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It is no use reminding myself . . .

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It is no use reminding myself that the young Proust must have capered about beneath these trees: the whole district still stinks from the cash of crooked business deals. Fraudulent dealing on a very much humbler scale is in evidence here on Thursdays when the stamp-dealers come, but the real scandal is here every day as people keep coming back to drive themselves to exhaustion in front of telephones and blotting-pads. So once again I get off the bus in this place. At the Rond-Point, alarmed by the drastic crush of people, a lady with some mysterious green stuff in a bag balances precariously on her bicycle. She has come from Montrouge or Clamart where a few vegetable plots still manage to survive behind the concrete, and she must be going to Saint-Lazare to catch a train. With her heavy brown jumper and navy-blue skirt she seems the only decent human being around, amid this whorehouse medley of expensively dressed men and women dragging their dogs along. She is not quite sure which direction to take, but she is certainly not going to ask anyone. In the end she will have no difficulty getting to Maurecourt, where her sister lives. And then in the evening, after retrieving her bicycle at the station, emboldened, she will set off again in the opposite direction, without any further worry about crowds, Palaces and Arches, wobbling a bit on her bike because her bag is now stuffed with rhubarb.

Translated from the French
by **Mark Treharne**