

MAISON BARLIER

(RUE DE L'ABBAYE, PARIS).

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THE Maison Barlier was built in the meadows of St. Germain des Prés—formerly the scene of the celebrated Foire de St. Germain—including Notre Dame des Augustins, St. Serverin, St. Julien Le Pauvre, and St. Germain des Prés—churches where the early monk physicians held their meetings and stored their treasures before they acquired a building of their own. The fairs at first were mostly devoted to the sale of sacred objects as figures of saints and religious

pictures, or in honour of a dead saint; but in time they became purely commercial, and offered pleasurable attractions for students and others. That of St. Germain was the oldest and most important fair in France. It was held as far back as the twelfth century. But for some time there was a restriction placed on these fairs, until Louis XI. in 1482, by letters patent, authorised the monks to re-establish their fair, and in 1486 they constructed on the ground belonging to the Hôtel de Navarre as many as 340 booths for the use of the merchants. In 1512 they were repaired and modified by the Abbé Guillaume Bricconnet, but on March 16th, 1762, they were destroyed by fire. After this the fair was held in a large quadrilateral walled-in space, with a great court, and it was constructed so as to accommodate a large number of merchants. The fair was the scene

of great gaiety and conviviality—"du vin et toujours du vin, belle était la coutume du temps. La Foire St. Germain était un champ toujours ouvert à la galanterie! C'est encore Scarron qui nous apprend:—

'Foire, ou l'on vend moins d'affiquets
Que l'on vend de chair humaine,
Sous le prétexte des bijoux.'

From an inscription under an old engraving of the seventeenth century we find that it commenced on the 3rd of February, and lasted for 15 days, and was often prolonged beyond this. The merchants held their tenancies from those who, at the beginning of the century, owned the Abbaye St. Germain. The spot on which the building was erected was originally called the "Jardin de Nesle."

