

And thou comest to thy dower,
And thy strength perennial keeps.
Stir the Aeol harp elate!
Make a triumph of its song,
For the Soul is ever great,
For the Soul is ever strong!"

Rushings cool as of a breeze
Amended to their litany;
In their pure sky smiled the trees;
And no more was mystery.
Clear I saw the Soul at work,
All through fair Saint Francis vale,
Beauty-making; like a dirk
Peering bright amid the mail.

Vital the dark River wound,
Glassy in his cool repose;
Many a bird-like country sound
As the Soul-voice upward rose.
Then as in a glass I knew
I was vale and town and stream,
Shadowed grove and northern blue
And the stars that 'gan to gleam.

This was I, and all was mine.
Mine—yea, ours—the grace and might,
With the lordship of a line
That laughs at any earthly knight.
Ah, what music then I heard!
What conceptions then I saw!
Master-thoughts within me stirred,
And there flashed the Master-law.
Next them did the greatest shapes
Of Angelo crowd in a dream:—
Vain the grace that marble drapes;
A village mason's these did seem.

But—the light from Angelo's eye.
That so deeply eager burns
With its fierce sincerity!—
Ah, the ancient saw returns:
"Greater artist than his art;"
Meaning: greater yet than he
Is the vast outfeeling Heart
In him lying like the sea.

With a sudden eagle-stroke
How this truth can lift one wide.
Then he sees the sublime joke
Of humility and pride;
For the Soul is ever great,
The one Soul within us all:—
One the tone that shakes a state
With the helpless cradle-call.

Yes, that wonder of the Soul
Is the riddle of it all,
And the answer, and the whole,
Bright with joy that rends the pall.
Brother-man, I pray you stand,
Hear a minstrel; but the song
If you do not understand,
Pass and do not do it wrong.

ALCHEMIST.

PARIS LETTER.

POLITICIANS are getting into line to mend or to end the existing tariff; it is a battle between moderate and prohibitive protectionists; free-traders have only to look on and plank down their money on the side of the moderates. Deputy Meline, who led the extremists to victory, has nailed his colours to the mast; he will not abate one jot or tittle in the matter of reducing the minimum tariff—the crucial test—as no country solicits the maximum. M. Meline truly boasts that he has a majority at his heels in Parliament; but it is not so certain that he has now the majority of the country with him. Only the general elections can settle this point, when depressed industry, and protectionists from whose eyes the scales have dropped, can act decisively. The odds are against the ultra-protectionists; they swear by all the gods of Olympus, that the high duties would fill the Treasury chest by an extra 120,000,000 frs.; the Finance Minister estimated that nugget for his budget in advance, but since the new tariff came into operation last February, the actual revenue receipts have fallen by 17,000,000 frs. without taking into account the proportion of the speculative 120 frs., so that the current budget has a big hole in its total, wide by 100,000,000 frs.

The farmers were led to believe that by clapping a duty of 60 frs. a ton on imported corn, foreign wheats would be excluded and home market prices proportionately run up. No such bonanza has been realized; prices have not risen. For example: in 1879, when the duty on imported wheat was only six frs. per ton, the price of the double cut was four frs. more than at present. But where the shoe most pinches, where the political gravamen lies, is in the vetoing by the parliament of the several reciprocal treaties, constitutionally negotiated, by the Ministry with some foreign powers. Commercial friendships bind fast political ties, and the most sincere and lasting of alliances is where mutual trading nations fill their purses.

The Swiss treaty with France will bring the economic question to the bursting point. If the protectionists reject it, in twenty-four hours Switzerland retaliates by applying her general tariff to all French products, which means excluding annually an import trade of 250,000,000 frs. Since 1888 a commercial war has existed between France and Italy, to the injury of both countries. It has been a blessing in disguise to Italy, for she has found new markets for her wines and there undersells France; stranger still, Italy accords a bounty to such of her ships as transport her wines to Havre, which thus enables shippers to escape the barring out customs tax, while selling good wines cheaper in France than French vineyards can produce. And France is compelled to augment her imports from Italy of hemp, raw silk, fresh vegetables, fruits, marble, sulphur, etc., despite an exorbitant tariff.

