

PARIS LETTER.

What a pity that—

"If all the year were playing holidays.

To sport would be as tedious as to work."

Statisticians, moralists, and relieving officers attest that a New Year's day resembles a foretaste of the millennium, here at least, and Paris, according to Victor Hugo, is the universe in brief. The police have no occasion to make arrests; every person finds some employment; fewer people die; the cabman make 50 per cent higher receipts; the beggars are allowed to go about as they please; no one is hungry; horses receive fewer lashings, and mothers-in-law are veritable angles of the household. To still further illustrate the efficacy of the holiday of the first of January, Rochefort uttered no Red Indian screams for the head of M. Coustant; M. Drumont refrained from using his scapel on the Jews; M. Andrieux revealed no more corrupt legislators; Jules Ferry was not anatomized; no allusion was made to a new poison having been found in Barm de Reinach's remains, and the latest residence of Dr. Herz was not made known.

Per contra, the cold was intense; tipsters complained it froze occasionally their grog, a much surer test of low temperature than the caking of the mercury in a thermometer. Citizens displayed no marked anxiety to remain outside doors, once the compulsory visitings were made, the custom any mutual admirations terminated, and gifts bestowed on the stand and deliver lines of eternal friendship. The churches were anything but thronged, but then piety scored well on Christmas morning. Places of amusement were well patronized, an annual side split is as necessary as a yearly outing. The Boulevards' fair was not a money making occasion for vendors; except those selling very cheap toys, and sweetmeats generally of English manufacture. No booth-holder did more than pay his way, and he might consider himself lucky did he do so. Unsold stocks will do for next year's novelties. Either people had no money, or they had taken a pledge not to expend any. Many employees and artisans received for their New Year's gift a notice that their services had to be dispensed with, business having declined. The most singular illustration of hard times was the next to desertion of the food shops. I passed through the working-class fauburges: the absence of Pantagmelian preparations for the day was painfully conspicuous; the popular restaurants never hired for stomach baiting so many legs of mutton, quarters of beef, poultry game, and fruit. The good things did not draw. On previous festivals these cooking and feeding establishments would be thronged by a public feasting, or giving orders for commodities to be sent to homes. And at the central markets; where artisans and their wives are accustomed to make their purchases for the day we celebrate they were on the present occasion conspicuous by their absence also.

The Panama scandal is gradually becoming less burning. So far as public opinion is concerned, a few more legislators culpable of corruption will not make much difference; only all who have dipped into the Canal Company's cash box either directly, or indirectly, whether for personal

relief, or "the honor and glory of the Republic" must be handed over to the Philistines for execution at the general elections next October. No influence can now bar the revelation of the last vestige of the corruption. Nor is it in the power of the authorities even supposing they desired to close the flood gates, to arrest the denunciations, as the proofs exist independent of their control. Opinion has made up its mind, that the "old gang" of ministerial parties and sect-leaders must give way now to new and better men. M. Floquet has resolved not to offer himself for re-election as Speaker of the Chamber; it is a pity a phase of Panamism thus compels this losing prematurely of a promising career; he was a popular public man. He will be succeeded either by Messrs. Maley, Brisson, or Meline. For the succession of M. Carnot, the betting is now on M. Cusimlr-Perier.

This gentleman is 45 years of age, and grand-son of the celebrated premier under Louis-Philippe, and whose sudden death by cholera in 1832 was a calamity for France; his monument in Pere le Chaise cemetery is amongst the most majestic in that city of tombs. His grandson has a brilliant record; he is a distinguished lawyer though not practising. In 1870-71, when 23 years of age and captain in the mobiles, he took part in all the combats around Paris; he was at the side of his colonel, the Marquis de Dampierre, when the latter was mortally wounded at Bagneux, and amidst a shower of bullets carried away the body of the Marquis. Entering on active political life on the cessation of the war, he graduated, as under-Secretary, in the several departments of the State. He is a sound republican, one who desires the republic to be so in fact, and not in name. He accepts democracy, universal suffrage, and parliamentary institutions. He is a sound financier and a model chairman of committees. He belongs to no Little Bethels; of his own, and rather indifferent about cultivating political friendships. These draw-backs he is rapidly overcoming. When the bill was introduced for the exiling of the Comte de Paris, he declined to take part in the debate and the vote, out of respect for his grand-father's relations with the Orleans family.

