

and the first rays of the sun showed us a sad and strange scene. The little square in the centre of the town was covered with tents, and the suburb presented the appearance of an encampment. Fires were lighted here and there, and by the light of them we saw Jewesses braiding their dark hair, Moors smoking their early pipe, French ladies preparing coffee, and their half-dressed children peering out at us, half-bewildered, half-pleased with the novel scene.

We heard several different accounts of the earthquake at Blidah, but the desertion of its inhabitants alone sufficed to tell of the universal panic that it had left behind it. And no wonder, when one remembers that, in 1825, Blidah was entirely destroyed in three or four seconds, and half its population buried under the ruins. One wonders, indeed, how even the various temptations of a sunny climate, a fertile soil, and every facility of gaining one's livelihood, are sufficient to induce people to stay there.

Fortunately, in this last shock there had been no loss of life, though several houses were partially destroyed, and all were fearfully shaken. The whole population rushed out *en chemise* in the first moment of horror, and only those who were obliged returned to their houses. To add to the general despondency, a heavy rain came on; and we were told it was pitiable to see the pale, drenched fugitives who came in by rail to Algiers, some half-dressed as they had rushed to the station, others quite paralysed with terror. Algiers was, of course, only comparatively safe; but glad indeed were we to see the terraces of white Moorish houses rising above the blue sea, and the green hills of Mustapha Supérieure.

We reached Algiers and Mustapha without any mishaps, and I report this from Marseilles, where I am kept a prisoner, with other unfortunate travellers, till the snow can be cleared from the railways. The weather is intensely bitter, and remembering what a delicious climate I left behind in Africa, I half feel inclined to forget all about the earthquake, and spend all my future winters in Algeria.

WANDERERS.

As o'er the hill we roam'd at will,

My dog and I together,

We marked a chaise, by two bright bays

Slow-moved amid the heather:

Two bays arch-neck'd, with tails erect,

And gold upon their blinkers;

And by their side an ass I spied:

It was a wandering tinker's.

The chaise roll'd by, nor aught cared I,

Such things are not in my way;

I join'd me to the tinker, who

Was turning down a by-way.

I ask'd him where he lived. A stare

Was all I got in answer,

As on he trudged. I rightly judged

The stare said, "Where I can, sir."

I ask'd him if he'd take a whiff

Of 'baccy. He acceded,

He grow communicative too,

And talk'd as we proceeded:

Till of the tinker's life, I think,

I know as much as he did.

"I loiter down by thorp and town,

For any job I'm willing;

Take hero and there a lusty crown,

And hero and there a shilling.

"I deal in every ware in turn;

I've rings for pretty Sally,

That sparkle like those eyes of her'n;

I've liquor for the valet.

"I steal from th' parson's strawberry-plots,

I hide by th' squiro's covers;

I teach the sweet young housemaids what's

The art of trapping lovers.

"The things I've done 'neath moon and stars

Have got me into messes:

I've seen the sky through prison bars,

I've torn up prison dresses,

"I've sat, I've sigh'd, I've gloom'd, I've glanc'd

With envy at the swallows,

That through the window slid, and danced

(Quite happy) round the gallows:

"But out again I come, and show

My face, nor care a stiver;

For trades are brisk and trades are slow,

But mine goes on for ever."

Thus on he prattled like babbling brook,

Then I: "The sun has slept behind the hill,

And my aunt Vivian dines at half-past six."

So in all love we parted: to the Hall,

He to the village. It was noted next noon

That chickens had been miss'd at Syllabus Farm.

C. S. CALVERLEY.

The Saturday Reader.

WEEK ENDING APRIL 27, 1867.

BOUND VOLUMES.

Covers for binding the third volume of the *READER* are now ready, and may be obtained from the publisher, also, the first, second and third volumes, bound in an elegant and uniform style.

THE SALE OF RUSSIAN AMERICA.

WHEN a telegram from Washington informed us the other day of the purchase by the United States of the Russian possessions on this continent, the news at first appeared of a startling character, and the alarm of trumpets with which the announcement was accompanied added to the effect the fact produced. People were taken by surprise, for it is not often that transactions of this magnitude are undertaken or consummated by the American executive in such Machiavellian secrecy. Either the Argus eyes of the press penetrate into all mysteries of the sort, or the lack of reticence in their public men generally serves to convey them to the outside world. The course pursued is also contrary to the spirit of Republican institutions and to the practice of the government in similar matters. In fact, it is easy to discover the hand of Russian diplomacy in the whole business, for it has always been the policy of that nation to work in the dark, until its object, whatever it may be, has been attained.

