

Many other matters were gone over in a similar way. "Well now," an Englishman asked, "what prospect is there of a fused nationality in Canada?"

"None," exclaimed the Nationalist, "only if you want to become French. You will not do that."

"We see none," said several of the others.

"I think we will finally see a French Catholic State here, that is my belief," one added.

"It is possible in any case to cultivate good-will and an understanding of each other—such would be a just step towards removing prejudice," said another.

"The trouble is not prejudice, but ignorance on both sides," put in the youngest Englishman present.

"Did you hear what this gentleman said," cried a Frenchman, "the trouble is not prejudice, but only ignorance!"

"If we were all Protestants," the most advanced of the French Liberals affirmed, "we would be one people in fifty years. The trouble is religion. Look at all our men who have become Protestants—they speak French but their language is English."

"I think it possible if we had secular schools," said the most thoughtful of the French group, who had been meditating since the question was raised.

But I shall break off here. The movement is a significant one; it throws much light on the questions at issue and the meetings are to be continued.

Montreal.

ALCHEMIST.

### PARIS LETTER.

THE last week of January in France is devoted to the "conscription"—if that term can be applied—now that the new law compels every man when twenty-one years of age, legally and physically qualified, to be a soldier, and to serve at least one year under the flag, and at most three. Formerly there was the excitement of chance about the working of the human lottery, when, plunging the hand into the bottom of the bag, the eligible and the liable might draw a "good" number, that would exempt him from active service; or a "bad" number, which would condemn him to five years' barrack life.

Following the baptismal register, all young men, on arriving at their majority, receive an official notice to present themselves—if in the rural districts—at the chief town of their canton, or at the town hall, if in a city, on a designated day and hour, to draw their number. High and low must obey, the duke as well as his valet, Jack as well as his master, the artisan as well as the humblest workmen. It is an odd medley of costumes: mashers, labourers, clerks, civil servants, students—now including the theologians, tradesmen, etc.; for all come generally in their Sunday clothes—broadcloth and top hat, white and blue blouses and caps. The "boys" make a day of it after the ballot; they place in their hats or caps their number drawn, printed on a morsel of paper, having a coloured patriotic ornamental border. Next linking arm in arm they march half a dozen abreast singing, shouting, laughing and dancing; others hire cabs and vans in which to execute their antics. The police have orders not to interfere with these harmless roysterers, who prepare to present their breasts to the bullets and bayonets of the enemies of France.

The drawers of the lowest numbers are selected for the navy. According to physique, the conscripts are told off for the cavalry, artillery, line, commissariat, ambulance, etc. The members of the Baptist faith, who prefer to be shot, rather than shoot down a fellow-creature, are exceptionally allocated to hospital duties. None can shirk the ballot; unjustified non-appearance means desertion, for once summoned the conscript comes under the military code. Desertion is next to unknown; it is a stigma on the family of the culprit, whose members are the first to hand him over to the authorities. Besides, to aid and abet a deserter involves from two to seven years' imprisonment. When arrested the deserter can be sent to the Punishment battalions, of which there are three categories in Algeria, and his military service can be increased from three to six years. He will further have that black mark recorded on his *casier judiciaire*, which will ever after shade his life's career. "One sad losel soils a name for aye."

Fourteen days after the ballot the conscripts present themselves at the military depot before the Council of Revision. This is a board composed of ordinary officers and army surgeons. In an ante room each conscript strips off his civilian clothing, is measured and weighed, and then appears before the Council, where the surgeons examine his constitution. If pronounced sound, the other officers allot him to that branch of the service they think best. Only those who volunteer earlier than twenty-one years have the right to select a particular branch of the army. Students, business men, and those who desire to marry early, thus volunteer; for it may be said, as a rule, no young man can marry in France till he has completed his twelve or thirty-six months' service under the flag. The conscript who has been accepted passes into another room, where he dons his uniform.

The refused retire to a different department and dress in their own clothes, and receive a notification to either present themselves in six months, or that orders will in due time be sent them. The rejected comprise conscripts incapacitated by tuberculosis or physical defects. Many of the latter are retained—as in war time they are good for clerking duties or employment in the military stores and factories, and so take the place of more stalwart men.

