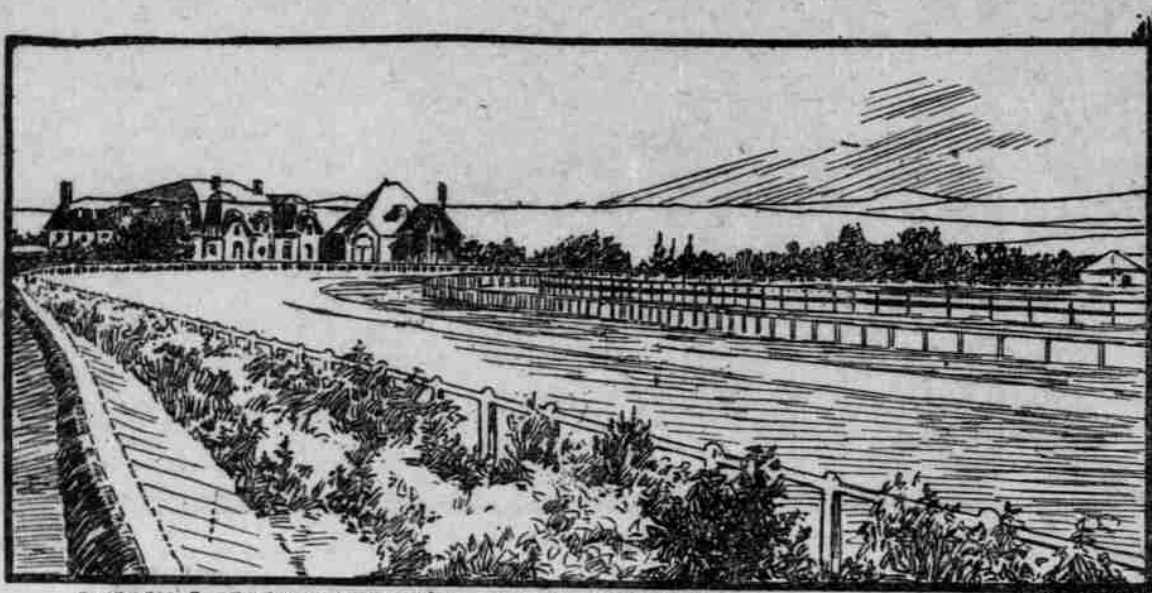


Where "Willie K" trains his Horses

THE VANDERBILT FARM IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD OF PARIS THE FINEST TRAINING PLACE IN THE WORLD



WILLIAM K. VANDERBILT'S NEW CHATEAU INSIDE THE NINE FOOT WALL WHICH ENCLOSES HIS TRAINING FARM



INSIDE THE RED CAPPED YELLOW WALL AT ST. LOUIS-DE-POISSY, SHOWING SAND AND GRASS TRACKS, WITH LONG STRETCH

BY DEXTER MARSHALL.
OISEY-ON-SEINE, Sept. 25.—(Special Correspondence of the Sunday Oregonian.)—"Monsieur Vanderbilt," as I have been "ere a good many years," said the young English-speaking Polisy cabman, who drove me out to St. Louis-de-Polisy, William K. Vanderbilt's training headquarters near the town of Polisy, some 25 miles, a little to the north of west of Paris. "I remember vore well when 'e come. I was small boy then. Every year since then 'e have been 'ere sometimes, 'e used to come from Paris in the train, but now 'e come toot, toot, in es motor car."

"'E does not stay much about the town, no; 'e stay at 'ees place an' keep busy about 'ees 'orses. But everybody in Polisy an' in this neighborhood think 'e is vore fine man; 'e give much work to the men of Polisy an' other places round 'ere. Some years ago 'e 'ave employ 'undred, two 'undred men. 'E is—'at you call it?—'all right? 'Ees not 'at?"

The Vanderbilt "farm," as it is sometimes termed by the Anglo-American colonists in Paris, is anything but a farm in the ordinary sense, since no appreciable part of the ground within its inclosure is devoted to cultivation. But it is big enough for a very respectable farm either in France or the United States, as it covers not far from 250 acres, while its soil is fertile enough to raise any of the crops which are produced on the smiling, hill-circled plain around it.

