

ODDITIES OF PARIS.

By M. Boldieu.

THERE are two classes of tradesmen in Paris that come to grief: dealers in eggs and butter, and buyers and sellers of philosophers. Mr. Emerson once said, pointing to the pride of his orchard: "That apple-tree is worth more than my head to me. My income from the former is greater than the revenue from all my books." But then Emerson has only sold *philosophy*—had he bought and sold *philosophers*, he would now be master of lands, tenements and hereditaments, valuable enough to win him the respect of all State street.

I was sitting some time since in a notary's office, when a man of most sordid appearance entered. He surprised me very much, for it is rare to see a tatterdemalion in Paris. Polonius knew the city thoroughly when he cautioned Laertes: "Costly thy habit as thy purse can buy." Here everybody puts his best foot foremost. The new-comer, however, was in rags, and his matted hair and unshaven face added to his repulsive appearance. I was still more surprised by the deference paid him. (Magic power of gold which gives even beauty to the beast!) He drew from the recesses of his rags, rather from wells than pockets, so deep and capacious were they, so many packets of bank notes, and so many rolls of gold coin, that my surprise grew greater and greater. I began to think of Signor Bltz, the Fakir of Ava, the Wizard of the North. I rubbed my eyes and was all attention, that I might lose no particular of the transformation scene, which I was sure was at hand. But I was disappointed.

"I have always made it a rule," he snarled, "to have a fifty-thousand-dollar house for myself, and to give as good a house to my children on their majority. My eldest

son and my only daughter have each a house. The house I am now buying is for my youngest son, who will be one-and-twenty the first of next month." As he spoke he marshalled coin and bank-notes for ready counting on the table, and growled as he laid them down: "See if there are not fifty thousand dollars here!" The deed of sale needed only signature. This formality ended, he withdrew accompanied to the office door by the notary. On his return the latter asked:

"Can you divine that man's occupation?"

"An usurer?"

"No. He buys sells philosophers. But may be you don't know what a 'philosopher is?"

"An inquirer into the nature of the under"——

"No, no, no! I need not tell you there is no end to the avatars of every object in Paris. Here water becomes wine and wine is turned into water. The bread left on cafe and restaurant tables becomes toast for soup. Clothes go from the rich fine gentleman's back to the poor fine gentleman's back, thence to lower and still lower poverty, till they reach the shoddy mill which transforms them into wool again. Shoes do not escape the common fate. They fall from rich to poor, then to poorer and to poorer still, until at last the soles are completely worn out and nothing but the uppers remain, battered, and worse for wear, but still no myth, as soles have long since become. These are 'philosophers.' They are used—the best of them—to make shoes, sold for new by shopkeepers whose consciences were left behind in their native villages; the others, to make the 'new shoes' you see in cobblers' stalls. The former—the 'Platos'—sell for six or