

PARIS LETTER.

The Siam affair is very serious and full of calamitous consequences, and to be the more deplored, as the French, like everybody else, are completely in the dark as to full particulars. The attitude of England is very plain, very decided, and admits of no misapprehension; she lays down that the integrity of Siam must not be touched, and her independence must be upheld. France asserts, these are also her views; then why all the fuss? No one questions the right of France to demand reparation for injury inflicted on her subjects and interests, and to demand satisfaction for all outrage on her honour. The Siamese are apparently willing to accord both to France, only they demand that the griefs be coupled to rebutting evidence. Then, what the demands of France are remain still unknown. Every accused, be he Shan or Siamese, has the right to explain.

The gravest grief is the matter of "the crossing the bar," at Pauham, on the River Meinham; once over that, there is water deep enough to float the biggest ironclad up to Bangkok. Like other European nations that trade with "Venice of the North," France had the right, without demanding any permission, to send her naval or trading ships up to the bar; but to cross it was requisite to obtain authorization from the Siam authorities. Did the commander of the French gunboats demand that permission; was it refused, as the Siamese had a perfect right to do, and in presence of a refusal, did the gunboats force a passage? These are points still obscure. It is not quite unnatural that, aware of the expedition France was preparing at Saigon to back up her reclamations against the Siam Government, that the latter refused permission to ascend the river. The prudence of their being on their guard was a matter for themselves.

If Siam declines to accede to the demands of France, the latter may lay Bangkok in ashes; if the Siamese continue hostilities on land and force France to undertake a formal expedition that will be costly and besides unpopular, as the nation desires no war. Then a blockade of the Siam coast must be declared; it is here where the great danger lies, for the European powers may not accept such for a lengthened period. It was with difficulty consent to the China blockade was accepted, when M. Jules Ferry embarked in hostilities against the Celestial Empire. It is a pity England has not been solicited by France to arrange the quarrel between the two antagonists. For Europeans, who dread the fire extending, two facts stand out prominently; England guarantees the integrity and the independence of the kingdom of Siam, and will pursue henceforth a more active Indo-Chinese policy.

It is very unfortunate that at this delicate moment, the relations between France and England should be of the strained character, in consequence of the non-return of Lord Dufferin to his post. His Lordship has reason to feel deeply hurt at the "set" a certain class of journals made against him. These journals represent only the writers and aim to attain "the largest circulation in the world," but they not the less wounded Lord Dufferin in his honour as a private gentleman, and in his standing as the representative not only of a great and friendly power, but the ambassadorial world at large, that ought to be left scath-

less and out of the intrigues of the political camps. Lord Dufferin was sincere in his friendship to France, and calmed down international irritations; no doubt he concluded there was a limit to even diplomatic patience. The French Government made a blunder, also, in leaving the French ambassadorial vacancy at London unoccupied since the departure of M. Waddington, whose resignation has been a loss for the two countries. Indeed, many would wish to see him return—for the situation is very grave.

The recent national fête day displayed a remarkable falling off as compared with that of former years. Indeed, keeping the national holiday is on the decline, so far as honouring it by flags and illuminations are concerned. The inhabitants clearly are of opinion that these matters ought to be entrusted to the state and municipalities, while the dancing accommodation ought to be provided by the wine shops. There can be no doubt as to the earnestness and cordial oration made to the army at the review, but then the army is the nation itself. The departure from Paris of citizens to avoid the hurly-burly of the big holiday were fewer than heretofore, evidence that the causes to disturb their tranquillity have grown less. Neither traders, hotel keepers, restaurants nor railway companies made money on the occasion of the late 14th. I witnessed the arrival of several excursion trains; instead of being packed they were only half filled. Sight-seers could witness the wrecked kiosques on the Boulevards where the recent rows took place; beyond this, Paris had no other novelty for visitors.

