

was an alliance, not only with France, but with England. Constantinople was then, as now, the bar-bisister of that union. Francois I. endeavoured to expel the Turks from Egypt and Syria. Louis XIV. negotiated an alliance with the Sultan. The Russians, after the 1812 invasion, cremated 175,000 corpses of the French army; the Crimean War supplied a holocaust to Russia of another kind. These opposites of history are the out-put of interests. The allies invaded France to crush Napoleon; yet at the Congress of Vienna an alliance between France, England and Austria was negotiated to check the territorial rapacity of Prussia and Russia. Perhaps, as Molière observes, between persons who esteem each other a few whacks of a stick are of no importance.

It may be safely assumed that the belligerents *in posse* have well taken the measure, not so much of each other's numerical strength as of each other's resources, which is not the same thing. The nation that can hold out the longest is certain to win, and will exact repayments of its expenses and losses. There cannot be the slightest doubt, since Lord Salisbury laid down that the British evacuation of Egypt was not a Conservative or a Liberal question, but one where the honour, glory and pride of England were staked, the French view the subject less frivolously. Impartial observers keep their eyes sharply fixed on the Sultans of Turkey and Morocco. It is around them that exist the double toil and trouble, and where the broth boils and bubbles in the diplomatic cauldron.

The strike in the Pas-de-Calais colliers is now complete. The 40,000 strikers remain, so far, orderly; they do not yet feel the pinching of the empty stomach. The quarrel is one peculiarly fitted for an arbitration court. The men do not earn more than 5½ frs. per day; in South Wales the colliers can earn as much as 12 frs.; yet in both countries the out-put of coal per year and per miner is about the same—270 to 300 tons. Public opinion thinks the shareholders could be more liberal in their dealings with their hands. The Government has committed itself to arbitrate in the dispute, and will name five delegates. No! say the men; let the company select a number of arbiters to confer with a similar number to be chosen by the miners, and, in case of an umpire being necessary, let such be the Premier or the Minister of Commerce. The proposition is not unfair. A fact to be noted in the evolution of labour is now passing through—the disinclination of employers to meet employees face to face, and have a straight talk about their differences. If the reluctance be the offspring of snobbery, the situation would be grave indeed. Formerly in Spain the sovereign, if too near a strong fire, ran the risk of being roasted, if the proper hidalgo was not forthcoming to place a screen between the king and the grate.

The Comedie-Francaise has brought out Shakespeare's "Taming the Shrew," the French name for which is "*La Mégère apprivoisée*," as translated by Francois Hugo. However, the word "*Mégère*," capital for a Billingsgate scold, is not the equivalent for the choleric temperament of Katharina, daughter of "a rich gentleman of Padua." Oceans of ink are being spilt over the claim of Shakespeare to the play. The "divine William," like Molière, took his *bien* where he found it. The rougher incidents of the piece have been eliminated or softened, so as not to jar perhaps on the over-delicate temperament of the Parisians. The spectacle of a husband stabbing or shooting his wife is tolerated, but to apply a whip is shocking. Voltaire in 1729 wrote to his friend Thieriot, in London, "to whip the lady Liset for her foolish sauciness." The audience thoroughly enjoyed the "Taming of the Shrew," especially the closing scenes, where Katharina is not only tamed, but humbled—and penitent. Coquelin, as *Petruchio*, was inimitable, and Mdle. Marsy, as *Katharina*, faultless. All the other rôles down to the most humble were filled by talented artistes, and therein lies the pleasure and superiority of a French representation. The staging of the play left nothing to be desired in histrionic accuracy and artistic effects. Madame Carnot was present on the first night; having a good supply of good Anglo-Saxon blood in her veins, she could relish the Bard of Avon.

The French are enjoying the admission by English authorities that England has no army "to go anywhere," so incapable to do "anything." The 1870-71 campaign has shown what a numerically smaller but highly disciplined army can do against hastily embodied soldiers, though they might spring up like Cadmus teeth. It is not the raw material England wants, but a scientific system applied to her army, and to economically utilize money grants. There is no mean between an effective army and a national militia as in the United States. France, having her army now so perfected that at last no button is wanting on the soldier's gaiter, has decided to bring her navy up to a corresponding pitch of strength and perfection.

Something like a branch foreign office has just been organized in Paris. Its object is to search out and examine what treaties France has from time to time executed, and to note if any of the rights therein conferred upon her have been overlooked or allowed to lapse. For every mare's nest discovered the foreign Minister will receive a prod to act.

