

## PARIS LETTER.

M. Taine was never in touch with the masses; he had not Renan's gift of style, so captivating as almost to atone for his heresies; Renan's temperament was jovial and sunny, Taine's crabbed and bitter. All the money Renan earned by his writings, he expended in the society of his sympathizers and left his family penniless. Taine saved with the narrowness of a peasant, so was able to purchase a handsome property on the shores of Lake Annecy, and leave his widow and two grown up children comfortable. Yet both eminent men, illustrious in their own spheres, sprang from poverty. Renan admitted that everybody might be right, and every doctrine not wrong. Taine considered only his system to be a syllabus, and his ideas the expression of scientific truth. Yet his system and doctrine were dead before his own demise, and he has left no style that will live, no phrases that posterity will appropriate.

Taine was richly endowed by nature with intellectual gifts; he had an encyclopaedic thirst for knowledge; but with all his schools of philosophy, with all his sittings at the Gamalliel feet of Kant and Spinoza, that mass of learning remained unassimilated; he did not promenade enough among the busy haunts of men to work off his intellectual indigestion. It was from voyages rather around his own chamber, and from books, that he made his microscopic studies of human nature. In a picture, for like all French people he loved art, he would count the number of hairs in a lady's chignon; when a medical student, for he studied anatomy to grasp the human soul, he would tot up the aggregate of the sinuosities of a brain and compute the sum of muscles in an organ. There was no broad Churchism in his creed. His philosophy did not catch on—it attracted and pleased as well as repelled. Opinion was not ripe for the doctrine that vice and virtue were products like vitriol and sugar; that man is a wicked animal of the gorilla type, at once ferocious and lascivious; not a few demurred to the proposition that the Reformation was due to the use of beer. Taine was a mixture of halting positivism and inconclusive materialism, and he was a foe to those altar-stairs "that slope through darkness up to God."

It is gratifying to know he died a Christian; his last visitor was Monseigneur d'Hulst, the Rector of the Catholic University; and the Reformed Church, of which he professed membership, celebrated his obsequies. Taine was born in the Ardennes, at Vouziers, the rugged home for robust peasants; his father was humble; a returned uncle from America taught him English, and to that accident he owes his best work, the "History of English Literature," despite some anti-Britannic blemishes. The subject was really new to the French, and was well-presented to them because the author was familiar with his task. The volume "Intelligence," had all the pros and cons of a metaphysical production, its school has no more disciples. His political writings are of no importance, his diatribe against "Universal Suffrage," lived its short day, but its spirit has survived in Taine's "Origin of Contemporary France," a work on which he was engaged for a quarter of

a century, the concluding volume remains unachieved; diabetes and phthisis only allowed him to arrange during the last three months, his Dryasdust Memoranda. This book deals with the Revolution, and the verdict is unanimous, that he has failed to grasp the spirit and the aim of that contemporary event. His plan, called the "Scientific," of writing that history, consists in tabulating documents to support his recitals, leaving the reader to perform his own summing up. Only, he has stated the case for the prosecution, and every "honest Griffith," should not omit chronicling also for the defence. All that was heroic, eye sublime, in that national federation of indignation and shame against ten centuries of people oppression and class privileges, he ignores, but collects like an entomologist, all its frenzies and lex talionis revenges. It is the Chamber of Horrors of the Revolution by a literary Tussaud.

Like a badly sunk corps, Panamaism keeps bobbing up. The big trial, before a jury, of the corrupted and corrupters, commences to assume importance as the day for hearing the case draws nigh. It is not exactly to measure the wrongs alongside the Decalogue that interest is displayed, but—for the whole affair is now political—to view several political chiefs under the scalpel of cross examination, and who have been whisked into the engrenage of the scandal. The ex-prefect de police Andrieux, who is belling the cat in the whole of this affair, announces, that he will suspend publishing further evidence of the bribery and the bribed, till the eve of the general elections, when he promises a thunder clap for the nation. The grave and respectable Debats is of opinion, that Dr. Hertz holds a redoubtable weapon in the back ground. All is mystery and surprise in Panamaism. Hitherto the press published morning and evening telegram bulletins respecting the health of Dr. Hertz. Suddenly these have ceased.

