

## PARIS LETTER.

I MET an old Spanish friend and tapped him on the Portuguese question. He is a Carlist and I shook the red rag at once: "So Portugal closes her frontier against your cholera, and you intend to bar out her republicanism." His eyes dilated, and his cheeks flushed to the splendid red of a turkey-cock under full sail and strut. "Portugal, the insolent! She and her republicanism are finished! We intend to protect her when her patriotic splits burst; for she has now no England to save her."

"But France may object to that kind of Latin unity?"

"Not at all; interfering with Spanish affairs never brought luck to France, it felled the First, and sank the Third, Napoleon. Besides, the Triple Alliance will only recognize Spain as a first-class power when she is stronger." "Then to become a Triton it is necessary to feed on minnows?" "It looks so, believe me, before New Year's Day next, Braganza Carlos will be sucking pomegranates and cracking nuts beside his relative Dom Pedro, at Versailles, while the Mozambique possessions of Portugal will fall into the lap of the Cape Colony." "And the Latin Union, can you tell me what that is?" "No, but if it means the union of all the Catholics, why Spain, the model of religiosity, must be at its head. Second fiddle in any federation would not suit Spaniards."

"But Italy may not like that supremacy for Spain?"

"The Italians are obsequious knaves; they only want a good shake to disintegrate their patch-work unity. Look at the Kassala comedy." "The what? You call Anglo-Italian negotiations a comedy?" "Yes, and well-played all round too." He then explained and read letters from Stamboul, that the English wanted to discourage visits of the French naval officers to the Sultan, and at the same time give a hint to Russia not to try on any Kurd incursions into Armenia. By England refusing Kassala to Italy, on the plea that it formed with Central Africa the hinterland of her miner, Egypt, while being part of the Ottoman territory, she posed as conservator and loyalist before the Sultan and the world. But when England has connected the territories of her two great African Companies with the Nile, and all with the Red Sea at Suakim—re-possessing of course Khartoum that pivot of Central African trade—then, but not till then, will Italy pass into Kassala and both powers forget the Porte.

The statue-mania still continues. Camille Desmoulins' statue has been unveiled in his native village of Guise, Picardy, where he was born 1762. It was he who applied the match to the train of the Revolution. He came to Paris when fourteen years of age, as a sizar in the Louis le Grand College. He had for college friend, who remained his life chum, incorruptible Robespierre. He was called to the Bar—but called away from it by politics. Much sympathy has been always extended to Desmoulins, he was so sincere in his enthusiasm, and the fate of himself and his wife was so touchingly sad. At the Museum of the Revolution last year, the most popular relics for visitors were those recalling Desmoulins and his wife. He was impulsive, witty and ambitious, possessing a brilliant imagination, and covetous of celebrity.

Labour has been holding two congresses in France, at Châtelleraut and Calais. The former may be dismissed as terminating in a split. That at Calais was distinguished by the declaring for International Labourism, better known as German Socialism. The divided labour units or sects, in France, have not yet found out the secret of discipline; till then there can be no federation, either national or international. The working classes in France keep pegging away, not the less, for eight hours' work and war to capitalists; while in Australia the fight lies between the right of employers to employ whom they please and the Trade Unionists, who insist on the hiring only their affiliated. A republic being the supreme expression of democracy, the working classes stand by that and sink nationality in cosmopolitanism. The tendency of strikes for the future is to call out the workers in some fundamental industry, as coal mining, all other industries contributing the sinews of war. May Day, wind and weather permitting, will be observed as *memento mori* for capitalists and monied folks. The French peasantry still remain the "Old Guard" for the defence of property.

If France threw physic to the dogs her budget would lose 12,000,000 frs. a year. That is the total the new tax on the sale of proprietary medicines will annually produce—a 2 sous' impost, per every 2 frs., of more or less "perilous stuff." This newly-discovered sop will not stifle the financial war-cry: "Live on the annual revenue receipts and not on treasury kites and quinquennial loans to wipe them out."