Instead of being planted to potatoes, or town to wheat or oats, peaty all the



RESIDENCE OF WILLIAM DUKE, VANDERBILT'S TRAINER AT ST. LOUIS-DE-POISSY



GREENHOUSES AT ST. LOUIS-DE-POISSY

area of St. Louis de Poissy is given over to horses, which its owner keeps in order to carry on his racing career in France, and neither money nor pains have been spared in the effort to make the establishment a model one. Frenchmen and Englishmen, as well as Americans, agree that the attempt has been quite successful.

The entire "farm" is securely enclosed after the manner of the French, partly by a high wall and partly by a stiff hedge 10 or 12 feet wide that is reinforced by a wire fence. Either stalls or fence would be difficult to pass; combined, they are practically impenetrable. Yet, apparently, the lord of the domain does not rely upon them wholly to keep intruders out, for at various points he has displayed conspicuously the announcement:

"Ici il y a des places a loupes," which, freely translated, means:

"Look out for the wolf traps."

So far as I know, no one ever has investigated for the purpose of learning whether there are any traps in the hedge or not. There are no similar warnings on the wall. It is a piece of masonry as only Frenchmen build—about nine feet high, of rough-finished buff stone, capped with brilliantly red tiles. It is so new and it reflects the light so brightly when the sun is shining that you can see it plainly from the hills miles away in every direction. The newness and the epic-and-panoply of the establishment are among the most distinguished characteristics of St. Louis-de-Polisy. It is in a region not altogether devoid of other new buildings, to be sure, but where most structures are gray and black with age. At Polisy is the second oldest church now standing in all France, say the people there. It was built in the twelfth century, and although portions of it seem to have been restored, it looks quite as old as it is supposed to be.

The Vanderbilt training farm is reached by a sandy cart track, which branches from the fine main road leading from Polisy to Meulan, both of which are on the River Seine. There are two entrances. Just inside the ornamental main entrance stands the new chateau—the cabman called it a "castle"—which Mr. Vanderbilt has had built for a residence when he

chooses to occupy it, but which is not quite ready to live in.

While the owner of the place was in France in August, but at a distance from Deauville, Trouville and other racing centers, Mrs. Vanderbilt was living in a pretty little red-roofed white-stone cottage just outside the yellow walls.

"Finest Training Place in France."

There are many who say that the training grounds at St. Louis-de-Polisy are the finest in France. As I haven't seen them all I cannot say whether this is true or not, but the establishment certainly is well planned and well kept up.

The entire inclosure is practically level, and the turf course, with two long stretches, has a circumference of a mile and a quarter. The sand course, just inside the other, is perhaps a hundred yards shorter. One of the stretches of the turf course is quite five furlongs in length, which gives a chance for a long straight-away dash.

The turf on the outside course is kept in as good condition as the turf should be on the putting greens of a first-class golf course, although a bit longer. As turf never or rarely maintains itself in France the course has to be watered plentifully every day, water for that purpose being pumped from the Seine into a water tower upon its banks, about half a mile from the western boundary of the farm. Within the inclosure and near its eastern wall is another smaller water tower which is connected with the first by underground pipes.

All the racing in France, as in England, is upon the turf. Consequently the more severe exercising of the horses at St. Louis-de-Polisy is done upon the turf course, the inner, shorter, sand course being reserved for the slower gallops. Inside the track there are 22 large paddocks, in which all the horses on the place can be turned out at once if it is so desired.

There are stalls for 62 horses, besides six or seven "hacks." The stalls, which are very roomy and well ventilated, are located in stone stables with thick walls that insure coolness in the hottest weather even known in the valley of the Seine. The stalls for the yearlings, of which there are 35, are in what is known as the riding school. It is nearly or quite 600 feet long and its inclosed and roofed-over track for the exercising of the yearlings.

which surrounds the stalls, is about a rod wide. Five times round this track make a mile, and its short turns are sharply raised on the outside.