Athletic sports continue to be the rage. The latest idea has been a saccharine contest between pedestrians; the competitors had to carry on their shoulders, each a sack of sugar, weighing 220 lbs. from Paris to Corbell a distance of 24 miles, to rest as they pleased, but never to set down the sack; the first arrival would win, and all would be paid the usual cost for the transport of that commodity, as if by the ordinary facilities. The racers on arriving at the boundaries of Paris were stopped, to explain from where they obtained the sugar, to deposit the sacks in order to have it weighed, and to control the sugar draw-back. Then as they arrived in a new commune, a fresh control by the excise, and a signing of declarations that they did not intend to introduce the sugar surreptitiously, or destined it for local sale. The experience will never be resumed, so the railways need not be frightened for their high tariffs.

A pleasant meeting last week. Through Cyclists will soon supersede racing horses, and the "Gagnants de Robert Milton"—his losses are never announced—will cease to be the most important news in the Figaro. The late bicycle contest in the Machinery Hall of the Champ de Mars, between Terront and Corre is to come off again, under several conditions, as if wheeling 42 consecutive hours at a rate

of fifteen miles an hour, with no "ten minutes allowed for refreshments," over that terrible arena distance of 630 miles was not truly a sufficient test for human endurance. The 40,000 spectators felt, that although Terront, the old roadster, won, Corre had more staying power, but that his defeat was due to loading his stomach with solid food before starting, as if he was undertaking an expedition to the North Pole, or a wheel through the Arcturion. The ensuing match will inaugurate an apparatus, wedge like in shape, and butterfly in point of weight—14 oz., by which the resistance of the air will be reduced; the apparatus will be placed over the governing wheel. Vive the bicycle! Plaudite, cives!

The French—not the Chinese—claim to have invented the bicycle; they added the pedal to the velocipede, it is claimed, and so converted our tibia into driving wheels and cranks. It is thus in August next that the town of Bar-le-Duc famous for its "jambes," will inaugurate the statue to the locksmith Michaux senior, who died in a lunatic asylum after a training in starvation—the too common fate of genius. A protest has been lodged in favour of Michaux, junior, as the true inventor, and whose father, to whom posterity honours is attributed, held the machine in horror. To complicate the situation, Baron de Drais starts his claim as the true inventor. Bar-le-Duc will witness a collection of thousands of mounted wheelers in August; if they blew their bellows trumpets and formed into sea-serpent order—they would recall the famous procession of locomotives in the States. And as they will be close to the German frontier, they might make an incursion into Vaterland and so aid General de Caprivi to pass his army bill rapidly and draw forth a "Mein Gott!" from Bismark, to prove he is still living. Z.

### "AS IT WAS IN THE BEGINNING."

I.

"For the love of me!" she murmured with a breath of perfumed fire,  
Curved arm about columnar throat, hot heart  
on hot heart crushed.  
"What are legions, gods, or peoples, in the strength of my desire?"  
(While to hear her Nile flowed softly, and the desert wind was hushed.)  
"Prove me love above all living! let my whisper drown war's thunder—  
Weigh mine eyes against thy corselet's shine,  
my finger 'gainst thy sword!"  
Reason reeled—the conqueror yielded and a world stood mute with wonder  
As fell a fame to deathless shame at history's dark award.

"For the love of Freedom!"—So they sang at every flashing stroke  
Of the knife that drank the blood of bravest,  
purest and most fair;  
When a nation groaned and struggled 'neath her own self-carven yoke,  
When Iscariot kissed Barabbas, and when hatred twinned despair.  
When the spy was on the hearth stone—when age and bloom of maiden  
Were shieldless 'gainst the tyrant's power to work unspoken things;  
When "Liberty, thy name's blasphemed!" she sighed whose voice low-laden  
With a million captives' anguish still through Time's deep arches rings.

"For the love of God!" they muttered, as with sentence slowly passed