

Parisian Affairs.

THE Franco-Russian Alliance, being now an official fact, appears to many people as if the end of the world had come. "Stands Scotland where it did?" In France the feeling is very mixed on the whole matter. No one can see what France gains exactly, while Russia scores, is making hay while the sun shines. The two questions that absorb the attention of the French are the repossession of Alsace and the ejection of the British from Egypt, two very difficult nuts to crack. It may be accepted as a fact that Russia will not go to war with Germany and England to change the European Congress settlement of these two questions. On the contrary it is likely to have the opposite effect. The French have only one fear of the alliance—Russia may drag them into a diplomatic dead lock. The bestowal of the order of St. Andrew on M. Faure by the Czar shows that the latter has no hedging about the alliance. And people smile at the timing of the movements of the allies that will now march, like Juno's swans, coupled and inseparable.

France and Russia have as good a right to ally, or execute a *mariage de raison*, as any other powers; only they must not become sour if other powers form new alliances. At present the trump card is in the hands of England. Can she play it well? That is to be hoped rather than expected. However, her independent situation will make even allied powers march cautiously; she must show henceforth more resolution, more energy, more decision than heretofore, while not ceasing to be on the best terms with all. The officious and official journals here are in raptures at the alliance; it seems that they can bid the sun stand still like Joshua and blow down all Jericho's walls with a few trumpet blasts. No later than Saturday last I was talking over the political situation with a very distinguished Russian writer. He says that England and Russia were born to be enemies and that enemies they would remain, but so long as England commands the sea she may snap her fingers at all the allies. Her fleet, at present at Kiel, would, he says, smash up the whole of the other navies assembled there. Perhaps so, but not the less she will have to put her house in order and lean on the triple alliance. By the sealing of the treaty of friendship and mutual defence into France Bismarck's influence, that is to say Germany's, is reduced to nothing in Russia.

Till after the Kiel high jinks be terminated the action of diplomatists will be suspended. Neutrals now become the deciding factor. The dual has not as many soldiers to put in line as the triple alliance, but where and how are the united five millions of armed men to encounter? The route by sea may be held as blocked from the firing of the first cannon shot. The past can throw no light on the future; the conditions are not the same. Unlikes cannot be compared.

That a section of the French do sincerely deplore the appearance of the French fleet at Kiel is true, and that some dry-rot politicians endeavour to make capital out of that feeling cannot be denied. But all the manifestations of socialists and sensitive patriots will not change the situation. There is no Government to be turned out, there is not even a Boulanger to speculate in a *coup d'etat*. Alsatian women may be represented in chromo illustrations weeping at the French ships in German waters, being applauded by the 1870 victors; but that will not modify the order of things. It will, of course, knock the bottom, perhaps, out of the Alsace legend; the Sisters Anne will not see anything coming to Strasburg for many a long day. France has to bow to the consequences of her defeat as other nations she defeated had to do.

So far as is perceptible at present, Russia seems to have out-witted all the Western Powers by her financial compact with China. The Son of Heaven has pinned his faith on the Muscovite, but he must now count with powers that will show him the cold shoulder and who will carry over their influence to Japan. It may be the destiny of Russia to complete the work of Japan—that of breaking up the Chinese Empire; such would not be opposed to Russian interests. When the concessions given to Russia are known, it is not likely the Muscovite will be allowed to help himself to what he objected giving to the Japs. The scramble for the big *debris* of the Flowery Land will proceed more rapidly than the snapping up of territory in Africa. The Chinese can just keep their secrets as closely as the Japs. Will the

Sino-Russo loan find subscribers enough in France, as British and German financiers do not feel inclined to bless the transaction?

There has been an extraordinary avalanche of dry-as-dust literature recently bearing upon Napoleon. Now a rest has set in to produce histories and legends about the power of cruisers in war—that is viewed as the weapon for the annihilation of England's maritime strength and wealth. Russia is to have a fleet of volunteer cruisers, but England will have a baker's dozen of fleets to catch them. Jean Bart and Paul Jones would not be able to go far in these days of steam cruisers and intelligence departments with all the round the world telegraphic wires in the hands, as they are, of England. Where are the cruisers to coal, where the havens in which to dispose of their captures? A harbour that shelters a cruiser would be at once shelled, and, if in a neutral port, the cruiser would have to leave after 24 hours' notice. If outside the Baltic or Vladivostock in winter, where would Russian war-ships hibernate? French writers cannot see this eventuality.

A discussion is now taking place over the subject of cremation, not versus inhumation, but of the folly of storing the ashes of the incinerated in an urn, and placing the latter, like a letter-box, in a Columbarium or a sort of Poste-Restanto. One party desires that the ashes be scattered over the soil, perhaps as a fertilizer, or into the Seine, as were those of Jeanne d'Arc. But the majority, and they are the ladies, the "warmest" advocates of cremation, who defend the urns. Is it of such importance to store up *restes* that will be so quickly forgotten? The remains of Lamennais and Mozart, no one is aware where they were precisely interred, yet the souvenir of the departed live in hearts they leave behind, and we know that is not to die. Under the First Revolution, a citizen undertook to incinerate all the Paris dead, at his own expense, if allowed to utilize their ashes for agriculture; he pointed with pride to his garden crops, fertilized by the *centres* of relatives. The age is not yet arrived at that degree of utilitarianism.

French architects and builders are bound by law to be liable for the structures they run up, for a period of ten years following the completion of the work. Unable to have that clause abolished, they have claimed that the ten years ought to commence to run when the house, for example, is finished. The Council of State has just ruled that the commencing date is that from the moment the owner formally accepts the completed building. Both architect and builder have to give solvent security for their ten years' responsibility, and which is done for them by a special insurance company. This explains why there are no Jerry houses in Paris. A house in the city is solidly built of stone and iron, almost no wood is employed and is destined to last 300 years. Between 3 and 4 per cent. is the interest, or rent, yielded for the capital invested. It has been said that fools build houses for wise men to live in. The knowing people with cash to lend, prefer a mortgage on house property as the best of securities. When a Frenchman makes sufficient money, his first act is to erect a house. By living in one of the apartments he saves rent, but the worst house in which to reside is that where the landlord is a co-tenant. He has curfew bell rules and regulations, and martial law judgments.

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London Literary Affairs.

The "Vagabonds" have eaten their dinner, and the lady guests did full justice to the invitations. They came "looking indiscreet," as they are supposed to do, chatted amiably with each other, ate generously of the good things provided, smoked sparingly their gold-tipped cigarettes, and envied very heartily the fortunate ladies who were placed nearest the chairman. Mr. Moncure Conway had a fearful responsibility which he carried as mildly as he does his evening dress. Fortunately for him he did not hear of the little quarrelling among the lady guests for the best positions on the "high table," else he might have frowned. But a brother "Vagabond" did, and for very shame he lowered his eyes, stopped his ears and murmured to himself, "I wish the New Woman were a little more of a gentleman." However, everybody was at last made comfortable and enjoyed herself or himself right merrily. After the meal, the chairman rose