The "Letters of Baron Ricasoli," Italian Prime Minister, just published, are very curious reading. They deal with events after the death of Cavour. In 1861, the Baron said, there could be no dissension between Italy and France on the question of interests: "the two nations marched hand-in-hand towards liberty" and all the usual

et ceteras. To-day Italy is the ally of the hereditary enemy of France, as France is the ally of the hereditary enemy of England. Ricasoli laughed at the supposition of ceding Sardinia to France to enable her to bridge the Mediterranean to Algeria. Not an inch of territory would be given—Italy was for the Italians.

The official report of the French Exhibition at Moscow does not appear, reading between the lines, to have been a commercial success for the 2,500 exhibitors who, on an average, had to expend nearly 700 frs. each. The prospect of opening up trade with the Russians is not encouraging, unless Russia lowers her tariffs 50 to 100 per cent. on imports, and votes protective laws for trade marks. Z.

THE RAMBLER.

IT is not possible—at least, not easy—to utter any reasonable reflections worth listening to. The bare boughs of December make, against the filmy-curtained blue of the transparent orange, many a French picture of undoubted beauty.

Because the leaves are fallen, shall we then see nothing gracious or marvellous around us? By no means. Beauty is still ever-present, in the savage powerful strokes of flame-colour and scarlet, with which dawn paints his winter sky, in the shapes of winter cloud and massive cumulus—soft domes of pearl and snow, tinged with the pink of a rose-leaf or a shell—in the avenues of slim black branches outlined against the coloured end of evening, in the golden days when sunshine lights the distant shining cross, in the gray days when the rain drips down through the leafless trees upon a sward as emerald as in June or young July. There should be some compensation for our unnaturally mild climate in the fact that we are never very far off from spring. Here the seasons are less clear-cut, less sharply defined, than in Eastern or North-Western Canada. Our spring merges into summer, and our summer into autumn and winter, and the winter again into spring, without those inconveniences with regard to clothing and diet and fuel and shelter which present sometimes such difficulties in other quarters of the Dominion. Still, it is odd that we are obliged to keep our fire going exactly as if it were the depth of an old-fashioned Canadian winter. This is a comfortable country in one respect at all events; we don't go slinking up to bed with a candle casting weird shadows all around us, through a cold, dim corridor to a colder and dimmer sleeping-room.

In this connection let me observe that if any of my readers wish to crown themselves with glory of a literary kind, and are on the look-out for plots, situations and characters, they cannot do better than follow this advice. Buy a ten or twelve-dollar coverlet. Leave the register open when you retire for the night, cover yourself up closely with the eider-down quilt, and then—see what'll happen, as we say to the children. There is nothing like it for downright nightmarish dreams and visions, compared to which opium is milk-and-water. You will wake up hot, dazed, irritable, distraught, with a sense of vacancy and distention combined about you, with your brain on fire, and with countless dreadful phantoms surging in its feverish labyrinths. Try it next time you are filling up an order for a Christmas story or New Year's Eve poem. As the bells ring out the old and ring in the new, we sigh over the Has Been, and turn with a smile of hope and pleasant anticipations towards the To Be, for

The years have linings, just as goblets do,
The old year is the lining of the new;
Filled with the wine of precious memories
The golden Was doth line the silver Is.

I had some conversation with an auctioneer the other day and was so carried away by his eloquence and sound reasoning that I cannot resist transcribing those fluent utterances. I had had some difference with the auctioneer's assistant as to his method in conducting a certain sale in which I was interested, and when I questioned Mr. — himself he answered as follows: "You see, there are two distinct and different methods of conducting a house sale. One is on what I may term the Accumulative, or Public principle; the other on the Expansive, or Domestic—Accumulative or Public, Expansive or Domestic. In the former we follow this plan;—I am giving away the secrets of our profession—we choose a room best suited as to size and situation, either on our own premises or at parties' houses, and, eliminating everything not saleable, we put in close juxtaposition and violent contrast—what? Everything, coal-scuttle and hanging bookshelves, books themselves, and bedroom sets, rare old prints and glazed chromos, statuary and butter dishes, jelly-moulds and door-mats, Japanese fans and boxes of cigars, the spacious leathern arm-chair of the master of the house, head-rest, arms, footstool to match all complete, alongside the easy-going rattan rocker of the loving hard-worked wife and mother. We don't stop here—no, indeed. By the model bookshelf we artfully place a painted clock, bright, cheerful, with a Scotch shepherdess and a pink sheep, just the thing in a kitchen—and so on, and so on. In this way—the secrets of the profession again—we invite curiosity, we arouse Suggestion—Suggestion, which is the controlling force, the central sun, the effulgent lode-star of the auction-room. Why, we can arrange a show-room to such advantage that many a lady intending to timidly purchase a frying-pan, with, at the most, a nutmeg-grater thrown in, departs

after having committed herself to the extent of a new gilt cornice for the sitting-room, a second-hand singer and a 'Death of Nelson' in a splendid black walnut frame! What do you think of that? Well that's one way."