There is nothing in the world, apparently, that William K. Vanderbilt likes better than to watch his horses at work under the direction of his trainer, William Duke. For some years Duke was employed by Sir John Thursty in England, where he helped introduce American training methods, as Lester Reiff and Tod Sloan introduced American riding. Duke succeeded Hughes as trainer at St. Louis-de-Polisy about five years ago. The stand from which the trainer and the owner watch the horses at St. Louis-de-Polisy rises one story above the riding school and commands an unobstructed view of both tracks, the sand and the turf.

Each track has posts at eighth-mile intervals—red for the turf and white for the sand—which serve the trainer in determining the speed at which the horses are going, and he calls for more or less speed as they are moving too slowly or too fast to suit, by means of signals worked from the stand. The exercising, of course, is according to the most approved American practice.

This is now accepted as desirable by practically all French racing men, most of whom have adopted it in full or in part, but at first they looked upon it with caution, not to say alarm. Even as late as five years ago there was much question as to its value, as the following paragraphs, turned into English "as she wrote" by one of the men who do casual translations for American sojourners here, will show. The article from which they are taken was contributed by Jean Romane to Le Sport Universelle-Illustre for July 20, 1902. It will be noticed that M. Romane found a few things to surprise him at St. Louis-de-Polisy besides the training.

"At the hour of our arrival," he says, "the work of the old horses has just been finished. We have before us the stable of the 9 o'clock horses. The men are dressed in blouses held together by belts, their heads covered

with very broad straw hats of the entire American form while attending to their occupations, giving us at the first step the impression that here we are not at Chantilly.

The Yankee lad, or subordinate of the Yankee trainer, has quite a different bearing from that of the English lad. He is not striving to appear as a gentleman, and the entirely sportive trappings and accoutrements, cap, serge jacket, breeches and leggings of porkskins, were not found by us to be worn at St. Louis-de-Polisy.

Contrary to the English, the Americans keep their horses as much as possible in the open air and do not store them all day in dark and close stalls. At a distance we see them drawn up in battle array like a line of cavalry. One does not give in. We take advantage of this incident to inform ourselves.

"The purpose of the daily exercise is not only to keep the horses supple, but also to make their character more steady and to get them into the habit of remaining in contact with their neighbors while they are under the orders of the starter. When at last all have been calmed down, order is given to break the line loose, and, to our surprise, the entire troop starts at a small, slow gallop, in one of the most picturesque, but also one of the most practical mix-ups. In the English stable the colts are seen in Indian file at from 75 to 150 feet one from the other. Evidently such a method is inspired by fear of accidents, but it offers the inconvenience of not preparing the horses for the brutal contact with others in the race.

"Here it is estimated that the training should tend to educate the horse with a view to the hippodrome. In consequence one tries to give the horse during the exercise itself a lesson which shall be profitable for its training."

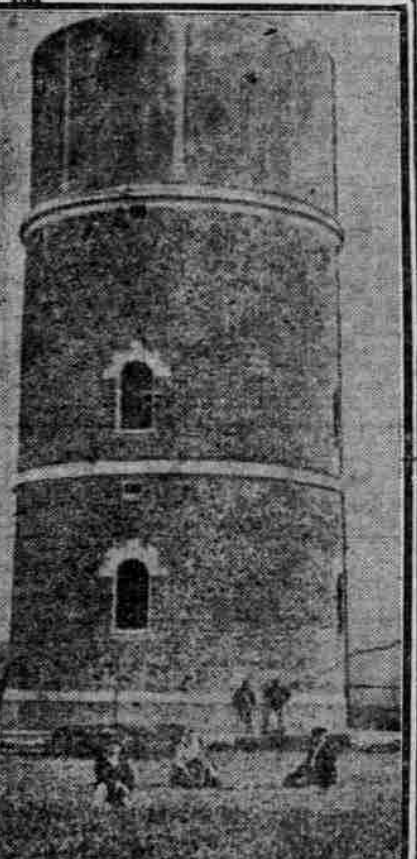
"It is a fact that the young colts go in playful way, but very calm, well placed and under the full control of their riders, without the least disad-

appearing in their close line. The training exercise and the entire light work are done on the sand. The rapid gallops are accomplished on the grass."