The general elections display a tithe more of animation; calculations may be disturbed if the Siam question deepens in gravity—no one could then predict the result. At present the struggle will be between the moderate of all shades, and the advanced of all hues of the Republican party. As for the Monarchists, their minority is discounted in advance, it is a "quantité négligable." By taking up the anti-clerical cry, and accepting a hook-and-eye connection with the Socialists, the advanced Republicans will gain many votes, but the verdict of the urns will be in favour of a majority of moderate deputies. And the latter cannot too soon enter upon duty. A moribund parliament is a great danger when waves run high and no daring pilot is visible.

M. Buloz is the proprietor-editor of the "Revue des Deux Mondes." This is the oldest and most grandmotherly of the French Reviews; it is published fortnightly, and has the reputation of being a specific against insomnia. A single copy placed under a pillow will induce the sleepless to slumber; a collection of the Review will induce a Rip Van Winkle nap. M. Buloz is the history of a good man gone wrong; he is on the side shady side of forty; he loved the ladies over much, and they so loved his money that he has run through his vast fortune, and in addition much of his wife's. The latter accidentally found one of the heavy hush-money bills of her husband, and so discovered all; she at once applied for a separation and has obtained it. The Review is an Orleanist periodical of the purest type, and Madame Buloz had a salon, sacred to Academicians and Royalists, but which has now put up the ha'chment. It was the father of the present proprietor who founded the Review by miracles of privations and hard work; it made many men famous, for it had all the literary

field of France to itself. He was very exacting with writers. He one time declined an article on "God," informing the writer that the subject possessed "no actuality."

Rue de Saintonge is a very populous street and a veritable hive of workers in bronzes and artistic metals. A few days ago, at two o'clock in the afternoon, a most respectably dressed man entered a baker's shop on that street, demanded two sous worth of bread; while the young baker, who was all alone, proceeded to cut and weigh the bread, the stranger stabbed him five times with a terrible Spanish knife, then went into the back shop and committed suicide. His body is exposed in the Morgue for identification. The baker will not survive. In the morning of the fatal day, his young wife was unexpectedly called to come to her mother in the suburbs, who was dying, and died. In the evening she was called to come to her husband, who was dying in the hospital. They were only four months married. The motive of the crime is attributed to robbery.

The Paris correspondent of the *Times*, M. de Blowitz, does not lack notoriety. A deputy intends to move that he be "denationalized." It appears his newspaper sin consists in taking the same view of public events as his adversaries. M. de Blowitz is the last man to tell the world that such a proposition frightens; he sides, he is accustomed to them. He is 68 years of age, and is a native of Bohemia—so he is doubly Bohemian. He came to France and settled in Marseilles, as a professor, and German and international literature, while contributing to the French provincial journals, notably at Lyons. He married the daughter of a pay-master in the French navy. During the troublesome times of 1871 at Marseilles when the Communists ruled that city, all telegraph wires were cut; but M. de Blowitz had a private wire connecting with M. Thiers at Versailles, and so kept the Liberator of France in touch with the generals commanding round Marseilles. The Commune suppressed, M. de Blowitz came to Paris as assistant on the *Times*, and when the vacancy of chief correspondent arose, M. Thiers recommended him for the post and obtained it. The *Times* has three correspondents in Paris, one a Frenchman, the second an American, and the third an Englishman.

A curious discussion is taking place apropos of the responsibility of the executioner. It was asserted that in 1870 the Communists guillotined Hindrichs on account of his "works." This is an error; there was no guillotine at the time, because the machine the Communists did was to burn the machine at the foot of the statue of Voltaire. In 1870, 1516, the mob was so indignant against the awkward manner that Faurant, the executioner, performed his work, that it invaded his residence and burned him alive in a cellar of the Pillori. The celebrated executioner and Huguenot Roseau, who hanged Leaguers and Huguenots alike, was in turn caught. In 1594 he was made to kneel on the steps of the Palace of Justice, in chemise, a rope round his neck, feet bare, and a lighted taper in his hand. In vain he implored mercy; that he carried out the sentences only of the courts; that he performed his work with "a firm but light hand" and always rendered the bodies of fathers to their children. But he was hanged on the gallows he so often employed, and his body was exposed to the public gaze during four hours. The Sanson dynasty of executioners

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