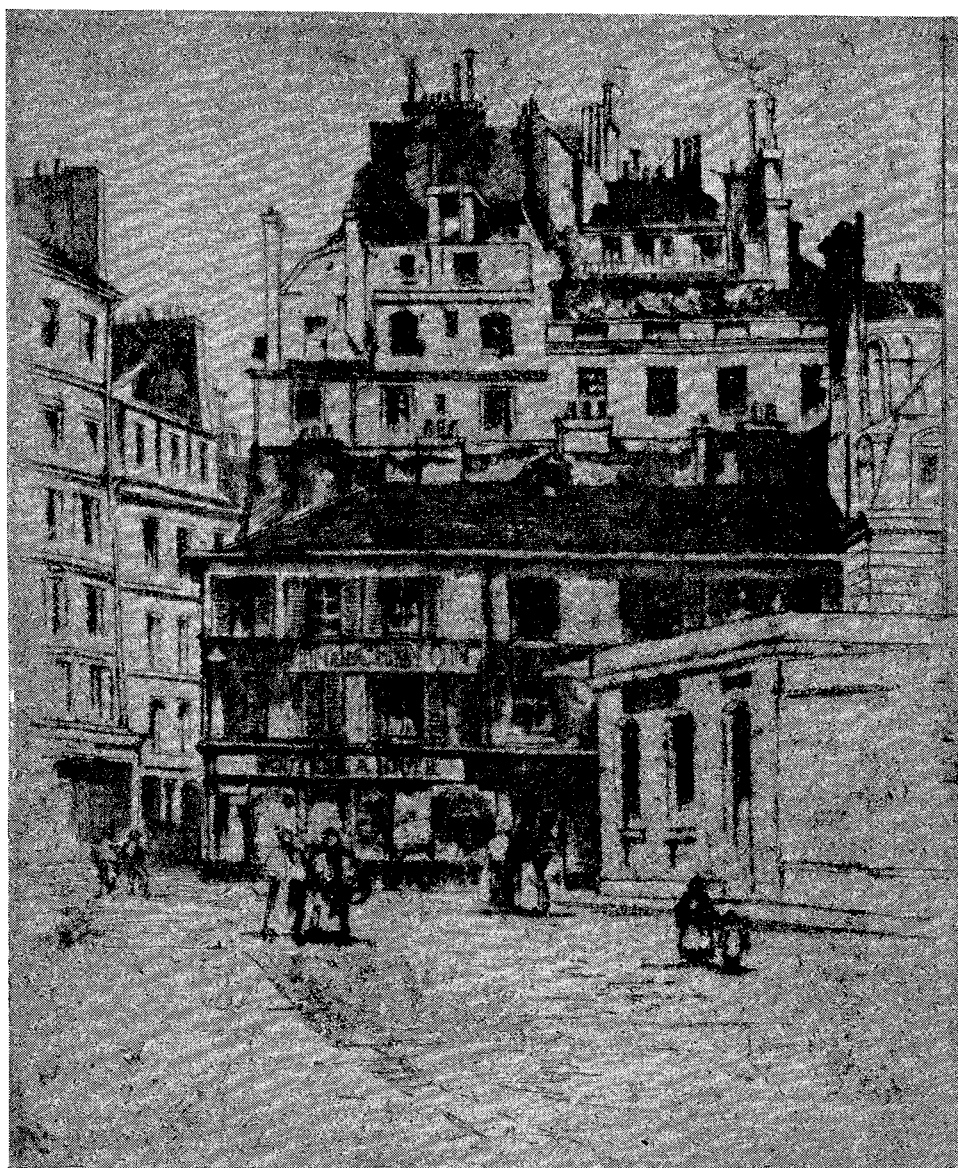
Thither occasionally went the King and Queen with all their court. Indeed, to this brilliant rendezvous went all grades of society of every calling and occupation, from the artisans and exquisitely dressed courtesans to the court favourites. It was always a condition to the privilege of taking a lady to the fair that the gallant should make her a present. Nor were pickpockets any idler in those days or less apt than they are at present. "Especially," says Nemeitz, "have you to be careful of those who cry at the entrance, 'Gardez vos poches.'" At night the fair was brilliantly lighted and the crush sometimes was enormous. Hither the Portuguese and Spanish brought their chocolate, first introduced by Alphonse Louis du Plessis, brother of Cardinal du Richelieu, the Portuguese having special privileges in regard to its sale. But for ages before the conquest of Mexico by

Spain the Mexicans had drunk their "Chocolatl" from their "choco" tree (*Theobroma cacao*), "latl" signifying water, not the compound chocolate mixture as we now know it. The use of chocolate was then very popular, and in 1663 the Medical Faculty endorsed this use by its approval. The very nutritious and sustaining properties of this highly charged carbohydrate and nitrogenous, heat-giving food are best known to our mountain climbers and long-distance runners. Coffee was then, we are told, regarded as a "curiosity." It became better known through the patronage of Marie Theresa, Spanish Consort of Louis XIV. Armenians served it at the fair of St. Germain.

It is interesting to note that the Arabic name given to coffee was "gahweh," which signified wine, showing that the Easterns early recognised its stimulating properties.

The story of coffee takes us into

the misty past of Ethiopia, its seeds, not berries, as they are often erroneously called, having been first imported into Europe (Batavia) from Abyssinia and Arabia. Few realise that the beautiful evergreen from which these seeds are obtained is a most attractive tree, very different in its wild state, when it reaches to over 20 feet in height, to that which we see in hot-houses, nor has it the pyramidal shape which it is made to assume in cultivation. Its snow-white flowers, nestling in the axils of its leathery, oblong leaves, exhale a delightful perfume, the deep scarlet fruit making exquisite contrasts for the greater part of the year, as the trees continue in blossom for some eight months. The Armenians who served up the coffee in the booths at the fair of St. Germain were probably better instructed in the



Maison Barlier (from an etching by Katherine Kimball). The site of the ancient fair of St. Germain, and the meeting place of the ancient monk physicians and the resort of the medical students in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

preparation of the seeds than most of our modern cooks. They used the Mocha beans and roasted these themselves. Nor was the coffee adulterated with chicory and caramel and many other substances which alter its flavour and impair its dietetic value, the proper roasting of the beans, influencing as it does their weight, volume, and aroma, being the main factor in the successful preparation of coffee. The Austrian or Norwegian peasant can give our English cooks many points in "making a cup of coffee." The latest innovation in this beverage—viz., the abstraction of the alkaloid caffeine from the bean—has imported a new element into the value of coffee. One can speak from experience that the flavour and refreshing properties are preserved and the objectionable physiological and therapeutical effects of caffeine are absent.