M. Romane describes the training exercise at some length, laying particular stress upon the fact that the horses are left outside as long as possible after the work is done. "Before their return to the stalls," he says, "they are walked a long time, led by hand under sleeve-like coverings which are spread over the entire horse, permitting the free access of air to the body and protecting it from flies. From time to time the animal is given a mouthful of water."

"I have been told that this dosing of the horse with the beverage is one of the tricks proving the superiority of the trainers. I admit my incapacity to discuss this question. The exercise, the walk led by hand, the grooming, take at least three hours by the clock," he continues, with some wonder, "during which time the horses remain in the open. If this be not sufficient they are taken out again in the afternoon."

Summing up with regard to American methods of training, M. Romane says that, saving the rule to keep the horses in the open as much as possible, the principle seems to be to treat each animal according to his temperament and to vary the method as occasion requires—different ways of doing—de la way he puts it. This is true of the Vanderbilt stables today, under Duke, as it was five years ago under Hughes. But today the under trainer is an Englishman named Platt and he wears the "leggings of porkskins" and otherwise attires himself as men of his nationality, and calling generally do. He is a highly competent man, however. He came here with Duke, the head trainer, and since their arrival, nearly all the buildings have been replaced by new ones; new waterworks and electric light plant have been put in, and the surface of the entire inclosure, which formerly was undulating, so that the tracks were not without grades.



TOWER THAT FURNISHES WATER FOR THE TURF TRACK



BELLHOUSE, "WILLIE K'S" ENGLISH JOCKEY

has been equalized and made almost as flat as a floor.

It is in doing all this work that the "one hundred, sometimes two hundred" men of Polisy, as stated by my cab driver, have been employed by the establishment to the gratitude and largely to the support of all Polisy and its environs. The building of the new "castle" has employed many local workmen, also. These men and the local tradesmen do most of their dealing with William K.'s secretary, Rutgers Leroy, the proprietor himself rarely coming in contact with them.

In the summer when the races are on and the horses are away St. Louis-de-Polisy boasts five employes, but at other times there are about 50 stable boys, besides other regular employes such as the gardener, the concierge and their underlings, and so on. The stable boys include a few French lads from the neighborhood, but there are several English lads, while here and there among them may be seen a "broad straw hat, entirely American." Bellhouse, the regular Vanderbilt jockey, succeeded Rancho, the American, last spring, and is English.

My visit to St. Louis-de-Polisy was made in midsummer, and in consequence the place was almost deserted by both men and horses. All the racing animals were at the tracks; the surplus stock had all been sold or sent to the big Vanderbilt breeding farm at Villebon, both Duke, the head trainer, and Vanderbilt were absent and a sabbath calm covered the place, both inside and outside the yellow walls. Only Platt was in attendance.

His house and Duke's, white-walled and red-roofed, like nearly all the St. Louis-de-Polisy buildings, stands near a gate that is nearly a third of a mile further from the public highway than the entrance of state opening on the new chateau and its garden. Every one of these villages has its traditions, dating back to the middle ages, and perhaps beyond. At Polisy, to the south, lived Meunier, one of the greater French painters, during the last part of the nineteenth century. His statue, surrounded by a square of stocks, thickly-leaved trees, closely clipped—an audacious figure in bronze—stands in front of the ancient church of which the town is so proud.

St. Louis-de-Polisy in the Past.

St. Louis-de-Polisy, especially since its owner has built a "castle" within its walls, is now in the zenith of its glory, and this is recognized by the picture postcard publishers, who have issued a series illustrating the improvements. But it has a history dating back some years before Vanderbilt got possession of it. It was once a public racing course, and for some time it vied in popularity with other courses in the neighborhood of the French capital. But at the best it no more than held its own and later, partially because it was so far from the Polisy Railroad station, its popularity dwindled, its receipts grew less and less yearly, its prizes were reduced, and finally it was closed. Then Jacques Hennessy took it, and trained his horses there. After him Camille Blanc, the famous French racing man, purchased it, in partnership with M. Melele; they kept it a short time only, and sold it to the present owner.