The material consequences of the Panama catastrophe are known and have done their work. But more serious for the nation is the rejection of the Swiss commercial convention, which involves as a consequence, the breaking of trade relations with Belgium. The French do not comprehend the nature of their disasters; they hug themselves in the security of having locked out foreign importations, their home industries are placed on a sound footing; they never ask where are the markets for the surplus of their manufactures, and when magazines are glutted, how labor is to be remunerated. The evil is done and cannot be remedied until the general elections return an ultra protectionist Chamber. And as the electors to all appearance will have their attention engrossed sweeping away the "old gang" of parliamentarians, the life and death question of a recast tariff will be over-looked.

In the very heart of hard-working Paris, at 35 Rue St. Denis, a singular Lodging House has been opened. It is close to the mansion where Eugene Scribe was born, and is reported to have been once the property of the poet Iodelle. Who prided him-

sickly love-song it evolved. But there are some lyrics that deserve to be remembered and which it is perhaps difficult to forget.

Out of many such we would mention one or two which possess in our opinion at least, a tenderness and beauty not often surpassed. The first of these is the "Chanson de Fortunio," that graceful lyric of the poet who spoke always as he felt.

Mais j'aime trop pour que je te die
Qui j'ose aimer
Et je vieux mourir pour ma mie
Sans la nommer.

writes de Musset, "Sans la nommer," involuntarily one repeats it, was it only a phrase born of an emotion fleeting but true, or, in the depths of that wayward heart did the "child of the age" feel, what no one ever suspected, a passion that despair itself could not kill? Deeper and more pathetic still is a lyric of Mme Desbordes Valmore:—

Un tel secret valait toute son ame
S'il l'avait su.

In this, one seems to catch the inmost secret of a young girl's heart. The refrain "S'il l'avait su" lingers in our ears, the sad resignation of it in our hearts. It seems almost as if it should not have been written but only spoken. It is an exquisite lyric but it is also a confidence. There is a poem by Felix Arvers from which we quote the following stanza which seems in the main idea somewhat similar to that of Mme Valmore and not altogether untinged with the unrest of de Musset:—

Mon ame a son secret, ma vie a son mystere
Un amour eternel en un moment coneu:
Le mal est sans espoir, aussi j'ai du le taire,
Et celle qui l'a fait n'en a jamais su.

In all three there is the same resolution—that of suffering in silence. There are brighter lyrics in existence but none which reveal more clearly in every line the desire of a human soul to express itself in words which with its sorrow are its own.

THE WINTER DIKES.

O'er stretch on stretch of flat, of gleaming grey,
Froth-headed billows onward, landward leap,
Storming the dikes as foes once rushed to heap,

Destruction on the homes of famed Grand Pie.
The dikes stand stark and still in stern array,
Resolved the meadows of the French to keep
Hallowed from touch of fierce hosts of the deep.

Winter's cold hands on all the landscape lay—
Crow's croak, sere grass, white, ceremental snow,

Mirroring clay like eyes that glass in death,
From which exudes fine frost as frozen tears—
While over all obscuring mists do blow
That dull tho' Acadian story of their breath,
All nature mourns and doubts through rolling years.

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The Railway Review tells of a novel method of laying foundations in swampy soil recently employed by an American engineer. The building to be supported was a low, wooden one, which it was proposed were set in the storage of machinery. Casks were set in holes in the ground along the line of posts, and were filled to the depth of about one foot with iron turnings. The posts were placed in the casks, which were then filled with iron turnings compactly rammed in place. A solution of salt and lime, under the action of which they solidified into a hard mass. The heat of the oxidation of the iron was so great that the posts were charred. This also served to act as a preservative, and to that extent the iron turnings are probably superior to concrete under similar conditions.