But the surprise caused by the affair once over, the cool indifference with which it was regarded by people in England and here, must have somewhat chastened the exultation of the smart statesmen who contrived this great diplomatic feat. The intention, we are told, was to "hem in" the British possessions on the Pacific; but Mr. Seward, on the occasion, must have borrowed a precedent from the Irish soldier who captured a number of the enemy by surrounding them, or from some equally sage source. It strikes us that the hemming in process is likely to be all the other way, and that the new territory, cut off from the rest of the Republic, by the intervening British settlements, will be very much in the position destined for the latter by the astute negotiators. We will not speak of the value of the purchase; that is the concern of the purchaser. But as the sterile region is not approachable by a force by land; as it is not likely to attract immigration until the more inhabitable portions of America are filled to overflowing; and as England, if she thought fit, might at any time, pour into it an army from India, before relief could come from the United States; under these circumstances, we imagine that we need not much trouble ourselves about the matter, so far as it might be supposed to imply danger to this quarter of the world. In fact, seeing that our shrewd Yankee friends are inclined to speculate in Arctic land, we can conceive no good reason why the British government should not do a stroke of business with

them in that line, and pocket a few millions of the dollars which they seem so anxious to invest in rocks and ice. There are, for instance, Prince of Wales Island, Queensland, the North Pole, and numberless other hyperborean dependencies which Great Britain owns by right of discovery, and which she might be inclined to transfer to our good cousins on terms such as those lately granted to Russia. We recommend this valuable suggestion to the serious consideration of Sir Frederick Bruce and Mr. Secretary Seward.

But it is certainly strange, that Russia, that never willingly parts with a foot of territory which she anywhere acquires by force, fraud, or otherwise, should divest herself of this possession. Wild as the notion appears, it is not at all impossible that the step is connected, however distantly, with her Asiatic policy. The immense progress she has made within the last quarter of a century, and even within the last few years, in Northern, Eastern and Central Asia are among the most extraordinary occurrences of the age. She has advanced her frontier from a line running northward from the slopes of the Caucasus and the western end of the Caspian Sea to the river Oxus in Independent Turkistan, and will shortly be within a few hundred miles of Cashmere, which, though not British territory is under British protection, and is one of the Western outposts of India. We, in a former number, expressed our belief that under certain contingencies, Hindostan might be invaded by land, and shall not repeat our views on that head.

That the Cabinet of St. Petersburg may have some deep design in effecting this sale is only consistent with the past history of Muscovite diplomacy. But two centuries ago Russia was regarded as being outside the European family of nations and her Grand Duke as the leader of a horde of barbarians, thinly scattered over a sterile wilderness, in which winter reigned for more than six months out of the twelve. At present, the Czar's dominions contain eighty millions of souls, is more than double the extent of all Europe, comprises one-thirtieth of the whole superficies of the globe, and one-seventh of the land. His army is the largest and one of the bravest in the world, and the commerce of the Empire is vast and capable of unlimited expansion. How Russia became what she now is does not require to be told; she has absorbed the greatest part of Poland, large portions of Sweden, Turkey and Persia, and the whole of numerous states of minor importance. Nor does her appetite for such acquisitions appear satiated, but grows by what it feeds on; and we have no doubt, that from the extensive plateau of Turkistan, the starting point of the Tartar conquests of the middle ages, she looks with longing eyes on Persia, India and China, all of which, as well as Russia herself, were subdued and appropriated by Timour and his successors, to whom the Czar has now constituted himself heir.

THE FALL OF THE MEXICAN EMPIRE.

WRITING on the Mexican question, some months ago, we said, in connection with Napoleon's intimation to withdraw the French troops from the country: "To say nothing of his duty to the one whom he inveigled into the enterprise, the fate of the unhappy partisans of the Empire, including thousands of Frenchmen residing in the country, ought to lie heavily on his conscience, if anything can. No one knows better than he that their lives and property would be at the mercy of their enemies, and enemies, 'Jo, who never spared a political or personal opponent." What we anticipated has partly come to pass. Large numbers of French soldiers captured by the Liberals have been massacred in cold blood; all French subjects have been told that they must transfer their allegiance from France to Mexico, or depart from the land; and the savage acts which marked the contest with Spain in the war of independence are once more repeated, to the disgrace of human nature and Christian civiliza-