Simultaneously with this providing of the rank and file by the conscription, the officers are being prepared to command them. Every Frenchman, with unimpeachable antecedents, is eligible for every professional and official station—for happily there are no classes in France. Those who feel competent to pass the entrance examination to the military, naval and engineering schools, have only to formulate their demand to be allowed to compete. If successful, they will be gratuitously admitted for two years to the colleges to be technically instructed, and on passing their final examination will receive commissions. They join the service for life. Should they change their mind when leaving college, and prefer a civil career, they must refund the State the cost of their technical education. The income of French officers does not allow of any mess extravagances, and the commanding officers take good care their subordinates shall not incur debts.

After putting in their flag service, the soldiers duly pass into the Reserve and Territorial armies, which comprise 26 military contingents, following the age of its members, and that are called out at stated periods for 28 and 14 days' drill. France adds annually to her land and sea forces, 220,000 men. In case of war, did she call out all her contingents, she could have an army of 4,500,000 men. In 1890, Paris alone contributed 19,627 conscripts; of this total 1,729 were rejected as unfit—afflicted with defective sight, phthisis, hernia, and scrofula. Of the 17,898 selected, 976 were graduates, 195 classified teachers, 13,000 knew the three R's, and only 365 were illiterate. In the 26 contingents it is calculated that 386,000 Parisians alone, there figure.

The municipal council intends to build a Medico-Legal Institute on the plans submitted by Professor Brouardel. It will cost 3,000,000 frs., and will stand on the site of the stables of the old archiepiscopal palace, near Notre Dame. A wing of the institute will form the new morgue. The present morgue is totally inadequate to meet its ordinary increasing wants, but, above all, it does not afford either the accommodation or facilities for the study of medico-legal science. Its whole administration requires to be recast, as it suffers from a dual control. The Prefect of Police reigns there, but it is the Faculty of Medicine that governs.

There was a time when the morgue was not the scientific help-mate of justice that it is at present, and when it was managed by a single porter-clerk, whose duties were so few that it was said he had to kill time by playing a piano in his office, and cultivating flowers, salads and strawberries on the window sills. In 1835 the morgue received 283 bodies; now the annual number is 900.

In the morgue there is an amphitheatre capable of accommodating 100 graduates in medico-legal science, and in the fourth year of their studies, lectures are delivered three times a week by Dr. Brouardel and his two assistants on crime-deaths—a technical instruction that no hospital can give. Formerly several bodies were placed in a vehicle and conveyed to a cemetery for interment; it was a hideous pile of freight; now each corpse has its own hearse, the morgue paying 14 frs. for the transport to the crematory.

### JEWS AND PEASANTS IN RUSSIA.

BY A JEWISH EXILE.

FOR a long time, but especially during the last decade, attention has been much attracted in all parts of the civilized world to the condition of the Jews in Russia. Prominent writers and travellers have written of their wretched state, telegraph despatches of anti-Semitic riots are frequently published and the tales of Jewish refugees are confirmed in all essential points by disinterested observers.

At present despotism binds Russia. In its most galling bonds called laws it twines harshly round all the various members of the political whole of the nation. But Jews and Peasants are the only classes who have to bear the sufferings of all other classes in addition to their own.

The previous and later outbursts of persecution the Jewish subjects of the Czar had to suffer have aroused in nearly every civilized country feelings of the deepest indignation. If people of this continent can be aroused by the starvation of Ireland should they not as keenly feel for the wrongs inflicted upon the millions of highly-gifted intellectual, and, on the whole, highly-endowed moral, but defenceless, Jewish race. It may be questioned whether Russia can claim a place among civilized nations. The Russian nation though nominally Christian is for the most part without morality. Their civilization is but a thin film insufficient to conceal a barbarian and cruel nation and though many of them are capable of miraculous fortitude and of almost supernatural devotion to a cause or to a leader, yet for the mass of them, the ten commandments have no existence. Russia, by her treatment of the Jews, has isolated herself from the civilized world. One may say that Jews as strangers had to suffer in a country of political disability. But the Jews in Russia are not strangers there; they principally inhabit Lithuania, White Russia, Little Russia, generally those regions which anciently formed a part of the Polish Dominion, and where they established themselves under the Polish protectorate and were employed by the Polish nobility in almost every position of responsibility. They are excluded from Russia proper, with certain exceptions. In many of the towns and provinces where they cannot remain legally they do live but are liable at any time to be ordered to remove at what-

