

THE SOMOVAR.

A correspondent of the *London News* says: "Tea-drinking is one of the great institutions in Russia; the outward and visible symbol of this institution is the somovar. There is something almost sacred about the somovar in Russia I scarcely like to talk about it amongst profane things. It ranks with the gilt images of Greek saints which are found in the corners of every room in Russia, and before which the pious believer is never tired of crossing himself. In the same way not a household, however poor, in Russia is without a somovar. To make tea in the vulgar fashion of pouring boiling water into the teapot would be to rob it of all its cheering grace and to profane the institution. The somovar is essential to the orthodox practice of tea, and as the first word you learn in Russia is 'tchai,' so the first thing which will strike your eye on arriving there is the somovar. The somovar is a large urn made of bronze or brass, with a tube running through the centre, into which charcoal is placed. When the tea hour arrives (and every hour is the tea hour in Russia) the charcoal is lighted, rather should I say, like the sacred fire of the Zoroastrians, it is never quenched. There it burns in its brazen tube, and the water boils audibly, and the little china teapot is placed simmering at the top of the charcoal—although this last is really a heretodox practice which has crept insensibly into the pure religion of tea—and in this way cup after cup of the Russian nectar is supplied."

THE QUATRE FONTANE.

A Roman correspondent writes: The other day I was walking in the Via Delle Quattro Fontane. I had just crossed the Via Porta Pia or Venti Settembre—as it has been rechristened with questionable taste since the entry of the Italians in 1870. It was the Porta Pia, at the end of the street, the gate at that part of the city wall which was bombarded and the breach made in the wall through which the Italians entered on the 20th of September, 1870, hence the cause of the new name—Venti Settembre. It is a beautiful street corner, especially on such an April morning as yesterday. A soft sirocco was blowing, and yet the sun was trying to peep out after three days' sulkiness; then came little whiffs of west wind, showing a disposition to sweep cloud and siroccos off into Africa. As you stand on the summit where the streets cross, you rarely see a finer view. On one hand you look toward Trinita de Monti piazza and its obelisk, and Monte Mario with its pines, forming a lovely background, now very green and soft; on the other hand, the great street sweeps down the Quirinal and rises up the Viminal, and its vista is closed by the imposing apse of St. Maria Maggiore, the north piazza of the church and obelisk. Then, if we look up and

OUR CANADIAN PORTRAIT GALLERY.



THE HON. CHARLES BOUCHER DE BOUCHERVILLE, PREMIER OF QUEBEC.  
FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY GRENIER.

down the street Porta Pia, we see the Michel Angelo gate at one end, with its pallium ornaments, telling that it leads to St. Agnes, outside the walls, where the little pallium lambs are blest in the spring. On the other side the street sweeps out on to the bold Quirinal hill, which has one of the grandest of Roman views. We can see from the street corner the magnificent group which gives the hill its popular name—Monte Cavallo. This group consists of an obelisk and the two famous colossi called Castor and Pollux in former times. Now they are great statues of men holding boldly each a wild horse. In the centre between them rises the obelisk, and in front is one of the most charming fountains of Rome. The water rises in a great tazza of bigio granite, of seventy-six feet in circumference.

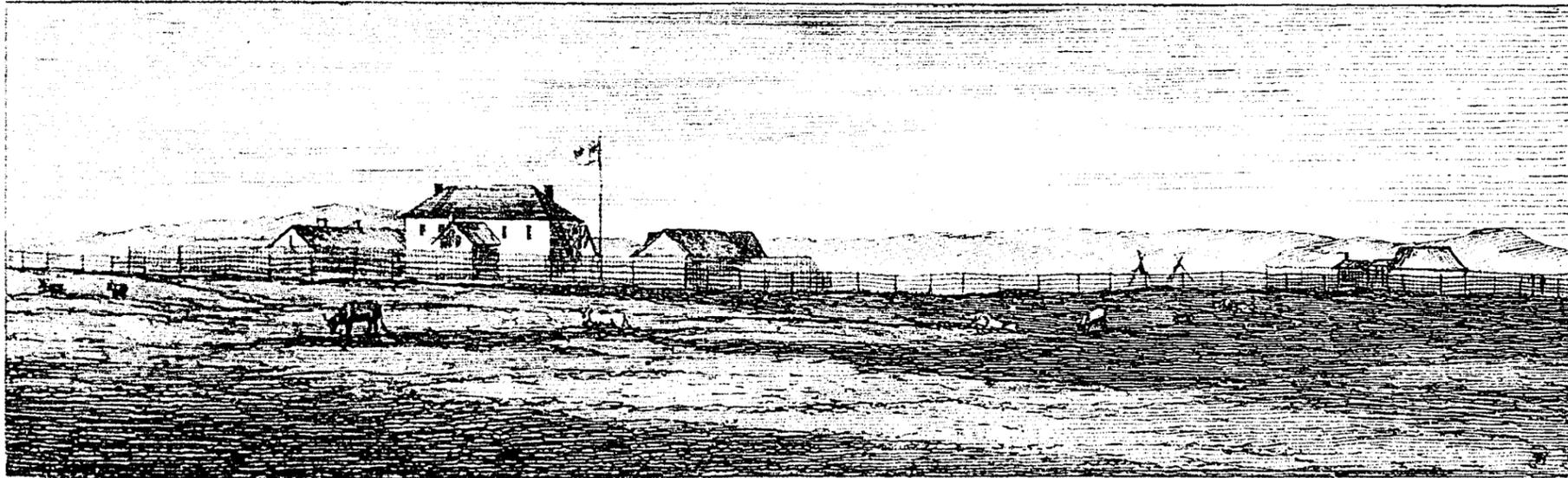
A FETE OF THE EMPIRE.

Lucy Hooper, in a Paris letter to *Appleton's Journal*, says in speaking of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs: In 1857 the first of the official fancy-dress balls, which were among the most splendid of the fetes of the empire, was given here. It created an unbounded sensation in the social world of Paris. Count Walewski, in the dress of a minister of the days of Louis XV., with powdered hair, in a costume of black velvet embroidered with jet and crossed with a broad blue ribbon, and carrying a gold-headed cane, received his guests at the entrance of the apartments. The Emperor and Empress were always present at the balls, concealed beneath the discreet folds of their dominoes. They entered the ministry by a small back-staircase opening upon the courts. Notwithstanding all their precautions they were generally recognized by their fellow-guests. A small side room was placed at their disposal, wherein they took refuge several times during the evening to change their dominoes, in the hope of eluding the vigilance of their subjects. At the first ball the Countess Walewski appeared as Diana, with powdered hair and a golden quiver. The young Viscount Amelot de Chaillou wore the costume of a rag-picker; his hook was of silver, his basket of gold filigree filled with bouquets of natural flowers, his suit of white satin, and his lantern of silver and plate-glass, with his armorial bearings engraved upon it. This lantern was lighted, and, on being asked the reason the Viscount made answer, "Like Diogenes, I seek a man." Stepping up to the Emperor the witty rag-picker cried, "I have found him!" and then blew out the light.

The Empress after supper threw off her domino and appeared in a superb Bohemian costume, but still wearing her mask.

"How did you recognize me?" she asked of one of her partners who bent respectfully before her.

"By the Spanish grace of your fan, madame," she made answer.



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