



# A VISIT TO PARIS 1890

## Introduction

William Ievers was born in Limerick City on 22 December, 1818, and was the son of Hawkins Ievers of Mount Ievers, Sixmilebridge, County Clare, and Margaret, nee O'Shaughnessy. He eventually became a Catholic, the religion of his mother. He joined the British navy when he was aged 18 years and followed this career until 1848, when he settled in Dublin and became a merchant.

In 1855, at the age of 37 years, he left Ireland with his wife and family to seek his fortune in goldrush Melbourne. He became a successful and wealthy real estate agent, a city councillor and a founder and director of the Colonial Building Society in that city.

On 12 February, 1890, following a farewell banquet given for him and his eldest son William (Jr), then a city councillor, at Melbourne Town Hall, father and son set off on a world tour on the ship *Oroya*. They returned to a champagne reception at Finlay's Hotel Melbourne, on 18 November, 1890, after their ten months' tour.

The Ievers stayed in Limerick from 4 July to 1 September, and also visited Paris for nine days in the same year. The 72 year old William kept a diary of his trip and, in 1894, he published his account of his world tour in a book *Fifty Years After, or Old Scenes Revisited*. He died in 1901, and was buried in Melbourne. This extract from his book describes his impressions of Paris in May, 1890.

### *Friday, 2nd May.*

Started off per express train early this morning for Paris. The country on the French side is also well cultivated, and we went through several long tunnels in getting through the Bernese Alps – I think they call them. No snow after leaving Lucerne. Great pity none of our party speak French, as we lost the pleasure of being informed as we go along of the names and history of the numerous castles, towns and ancient places that we pass by. But the country is a perfect picture to look at. 'Tis a long run for one day from Lucerne to Paris – 400 miles-but the carriages are very comfortable, and every convenience for

travellers are on board each train, and we all remarked that 'twas most singular that Mr. Speight, our expert Commissioner of Railways, has not seen the necessity of providing such 'conveniences' on the Victorian lines long ago. I speak feelingly, as I have often experienced the great inconvenience and actual danger incurred by passengers, especially elderly people, for such a want not being attended to on our Victorian lines. After we cleared the boundaries of Switzerland and entered 'La Belle France', twas evident that the cultivation of the land was not at all well looked to as in Italy or Switzerland, and 'twas noticeable the number of small and poor-looking dwellings to be seen on either side of the line, and was indicative of more poverty than we had lately seen. We stopped and had to submit to a Custom House search for contraband goods on the frontiers, but none of our party had any dutiable goods, and I could not see an opportunity of offering my Dead Sea water to any of the officers,

BY WILLIAM IEVERS

as we were not much troubled. The word Australian seemed to satisfy them. We rolled along cheerfully all day, and at six o'clock p.m. entered the station at Paris. Not a bad run, 400 miles in twelve and a half hours, stoppages included. I must say I would rather go slower, as forty miles an hour is, in my opinion, rather risky travelling. Cook's agent met us, and we drove to the Hotel St. Petersburg, 33 and 35 Rue Caumartin – a good house, where we were comfortably housed.

### *Saturday, 3rd May.*

After breakfast had a look round Paris, and went on the train to St. Maude, and called on Mrs. and Mr. Lambert, father and mother of Mr. Lambert, of Collins Street, Melbourne. He was not at home, but madame was delighted to see us, and at once prepared a good lunch, to which we did full justice, and spent a couple of



William Ievers and his son, pictured during their world tour, 1890.

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pleasant hours talking of old times and old friends. Madame appeared to live ideally in Melbourne still, as the pictures on the walls of the rooms testified, and a view of the old place, with Albert Lambert and Ellen Harrison and two or three others standing about, confirmed our ideas. We went to the Varieties Theatre in the evening, but after an hour we came away. I could not see the play from my position, and the language being foreign there was no use in stopping.