ever loss or damage to their property. When Poland came under the domination of Russia the Jews became outcasts. The strictest laws were enacted to limit their rights. Under the iron grasp of Nicholas and his general, Muravieff, called at that time "the hangman" the limited rights of the Jews were trampled under foot. Nicholas wanted to convert the Jews and the Poles to the Greek Church. He did not succeed in converting the first. The Russian police then made more proselytes to the Greek Church than the missionaries and the people. This explains why at the present day half of Russian Poland is converted. It was a question of life or death. Under the Emperor Alexander II., some strict laws against the Jews were removed. The Jews began to breathe more freely. Such new hopes however, as they may have begun to indulge, fell with Alexander's assassination. The Jews seemed to have been also assassinated. The Jews have been chained in the abominable laws of the barbarian Count Ignatieff, the favourite of the retrogressive despot, Alexander III. The cruelties perpetrated upon this people seem incredible. The charges against the Jews in Russia are lacking the basis of truth. The Jews have fought in Russian wars, they have laid down their lives for her. Like the rest of the population, they are liable to conscription into the army, but unlike them they are not allowed promotion. Their condition is most deplorable; debarred from pursuing legitimate vocations, oppressed by heavy special taxes, confined to over-crowded districts and harassed by many annoyances, they are even persecuted when they try to make a living by the only few means left to them. In an address delivered in Philadelphia by Coroner Fred Levy, of New York, the speaker said: The situation of the Russian Jews is becoming so horrible and unbearable that they would probably all leave Russia if permitted. Their choice is between baptism and suicide. Numbers choose baptism, others death in escaping across the frontiers, and how many select suicide, strances would not be apt to produce much influence upon the Czar who would regard them as impertinent interferences. The great meeting at the Guild Hall, London, was answered by a decree increasing the severity of anti-Semitic law and therefore it is believed that the Czar is personally determined to break the race down in Russia. Though apparently the Russian Government seems to be quite impervious to foreign influence or foreign remonstrance, yet foreign opinion is a power dreaded by the despotic Government. The more cruel the laws enacted and the stricter their enforcement the clearer is the proof that the Government does not feel secure; a Government that is strong need not have recourse to such barbarities.

Are the Jews the only class who suffer? No. The iron despotism and the degrading tyranny of Alexander III. and of the sordid group that surrounds him, harshly threaten all classes and compel them to smart under the Russian knout. The state of affairs going on in Russia is most deplorable. Look, what a Russian weekly paper, *Hedelya*, writes of the great mass of the people, the peasants: "The most respected students of Russian life bear witness to the fact that so far from the people becoming as in West European countries, better fed, better housed, better instructed, and more civilized year by year, it is painfully evident that the unmistakable process of decomposition has set in among the Russian peasantry, the drying up of the material and moral sap, the process of demoralization. Neither in Europe nor in any civilized country of the whole world is a people to be found poorer than the Russian people, more grossly ignorant than the Russian people, who dwell in more primitive dwellings than the Russian people, or who till the ground with more primitive implements. Even such pagan countries as China and Japan, with their well-informed inhabitants and high standard of agriculture, have far outstripped our Russian people. Our peasant with his plough and wooden harrow, that seem to have been handed down from the age of Bronze, and with his benighted ignorance and carelessness loses three-fourths of the possible harvest. Among the peasants, epidemic diseases are continually raging to such an extent that competent medical authorities declare that they carry off as many lives yearly as if cholera were perpetually in our midst. The terrible mortality among children is accounted for in the custom of giving infants sour black bread wrapped up in a rag to suck—a barbarity not practised even by the non-Russian tribes on the Volga. The astonishing lack of elementary education manifests itself with the frightful spread of drunkenness and degrading disease. It is notorious that these two scourges were the main causes of the degeneration of Australian and other savages. In Russia among our own people, painful though it be to make the admission, something extremely suggestive of this process is now taking place. We will say nothing of drunkenness, in which, to use an expression of Dostoevsky's, our people 'is rotting away.' Things more horrible still may be in store for our people from such disease. Spread throughout the length and breadth of Russia, it has in many places infected the whole population. Dr. Maslovsky, for instance, writes from the Government of Tambov: 'In some places every man, woman and child, or nearly everyone, is infected, and it is impossible to prevent its spread by any conceivable measures.' How can you cure a disease so catching when all the members of the peasant family eat out of one platter, sleep in one bed and where the same coat and the same felt boots pass from one member of the family to another. The zemsky doctors of the Government of