all decorum, and eat the preserve with a kind of pious gastronomic delectation. But, however, in the bill that two of the sisterhood presented when we left the apartment, I was puzzled to read the following charge.

“ ‘ For a pot de confiture . . . 0fr. 5c.’

“ ‘ Five centimes, one halfpenny for a pot of preserve!’ I exclaimed: ‘ but, Mesdames, did we not enjoy that confiture as a token of your beneficence?’

“ ‘ But the pot, Monsieur,’ answered the aide-de-camp, casting down her eyes and folding her hands in the sleeves of her ample