France is willing to take over Uganda for her Catholic missions, if England desires to retire from the key of the Soudan and thus allow monsieur to become turn-cock at the head waters of the Nile. By drying up the latter—a plague the hard hearted Pharaoh was not subjected to—the English would not be able to retain Egypt; but then this would compromise the Suez Canal, by cutting off its supply of "sweet water," which international treaties would not permit. Jules Ferry is the sworn enemy, as was Bismarck in his day, of every form of "back down" policy; if a nation, he maintains, is not to shrivel up, it must go on expanding. The French will keep their colonies, Dahomey now included, even if they do not benefit France. This will not please M. Guerraz and his school, who view Tonkin as a sword of Damocles, held over the head of France by China, and so propose to put that possession up at auction, since it cannot be worked or colonized.

There is an extraordinary display of writing over the defunct philosopher Renan; it embraces the whole gamut of pathos and bathos. One publicist apologizes for inability to write a necrological article, though six days after the decease, because grief causes the pen to tremble so between his fingers; obituary cramp is a new variety of penmanship infirmity. If Renan was alive, his massive cheeks would shake with fun, for one of the exceptional traits of his character, philosopher though he was, was to indulge in a guffaw. Renan could support any number of gout twinges, but he was of the earth, earthy, as he never forgot his sorrows at the hustings in 1869, and the Senate declined him, wanted no philosophers, as the first Republic told the guillotined Lavoisier, it needed no chemists. The strange spectacle has been witnessed of a Jewish journal attacking the memory of Renan, he who sang the praises of Israel on a harp of a thousand strings. That Semitic ought to have strewn over Renan's coffin some dust from Rachael's tomb, as was done at the burial of Sir Moses Montefiore. After all, Renan remains a poet-savant, a philosophical priest, an amusing sceptic, but who showed that his life, not the less, was governed by the faith that he had abjured.

There is an evening edition of the Stock Exchange known as the *Petite Bourse*, which the sixty monopolist stock brokers are trying to crush; it is said that of the sixty privileged—for the Republic did not abolish all privileges in 1789—not more than twenty brokers pay their way. Such are the tritons; the minnows belong to the evening exchange, and execute scrip commands for one-fourth the fee their competitors charge; the gambling is common to both; the minnows will not allow themselves to be sat upon; they have just been expelled from their temple owing to governmental pressure brought to bear by their big rivals; they now execute orders in the open air, on the boulevards. Shylock was also a peripatetic stock broker since he operated on the Rialto.

While waiting for news about the "scientific mission" that Russia has sent into Abyssinia, to make tribal treaties for no man's hinterland, even in central Soudan, a correspondent writes from Harrar. That part of Africa is being civilized by raki and absinthe, which sell for 6 frs. the champagne dozen; this beats the cognac sold to the West Africans at 8 frs. the case of a dozen litres. Since the Amazons of Dahomey work Krupp cannons, nothing is impossible in the opening up of the Dark Continent. The correspondent being classed a distinguished foreigner, was serenaded by the Ethiopians—original Christy's minstrels; they were the troubadours of the region; the honoured was compared to a buffalo, an hippopotamus, a lion, a rhinoceros, etc., but as each hyperbole cost a thaler, and fearing to be linked with all the members of natural history, he begged the Ethiopians to shorten their improvisations. Good things must not be abused.

Paris has a school population of 160,000, of which 69,000 are boys, 30,000 infants of both sexes, and the remainder girls; there are 7,400 children receiving no education, owing to there being no school accommodation, a want that is being repaired. A startling fact: seventeen years ago there were 60,000 children attending no school in Paris, and a singularly forgotten fact it was to M. Renan, who as head of the University, if that term can be employed, contributed to reduce that army of ignorance, by affording facilities to his professors to train masters for the Normal Schools. The Minister of Public Instruction has taken a bold step in advance; he has authorized, at the expense of the Government, the publication of an official grumbler's journal, where every pedagogue paid by the State, whether male or female, will be invited to pen fearlessly, whatever he perceives to be

faulty in the working of the great state machine of public education.

It seems like a shave, the proposition to tax bathers at sea-side resorts or spas; but why more so than taxing spectators at theatres, railway passengers, or gangway travellers between France and England? It is curious the craze the French have, to discover something new in the way of imposts to saddle themselves with; it is an irritating form of the pecuniary happy despatch. You cannot take a barrel of water from the sea without a prefectural permit; you would be suspected of employing it to make salt, and so cheat the revenue from the salt scraped in the several farmed marshes in the west and south of the country.