The "Mount Parnassus" of the medical students' song, with its well-known chorus, "Toujours, toujours, vous avez tout, mon cœur," was probably in the near neighbourhood of, though not comprised in, the original enclosure of the fair. It may have been some elevation in the neighbourhood of the Boulevard Montparnasse, near the Observatory at the end of the Boulevard Mont St. Michel, where it crosses the Boulevard Montparnasse and where the famous students' ball, the Bal Bullier, is still held.

For much of this information I am indebted to René Fauvel's "Les Étudiants de Médecine de Paris sous le Grand Roi," and to Miss Katherine Kimball (Royal Society of Etchers), a print of whose excellent etching of the Maison Barlier, exhibited in the Salon in 1908, accompanies this descriptive sketch.

VITAL STATISTICS.

HEALTH OF ENGLISH TOWNS.

In 76 of the largest English towns 8691 births and 4650 deaths were registered during the week ending March 5th. The annual rate of mortality in these towns, which had steadily declined in the four preceding weeks from 17.0 to 14.7 per 1000, further fell to 14.5 in the week under notice. During the first nine weeks of the current quarter the annual death-rate in these towns averaged 15.5 per 1000; the mean rate in London during the same period was also equal to 15.5. The lowest reported annual rates of mortality in the 76 towns last week were 7.0 in West Hartlepool, 7.8 in Willesden, and 8.0 in Reading; the rates in the other towns ranged upwards, however, to 21.4 in Burnley, 22.1 in Birkenhead, 22.7 in Swansea, and 23.9 in Wigan. In London the recorded death-rate last week did not exceed 14.4 per 1000. The 4650 deaths registered in the 76 towns last week showed a further decline of 52 from the numbers in recent weeks, and included 328 which were referred to the principal epidemic diseases, against numbers declining from 361 to 266 in the five preceding weeks; of these 328 deaths, 111 resulted from whooping-cough, 88 from measles, 50 from diphtheria, 32 from diarrhoea, 29 from scarlet fever, 17 from enteric fever, and 1 from small-pox. The mean annual rate of mortality in the 76 towns last week from these epidemic diseases was equal to 1.0 per 1000, against 1.0 and 0.8 in the two preceding weeks. No death from any of these epidemic diseases was registered last week in East Ham, Walthamstow, Tottenham, Derby, Wolverhampton, or in 7 other smaller towns; the annual death-rates therefrom ranged upwards, however, to 2.3 in Hastings, 2.4 in Middlesbrough, 3.8 in Birkenhead, and 3.9 in Burnley. The fatal cases of whooping-cough in the 76 towns, which had been 162, 135, and 100 in the three preceding weeks, rose again last week to 111, and caused annual death-rates equal to 1.1 in Rhondda, 1.3 in West Hartlepool, and 1.6 in Barrow-in-Furness. The deaths from measles, which had been 71 and 49 in the two previous weeks, rose to 88 last week; the highest annual rates from this disease last week were 2.1 in Ipswich and in Birkenhead, 2.2 in Hanley, and 2.4 in Burnley. The 50 deaths referred to diphtheria showed an increase of 16 upon the number in the previous week, and caused death-rates equal to 1.2 in King's Norton, 1.5 in Middlesbrough, 1.7 in Portsmouth, and 1.8 in Tynemouth. The 32 deaths attributed to diarrhoea were fewer than in any recent week. The 29 fatal cases of scarlet fever showed a decline of 3 from the number in the previous week, but included 3 in Birmingham and 2 each in Leicester, Nottingham, and Burnley. The 17 deaths referred to