It was a much smaller place then than now, having been added to bit by bit, almost every year, and the fact that only a part of the present 250 acres is protected by the famous buff stone wall may mean that "Willie K." intends to add still more acres to his domain.

The only training quarters in France that have cost more money than Vanderbilt's are those of Edmond Blanc, brother of Camille, and manager of the Casino at Monte Carlo. His racing headquarters is at St. Cloud, adjoining the racetrack there, which was built by him originally to serve as a training track only. It has been one of the most important racetracks in the French system for some time now, however, and Edmond Blanc is one of the heaviest holders of race track stock in the country today.

Those who should know say that while Vanderbilt has spent a million dollars upon his track near Polisy, Blanc has spent twice that much at St. Cloud. Including the public stands

the track there has cost much more than the Vanderbilt track, and the same may be said of the training quarters themselves. Much costly art work is to be found in some of the stalls and other parts of the big stables at St. Cloud, but nothing so extravagant and really useless as to be found at St. Louis-de-Polisy.

Edmond Blanc makes his establishment very profitable, however, every year; Vanderbilt made money out of French racing for the first time in 1905, but has made little or nothing this year. To tell the truth "Willie K." has not done so well this year as last; neither has Jay Ranch, the American jockey, who left him last autumn after "a bit of an argument," thus closing an engagement of three years. Vanderbilt's present jockey, Bellhouse, the English lad, who rides the horses of other owners when not needed by Vanderbilt, has done very well, however, being second on the list of winning jockeys, which bears out the statement that Vanderbilt's horses were not up to the standard this season. His 2-year-olds all failed to make good. Second Sight, which ran second to Sans Souci II, in the Grand Prix de Paris, has not done so well as last year, since Kadish, who was in the second string, but still gave promise, also has failed to count for much. Schuyler, the best Vanderbilt 2-year-old, and North-east, another of his 2-year-olds, appear to be coming on very well, however, and there is reason to believe that the multi-millionaire owner may fare better in 1908 than he has fared in 1907. His Maintenance and Prestige, which were the talk of all racing France last year by reason of the victories they won under Rancho's guidance, are out of racing completely for the present.

It makes little financial difference, however, either to Vanderbilt or to Blanc whether they make money on the tracks or not. Blanc's pockets are kept full to repletion, quite independent of his winnings or losses as a racing man, by the constant stream of money from the uttermost parts of the earth that flows to him by way of the great gambling resort, where, as the French say:

"Nolite gaudere quicquam—Rouge gagne quelquefois, mais Blanc gagne toujours"—which means that Blanc wins sometimes, Red sometimes, but white always wins all the time.

The racecourse at Sheephead Bay, largely owned by Vanderbilt and his New York Central trains—unless the Interstate Commerce Commission gets after them too hard—"win all the time," and will keep his pockets full, no matter what happens in France, so that he need not care the snap of his finger whether his horses win on the French turf or not. At the most his racing losses cannot possibly be big enough to embarrass him financially, since like Keene, Harry Payne Whitney and August Belmont, "at home," he never bets to any extent worth mentioning. But it is said that he does care a lot—that he is pretty sore over the failure of his stable to cut much ice this year.

It should be understood, however, that Vanderbilt stands very high as a racing man in France notwithstanding his rather poor luck this season. There was a time, before his horses began to win, when Frenchmen refused to take him any more seriously than they take most Americans, whether rich or otherwise, but now "it is different." His costly breeding farm has not turned out any great horses as yet, but his Prestige carries an unbeaten card, despite his breakdown, and had beaten the best French horses before being withdrawn because of lameness.

In France, as in America, "Willie K." has the name of getting more real fun out of racing than any other rich man alive, and of taking defeat with the same smile with which he welcomes victory. It isn't supposed that he knows as much about horses as the men he hires, and it is true that he is vastly better at railroading—which he hates—than at horse-racing, which he admires so much. But he knows how to select good horsemen as well as expert railroad men, and, perhaps, one day he may realize his ambition to stand at the head of the French turf. He is the only American, probably, who could be a member of the French Jockey Club if he chose, which he doesn't.