*Sunday, 4th May.*

After breakfast, Willie and self went to mass in the Church of the Madeline, and after that took a cab to Notre Dame. 'Tis a noble pile indeed. Here a funny incident occurred to us. When we drove to the church and dismounted, the cabman called after us and evidently wanted some money on account. I did not clearly understand him, but, suspecting his meaning, I handed him my new pair of kid gloves, and in pantomime told him to keep them till we returned. Not thinking (as I supposed) the gloves security enough for our return, he coolly took Willie's silk umbrella as further security, and then retired to his stand on the rank close by. We took his number, 1335, and laughed heartily at the idea of our being suspicious characters in the estimation of the cabman. Possibly he had been 'bilked' before by someone, but for all that Willie did not at all like the transaction. This Paris is an extraordinary place; so large, so busy and bustling, and the disregard of the solemnity of the Sunday was most noticeable - shops open, very few closed, and trade and business carrying-on was not at all in accord with our notions of things. There were large crowds, for all that, in the churches, and as fair a proportion of men there as you would almost see in Melbourne, and one of the priests went round and made what seemed to us to be a very good collection, very pleasing to see. We paid one penny for our chair to a woman in black, who goes round and collects it. After dinner the afternoon turned out to be very wet, so we stopped indoors.

*Monday, 5th May.*

Having agreed with Cook and Son to go on their three day's tour through the city and suburbs, a nice four-horse open carriage called for us at ten o'clock, and off we all went on our round of visits. At the Church of the Madeline 'twas awful to look along the outside walls where the Communists had been placed by the Versailles troops and shot to death, and the impact of the bullets where they had passed through their bodies and left their mark on the walls about four feet above the ground. 'Twas dreadful to think that the walls of the Church of God should be used for such a sanguinary purpose. The Place de la Concord, where Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette's heads had fallen,



*Paris street scene, in the shadow of the Panthéon.*

was pointed out to us, also a beautiful panorama of one of the battles outside the walls during the Siege of 1871. The Palace of Trocadero is worth inspection, also the Eiffel Tower, up which we went some hundreds of feet, and had an excellent lunch while surveying the city from our seats. We then visited the famous Palace of the Invalids, where the decayed warriors of France are comfortably sheltered by a grateful country. We visited the tomb of Napoleon, the Great, and, oh! what a lesson its sight conveyed of the vanity of human greatness. We were requested to remove our hats when we descended to the floor of the mausoleum itself: more veneration than Frenchmen display towards most things. The various flags of the different nations of Europe which

were taken in the wars of the Revolution by the French troops were hung up round the walls of the large hall adjoining the tomb of Napoleon; and perceiving among them an old English Union Jack, I asked the guide how they came by that flag, as I said I did not remember any battle in which the French had got one. The guide, strange to say, mentioned the battle of Fontenoy, and I at once reminded him that there was no such flag used by the English at that time, as the Union Jack had only begun to be used at the beginning of this century, after the Union between England and Ireland. He said his view was correct, but I said they must either have found it or stolen it and so the argument ended. He not in good humour and I quietly laughing at him. We saw the Palais



Royal, the Church of St. Eustache, the site of the Bastille, the Prison de la Roquette and the Place of Execution (where two criminals suffered next morning), the famous Cemetery of Père la Chaise – such splendid monuments by the hundred, including that of Heloise and Abelard, where youthful lovers delight to meet and bring away as mementos some of the soil from the hallowed spot. We saw Belville, Park of Buttes, Chaumont, and the lovely grotto and cascades; such noble views of the city from the top of the park, the Rue La Fayette and other places. Our visits this day were most interesting and pleasing.