enteric fever showed a slight increase; 2 were returned in Nottingham, Liverpool, Wigan, and Leeds. The fatal case of small-pox occurred in Newcastle-on-Tyne. The number of scarlet fever patients under treatment in the Metropolitan Asylums and in the London Fever Hospital, which had steadily declined in the 20 preceding weeks from 2819 to 1765, were 1766 on Saturday last; 211 new cases of this disease were admitted to these hospitals during last week, against 215 and 193 in the two preceding weeks. The Metropolitan Asylums Hospitals contained but one case of small-pox on Saturday last. Of the 1346 deaths registered in London last week, 290 were referred to pneumonia and other diseases of the respiratory system, against 425, 395, and 348 in the three preceding weeks; these 290 deaths were 159 below the corrected average number in the corresponding week of the five years 1905-09. The causes of 37, or 0.8 per cent., of the deaths registered in the 76 towns last week were not certified either by a registered medical practitioner or by a coroner. All the causes of death were duly certified in Leeds, Sheffield, West Ham, Bradford, Newcastle-on-Tyne, Hull, Nottingham, and in 49 other smaller towns; the 37 uncertified causes of death in the 76 towns last week included 7 in Liverpool, 5 in Birmingham, 3 in South Shields and in Gateshead, and 2 both in St. Helens and Preston.

HEALTH OF SCOTCH TOWNS.

In eight of the principal Scotch towns 912 births and 590 deaths were registered during the week ending March 5th. The annual rate of mortality in these towns, which had been equal to 17.7 and 16.2 per 1000 in the two preceding weeks, rose again slightly to 16.3 in the week under notice. During the first nine weeks of the current quarter the annual death-rate in these towns averaged 17.7 per 1000, and exceeded by 2.2 the mean rate during the same period in the 76 largest English towns. The annual death-rates last week in these eight Scotch towns ranged from 10.6 and 12.0 in Paisley and Edinburgh, to 18.1 in Dundee, 18.6 in Leith, and 27.6 in Greenock. The 590 deaths from all causes in the eight towns last week exceeded by 2 the number returned in the previous week, and included 79 which were referred to the principal epidemic diseases, corresponding with the number in the previous week. These 79 deaths were equal to an annual rate of 2.2 per 1000; the mean death-rate from the same diseases in the 76 English towns last week did not exceed 1.0 per 1000. These 79 deaths in the Scotch towns last week included 40 from measles, 14 from diarrhoea, 12 from diphtheria, 6 from "fever," 5 from scarlet fever, and 2 from whooping-cough, but not one from small-pox. The 40 fatal cases of measles corresponded with the number in the previous week, and included 28 in Glasgow, 6 in Leith, 3 in Greenock, and 2 in Edinburgh. The 14 deaths attributed to diarrhoea exceeded by 5 the number in the previous week; 6 occurred in Glasgow, 3 in Aberdeen, and 2 in Dundee. The deaths referred to diphtheria, which had been 13, 7, and 8 in the three preceding weeks, rose again to 12 last week, and included 9 in Glasgow. The 6 deaths referred to "fever," of which 3 were returned in Glasgow and 3 in Greenock, corresponded with the number in the previous week. Three of the 5 fatal cases of scarlet fever occurred in Glasgow. The 2 deaths from whooping-cough were fewer than in any recent week. The deaths in the eight towns referred to diseases of the respiratory system, which had been 135 and 97 in the two previous weeks, rose again to 114 last week, but were 60 below the number returned in the corresponding week of last year. The causes of 22, or 3.7 per cent., of the deaths in the eight towns last week were not certified or not stated; in the 76 English towns the proportion of uncertified causes of death last week did not exceed 0.8 per cent.

HEALTH OF IRISH TOWNS.

In 22 town districts of Ireland, having an estimated population of 1,151,790 persons, 652 births and 495 deaths were registered during the week ending March 5th. The mean annual rate of mortality in these towns, which had been equal to 22.8 per 1000 in each of the two previous weeks, declined to 22.4 in the week under notice. During the first nine weeks of the current quarter the annual death-rate in these Irish towns averaged 22.4 per 1000, whereas the