Being much impressed I begged of him to continue. "The other method, which we call the Domestic or Expansive, would appeal, I see, to you. Here everything is in its place and everything has a place. Ornaments for sale are exhibited in the drawing-room and boudoir where ornaments should mostly be; the books are to be found only in the library; articles for ladies' use, sewing-machinery, cradle, work-table and rocking-chair neatly ranged in the upper rooms, and all mechanical utensils, tools, etc., displayed in the kitchen and shed."

At this point my patience gave out and I left the brilliant scene in which Adaptations from the Japanese and Persian mingle with imitation oak and obsolete walnut. How many will recognize the auctioneer?

"A private secretary," says Balzac, "is to be pitied as much as women and white paper. They are nonentities who are made to bear all things. They are allowed no talent but hidden ones, which must be employed in the service of their ministers. A public show of talent would ruin them. Amiable constitutional poodles—so gentle, nicely curled, caressing, docile, always spick and span—careful watch-dogs besides and faithful to a degree!"

CORRESPONDENCE.

ART SALES.

To the Editor of THE WEEK:

SIR,—An article in your Art column of last week calls for some comment from an "outraged public." Of your strictures on public and private "hangings," and on government and private benefactor's shortcomings, I shall say nothing. These, and the want of an art gallery are too patent for the moment for any person's patience to endure. I would rather put in a word for the art loving public, and without a word of apology for my lack of experience as a critic, so necessary in order to enable one to speak with authority. Do you not think, Mr. Editor, that there is something wrong with the ridiculous prices affixed to these pictures by the painters, and more especially so, when they can be bought in a roundabout manner far cheaper? Is it any wonder that the general public wait rather for auction opportunities, when artists auction pictures at prices far below those which they ask, and then, forsooth, get fairly well paid for these days of small pay and quick returns? I speak advisedly, but I can remember one or two things of which I heard at the time, for instance,—Mr. Bell-Smith's "Thunder Cape" went for three hundred and odd dollars and took him three days to paint. He asked a thousand for it originally. Mr. Challener asked one hundred and fifty dollars for "A Bite," and it sold for thirty odd dollars and all it was worth too. Mr. Knowles' collection, to which you refer, sold exceedingly well. By a reference to the marked dates, the pictures were all painted within two years or thereabouts, and, if the sale was genuine, fetched nearly five thousand dollars; not so bad for a couple of years' work from a very young artist. Another case and I am through,—a lady exhibits at the Academy regularly, who always ask from five hundred to one thousand dollars. No sane lover of pictures will dare say these pictures are worth half what she asks, and yet the game goes on. Auction sales do not enhance the value of my pictures nor of any other collector's. We all want Canadian pictures, glad to get them in fact, but do let us have reasonable figures at once, and nothing fancy. Just because so-and-so sold a picture for a good price at a certain time, everyone with a fair brush emulates him. Tradition will not dispense with the auction room, but reasonable first figures will.

R. A. D.

CURTAIN CIVIC EXPENDITURE.

To the Editor of THE WEEK:

SIR,—As there are complaints of over-taxation coming in from every quarter, and but few, if any, real remedies proposed which would tend, in my opinion, to improve matters much, I would like, with your permission, to offer a few suggestions in your prominent journal. While the expenditure has been admittedly heavy, why have the authorities been so lax in the enforcement of license by-laws? Such laxity, to my mind, has very materially lessened the receipts derivable from this source. Surely it cannot be attributed to want of officials, as I understand we have no small number of these!

Would it not be a step in the right direction to abolish a number of these petty license by-laws, and with them the inspectors, commissioners, etc., that have been appointed under them, since it has proved impossible to deal out justice, and hence arises a ground for complaint? How it is that individuals in the employ of corporations are paid salaries for a specific work that is only half performed, and whose time is considerably taken up otherwise, I am not able to conjecture. Why is the Council so lenient with the Street Railway Company with regard to transfer tickets and all-night cars, etc.?

Again, in order to secure a better system of doing municipal business, would it not be advisable, this coming year, as the number of aldermen to be elected will be consi-