*Tuesday, 6th May.*

After breakfast the carriage again called for us, and at Cook's among others, found Mr. and Mrs. Clarke (formerly Mrs. Nagle), of Melbourne, and Mr. Wilson proprietor of Scott's Hotel, who were much pleased to find so many fellow-colonists, and we were all mutually glad to be in each other's company for the day. Went through Park Monceau, Arc de Triomphe, Bois de Boulogne – such a lovely place of hundreds of acres right in the City of Paris. One wonders how the municipality manages to get the funds to cover the enormous outlay they must be put to in order to maintain this and scores of other places for public resort and pleasure. Truly the French authorities see to the comfort, recreation and wants of the Parisians in a way that would astonish our City Fathers – of Melbourne, I mean – and I remarked to my son (who is a City Councillor) that I hoped when he returned home he would endeavour to have a few more seats placed in our public gardens and parks and open places, and other conveniences that he will recollect, and I must say that the French railway authorities pay the greatest attention to travellers of every class. We visited the Racecourse of Longchamps, Citadel of Mount Valerian, Palace of St. Cloud (in ruins), Forest of Ville d'Avray, Grand Trianon, the grounds once the scene of much depravity in the days of Louis XIV and Madame de Maintenon, and the private rooms of Josephine and Napoleon I. We saw those costly gilded State carriages belonging to the French kings, one of which cost 400,000 francs – such wasteful extravagance; no wonder the French people grew tired of kings, courtiers and all their following. The Palace and Park of Versailles – what a lesson can be taken by a thoughtful person as you walk through those desolate and tenantless places, with their almost fabulous wealth of gold decorations – pictures worth thousands of pounds, priceless statues, gorgeous furniture and no one to enjoy them but palace servants and a staring and wondering public. What a reflection to stand and look at the very bed, once occupied by Madame de Maintenon, with its wealth of faded adornment and



'Went through Arc de Triomphe ... such a lovely place of hundreds of acres right in the City of Paris'.

that of the hapless Marie Antoinette and her secret chambers, now a mere show-place. We saw poor Josephine's bedroom and sittingroom, richly ornamented, also the bed on which Louis XIV died; and the chamber and balcony from which La Fayette introduced the poor Queen to the mob of Paris – which mistake led her to be guillotined. We visited the porcelain manufactory of Sévres, where one could spend a whole day; also the fortifications, the Seine Embankment and many other famous places, and returned home at six o'clock p.m. Took a stroll in the evening and saw Paris by gaslight and its teeming population.

*Wednesday, 7th May.*

The carriages came at the usual hour, and off we drove to the Column of Vendôme, made from the cannons taken chiefly from the Austrians and Prussians in the great revolutionary wars of the end of the last and the beginning of the present century. I only wonder when the German Emperor and his generals and officers entered Paris that they did not demolish it, and so erase from public view such a lasting emblem of the crushing defeats that they had sustained at Jena, Wagram, and Austerlitz at the hands of the French, and considering the very cavalier manner, to say the least of it, that 'tis said the first Napoleon treated the Queen of Prussia, and mother of the Emperor William, he must have been a most religious and forgiving man to let the Palace of the Invalids, where the ashes of his great enemy repose, escape being in some way marked out for satisfaction of great injuries sustained at the hands of Napoleon I. We saw the gruesome Pont Neuf and two poor dead men exhibited

behind a glass screen for recognition. A glance was sufficient for me. We visited the Conciergerie with its sad associations of crime and sorrow, also the famous Palace of the Louvre, with its wealth of pictures, statues, and mementos of the old regime. 'Twould take a whole week to see with any satisfaction this exhibition only. The Church of St. Sulpice is worth visiting, both for its ornaments and monuments. the life statue of the gallant, but ill-fated, Marshal Ney, erected on the very spot where he was shot, is a sad memento to look at, and his execution reflects very little credit on the French King, or our own Duke of Wellington: a word would have saved him, and the majority of the French nation would have applauded the act. Alas, poor Ney! We paid a long visit to the factory where the Gobelins tapestry (a Government institution) is manufactured, and we were kindly shown the whole process of manufacture. The tapestry is not sold to the public, but made present of to foreign rulers and distinguished people, and the mode of making it is a profound secret, as the artisans and their families reside within the building, and the knowledge is conveyed from father to son, and it takes from twelve to fifteen years to acquire a full knowledge of the art, and from five to ten years to finish a piece of twelve feet square. This seems to us incredible, but a gentleman occupying a responsible position in the factory assured us 'twas an absolute fact. We saw the Pantheon (much like the Roman one) in which the great men of the first Revolution are buried, and many others of the same ilk, who have since died. There is little, if any, signs of Christianity about it, and it

