

annual meeting under the presidency of the inspector general of the university delegated by the Minister of Public Instruction for that duty. Odd that the Government should aid, officially, to discourage the consumption of tobacco, which helps to fill the coffers of the treasury and at a moment when the revenue receipts fall more and more. It is only another proof of the anarchy that reigns in Cabinets. To-morrow the Minister of Commerce may delegate his representative to preside over the annual meeting of the Temperance Society. The secretary of the anti-tobacco league asserts, with joy, that the use of tobacco was rapidly decreasing; that the dealers in the weed were lamenting they were doing no business. This may be due to people having less money to expend on the luxuries of life. The sellers of smokers' knick-knacks or "furniture" also complain of slack trade; They will soon commence to view their wares as curios, just as did Talleyrand his 600 snuff boxes. The society has netted one notable convert during the year—M. de Goncourt. He has left off smoking and so far has been able to resume writing novels—may the latter be henceforth fit for a young lady's boudoir, or to lie on a drawing-room table.

M. President Faure is, perhaps, the brightest and most satisfactory figure in every way in France. He seems to be everywhere, and appears only happy when no one is complaining. All his movements are laid down on business lines; as head of a firm, he insists on knowing and controlling the affairs of his second firm, France. He will not interfere with the management of the various departments of administration, but the latter must be up-to-date, and no more negligence in their conduct than a private merchant would permit in the transaction of his business. Having plenty of money he is not niggardly in its outlay; he takes a pleasure in distributing bountifully, but, remark, he never does so unmethodically. He has the good sense to appear only what he is and the courage to remain simple and unpretentious. He shows that to govern France, one need not cease to be an ordinary mortal. His handsome prize given to the Auteuil Race Course has created a most favourable impression in the aristocratic world; he neither dispises the latter nor shows that it is not essential to his life; he is the friend of the poor and never the enemy of the rich. It was a happy thought to send a man-of-war from England to salute M. Faure on his visit to Havre, which may be said to be his really native town. It would be a great triumph for England and France, could he be prevailed upon to visit London, and naturally the Queen, at Windsor. What a congenial contrast—the son of a cabinet maker, and a once apprentice tanner, sitting *ex aequo* at dinner with the Queen of England and the Empress of India. But to permit him to quit France, a law would have to be specially voted—the French Legislature would not hesitate to enable their national chief to be so splendidly honored.

The Government has adopted a good plan for the development of its African "takes." It receives applications for concessions of territory at pepper corn rents, but on condition that satisfactory evidence will be afforded that the concessionists are in a fit financial condition to work their bonanzas. Further, such grants of territory being national property, the applications have to be ratified by the Legislature. This puts an end to all charges of corruption or jobbery. The Government ought to rigidly enforce the clause, that if reasonable progress be not made in the working up of the concession, the latter will be foreclosed. That will cut out speculators in land. Why not arrange with the natives to go profits sharing in the exploitation of the concessions? I have been told that one of the most successful colonists in the French Congo is a naturalized John Chinaman, who farms his holding by the help of pig-tail colleagues.

There seems to a very fierce war carried on between the Hugos and the Daudets, and its phases are not kept out of the journals. Alphonse Daudet's son, Leon, who is a doctor, was married a few years ago to Victor Hugo's grand-daughter, the cherub "Jeanne" of his poetry. The wedding made a great splash; it was the ideal "of a civil marriage and a theatrical spectacle." Daudet père, who is a monarchist and a good Catholic, it is said, did not like the materialistic wedding. "That marriage," said a lady spectator to me on the day of the ceremony, after scanning the bride and bridegroom, "will prove unhappy." She was right; the loving couple was divorced some months ago. One child, a son, was the fruit of the union, and is cared for by the mother. M.

Daudet takes umbrage at the infant being always alluded to as "the grand-son of his mother-in-law," and not the son of hispa, and informs the public that his bouncing boy is the great-grand-son of Victor Hugo, the poet, and the grand-son of Alphonse Daudet, the novelist—facts the public do not care a straw about.

Since the death of Auguste Comte—1857—the mantle of Positivism in France has fallen upon Pierre Laffitte, Professor of Positivism in the College of France. He throws a discordant note into the present widespread rage for "Napoleonism," and draws very liberally upon University Billingsgate to dethrone the *Petit caporal*, which is not quite fair. Napoleon was after all but human, though his adulators flattered him he was more than a demi-god, an incense that never intoxicated him, as did similar stuff Victor Hugo. M. Laffitte calls Napoleon I. the "Simpleton of St. Helena," while he glorifies Julius Caesar as a world benefactor and a model hero; it is "unjust to the beautiful, useful and great genius of Caesar" to dare to compare Napoleon with him. That's hard; but worse remains: Napoleon was "a sinister buffoon, and the scourge of the West"—his own country included. The professor condemns the literature of the times, "that labours to whitewash the repulsive memory" of the Corsican ogre. Bad words break no bones, even those of skeletons, but M. Laffitte, as an historian, ought to bring forward a few "human documents" to illustrate his diatribe. Taine, as does Professor Aulad to-day, always gave—and gives—day and date for their severities.

Bicycles are becoming as numerous as the seed of Abraham; but the machines are not becoming more popular with the quiet section of the public. It is noticed that lady wheelers are on the increase in Paris, and, as a general remark, are of a stout build, that which does not evoke admiration; the region of the hips is awfully elephantine. Some ladies now dismount from their seed before a café, quaff a hock of beer, remount and disappear. The bicycle tax brings in three times more money than that on pianos. The latter, too, are being killed by the bicycle—so out of alleged evil, some good. Z.

\* \* \*

## Letters to the Editor.

### OUR SONG-BIRDS.

SIR,—In a recent number of the *Illustrated London News* (March 30th, 1895), appeared an interesting article by Professor Goldwin Smith on "Love of Nature in Canada." This article was prompted by the publication of Mrs. Traill's volume, "Notes of an old Naturalist." Mrs. Traill, while exhibiting little knowledge of ornithology, has made no statements that demand challenge and correction. Mr. Goldwin Smith, on the other hand, apparently having no knowledge of birds however amateurish, essays to give information to Englishmen about the vocal powers of our woodland songsters, or rather to proclaim to the world that Ontario has no songster! Here is the astonishing dictum of the Professor: "*None of them (the birds of Ontario) can be said to sing—a pleasant chirp is their best melody.*"

Shades of Audubon! None of them can be said to sing! Through my window as I write I hear a half-dozen birds singing gaily their vesper canticles. I should like to have the pleasure, during this melodious month of May, of conducting the esteemed Professor to woodland haunts within a mile of the present spot, where—if he has ears to hear and a heart to feel—he would bend his knees in reverence to nearly a score of fine songsters, and then hasten to his four-walled study to unsay the gratuitous slander which has led me to write this apology for our birds.

It is quite certain that Mr. Goldwin Smith has never heard our chief soloists, the hermit thrush and the wood thrush. Perhaps this should not be surprising when you consider that only one in five hundred persons in this locality has heard the glorious measures of the wood thrush, although the bird sings for six or eight weeks in the heart of yonder swampy thicket every May and June.

It is certain, too, that Mr. Goldwin Smith has neither heard nor seen that unique bird, the rose-breasted grosbeak, remarkable for having what few birds have in combination, a gorgeously beautiful dress and a song of wonderful sweetness. This bird can be heard in almost any damp thicket in Western Ontario in early summer.