M. Emile Zola has sold the copyright, in prospective, of his "religious" novel—Oh! Shade of *Nana*—to be called *Lourdes* for 31,000 frs. to a Paris journal, that will have the right to farm it as serial story to any newspaper outside France. Syndicates, take notice.

The report is rife that the cab horses of Paris have caught cholera, and are being quietly "removed." As Mr. Stanhope is within our walls, he ought to be able to give an opinion on the matter. It is a proverbial fact, that no matter what plague reigns, cabmen always escape it.

I was recently flânant along the Boulevard Saint Germain, when in a side street I observed a new newsroom, entrance fee quarter of a franc "per hour;" I say per hour; the prospectus was enticing; all the foreign reviews and journals were to be found inside. "I walked into the parlour," planked down my five sous, and took stock of the room. The foreign journals were limited to one London journal and the reviews to a single English monthly. As I had gone into mourning for the entrance fee before I paid it, I was reconciled to the worst after my visit of five minutes. But I was annoyed at the cashier's look, which implied: "Old man, wide awake as you may consider yourself to be, you can all the same be caught with chaff."

Why is a slap in the face ranked as an outrage? Because in olden times serfs fought without vizors, so only the *hoi polloi* could have, injured skin, or a pair of lovely black eyes. A gentleman so punished was ranked as a villain till he washed his sword in the blood of the person who struck him.

Z.

SONNETS TO THE THRUSH.

IN the little bird song, which the translated Bottom sings to awaken Titania from the sweet slumber into which the lullaby of her fairy train had thrown her, occurs the line:—

The thrush with his note so true,

and one of the best tributes to this bird's delightful music is the effect it had upon Monsieur Le Bon, of whom Portia remarked:—

If a thrush sing, he falls straight a capering.

The effect of the thrush's note upon the poetic soul, however, has not proved so inspiring as the song of lark or nightingale; but its sweet purity and glad ring have sometimes gained the approval of the sons of Petrarch, and the natural music has been extolled in the best of artificial verse-forms.

Sonnets to the thrush are not numerous, and even references to the brave bird of brown are seldom met with in this species of song; but, when they are found, there is no doubt of the hold the bird has taken upon the feelings of the poet and the influence it has shed upon his thoughts. There is also a great variety of manner in which the songster is regarded by the sonnetist, and if the thrush should ever become extinct and all scientific accounts of it destroyed, there might be constructed from these few sonnets a fair notion of the bird and its habits. The beginning of the thrush's life is in the egg, and we cannot do better than adopt Horace's plan—*ab ovo usque ad mala*—in our sonnet repast. Therefore let us turn to John Clare, "the Northamptonshire Peasant-Poet," who was peculiarly fitted to sing of birds. The life of Clare is a career of vicissitude. He was the son of a farm-labourer, and was himself a gooseherd, field-worker, pot boy, gardener, militiaman, pseudo-gypsy, limeburner, beggar, and householder in turn. He died in a lunatic asylum in 1864, writing verses to the last. The sonnet was a form to which he often turned, and though he seldom cared to consider the essentials of construction, the specimens he has left are full of keen observation and are endowed with a sweetness of pastoral expression that was never killed by his town experiences. To Clare we are indebted for the following:—

THE THRUSH'S NEST.

Within a thick and spreading hawthorne bush,
That overhung a molehill large and round,
I heard from morn to morn a merry thrush
Sing hymns to sunrise, and I drank the sound
With joy; and, often an intruding guest,
I watched her secret toils from day to day—
How true she warped the moss to form a nest,
And modelled it within with wood and clay;
And by and by, like heath-bells gilt with dew,
There lay her shining eggs, as bright as flowers,
Ink-spotted-over shells of greeny blue;
And there I witnessed, in the sunny hours,
A brood of nature's minstrels chirp and fly,
Glad as the sunshine and the laughing sky.

This sonnet is curious, being Shakespearian in form and Petrarchan in spirit. The division of the verse, as arranged by rhyme, is into three quatrains and a couplet; but the subject is as markedly divided into octave and