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*Early morning street scene in Paris.*

is much to be regretted that the French public men have forgotten the traditions of the ancient faith, the believers in which were the men – aye, and the women – who have so largely contributed to the grandeur and glories of France, as a glance at her famous statues and pictures and old traditions will amply verify. The Cathedral of Notre Dame is a wonder to look at, and how those mad revolutionary demagogues could find it in their hearts to stable their horses and make a barrack of it and even degrade it much more, is a question that I can't solve. This Paris is a great city and the people are all aware of it, and speak in the most glowing terms of its grandeur, with all the appliances of civilisation; and the powers that-be conform much to the popular wishes of the inhabitants. Of course, I apprehend that the readiness with which the French people erect barricades, and put to the right-about kings, emperors and rulers of all kinds, has something to do with the attention paid to their wants and pleasures by the Government.

#### *Thursday, 8th May.*

Visited many places of interest this day, and dined with Mr. and Mrs. Lambert, and after dinner took a carriage and they drove to many places which we could not know of ourselves.

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#### *Friday, 9th May.*

Still visiting about, all our party went on

the river by steamer, and again visited the Eiffel Tower, and, as the day was foggy, and the atmosphere obscure, we only ascended to the second platform. 'Tis a marvel of architecture in iron, and you would never think, looking at it from a distance, that 'tis so enormously large till you ascend the structure, when its vastness is at once apparent, and from the landing we were on we could see most of Paris and its fortifications. Mr., Mrs. and Miss Ware, from climatic reasons, I believe, resolved to stop in Paris for some time, and Mr. and Mrs. Barrett and ourselves determined to go on to London on Saturday by express and boat by Calais and Dover. We regretted the almost total break up of the party of nine's who had started from Melbourne, and Mr. and Mrs. Willersdorf parted from us in Rome *en route* to Germany, and Mr. and Mrs. Barrett and ourselves would soon separate in London. We all expressed sorrow at the breaking up, as nothing but the best of feeling and the kindest attention to each other during our three months' incessant travelling by sea and land, and I especially felt it the most, as I had been laid up sick in Palestine and at the Jordan and also at Rome, and the kind attention that I received from the ladies of our party shall never be effaced from my memory, for had they occupied the position of daughter or sister they could not have acted kinder to Willie and self. We mutually promised to call at each

others houses when Providence would bring us back to our homes in distant Australia – and so we parted. 'Tis not often that a party of nine individuals, strangers in part to each other, go over so much sea and land together without a shadow of disunion.

#### *Saturday, 10th May.*

Started from Paris at half-past eight o'clock a.m. by train for Calais. The country, as usual, looking very well, and we passed some of the historic spots where the French and English fought bloody battles. We saw a small hill with a windmill on top, and Willie said it reminded him of the battle-field of Agincourt, and said the appearance of the country was much like a picture he had seen of it. We went past Amiens and Boulogne, and at length saw the English Channel, which I had not seen for over forty years, and arrived at Calais. The train ran close up to the steamer – a small vessel with very poor culinary accommodation, and I could not get anything but cold meat for dinner, not even a hot potato, which was strange. I think it would pay much better if there was a hot roast or boiled joint for dinner. The miserable cramped dirty cabin in which 'twas served could only accommodate six people at once. The Customs people looked over our luggage as usual, but we had nothing dutiable, so we locked up our portmanteaus again.