Respecting medicine, the celebrated physician, J. B. Portu, affirmed that symphonies executed upon instruments made from medicinal woods exercised the same effects as the medicaments extracted from the woods or shrubs themselves. What a revolution. Imagine a castor oil flute and an ipecacuanha piano for nurseries; a quinquina clarinet for African travellers, and a clove-tree fiddle for toothache martyrs.

The new Customs Tariff Bill has been published. It excites no criticism, provokes no hosannas. This may be due either to its voluminousness or to its having been out-protected by the McKinley Bill. The framework of the project is simple; it is a sliding scale from A, prohibition rates, to Z, free entries. But, as in all reciprocal treaties, a term must be fixed longer than twenty-four hours; as usual the more one changes the more things remain the same.

The difference between the maximum and the minimum duties is about one-third. It is on that margin reciprocal—not commercial—treaties must be negotiated. All raw materials vital to French industries are admitted free; but imported goods, calculated to cheapen the home manufactures of France, will be McKinleyed. From the columns—longer than half a dozen sea serpents—of duties here are a few specimens. *Ab uno disce omnes.* Per head and in francs: horses 30, mares 18, pigs 6; per 220 lbs., live weight: oxen 12, sheep 15½; per same, dead weight: fresh mutton 28, beef 20, pork 10, canned meats 8, salt pork 12, salt beef 22, margarine 20, cheese 12, butter 15, canned oysters 20, lobster 30. Elephants' tusks free, but if worked up 100 the 220 lbs.; per latter weight for wheat 5, its flour 8, maize 5; tea and coffee nearly 1 fr. per lb.; cigars 3,600 and snuff and quid tobacco 2,500 frs. per 220 lbs. Statuary and sculpture pay the same duty as butter, 15 frs. the 220 lbs. Gold nuggets and silver ore admitted free, but if once touched by the hammer 2,500 and 2,000 frs. per 220 lbs. respectively.

Wines of all kinds, whether made from grapes or otherwise, 14 sous, each alcoholic degree, per 22 gallons; beer 13 frs. the 22 gallons, and alcohols 70 to 80 frs. same quantity. Funeral wreaths in bead-work 120 frs. the 220 lbs. Books, if in a foreign language, free, if in French 18 frs. per 220 lbs.; same rate for music. Maps free—no geographical ignorance henceforth. Those who import printed circulars, chromos, hand-bills and posters pay 40 frs. per 220 lbs. As for cotton, woollen and flaxen threads and tissues the comprehension of their duties must be deferred. Artificial jewellery 600 frs. the 220 lbs.—the latter quantity would suffice to gain the realm of an African chief including treaty duly signed. Needles, per 220 lbs., 300 frs.; pins, 60; steel pens, 160 frs.; knives and scissors, 120 frs., and razors, 600 frs. Statues in metal, and so capable of being melted down in the interests of art, are admitted free. Gold and silver coin 1 sou per 11 lbs. weight. Swords, if not made of hoop iron, 360 frs. the 220 lbs.; dynamite is more favoured as its tax is only 13 sous per lb.

Upright pianos 60 frs. each, but if they have a *queue* 25 more; harmoniums and organs 13 frs. per 66 lbs., and 6,500 frs. if 20 tons and above. Strange to say, street organs are not prohibited; the duty per each instrument varies from 39 to 390 frs.; the grinding must be akin to perpetual motion to work off the latter duty. A harp 75 frs.; a fiddle 2½ frs.; a flute 6 sous, and a triangle for playing "the loves" 15 sous. Musical boxes are taxed like clocks. Trimmed bonnets, meerscham pipes and muzzle-loading rifles pay 27 sous per lb.; velocipedes and carriages 16 less; wigs, chignons and false hair 6 sous per lb., the same as sweeping, blacking brushes and wooden trunks. If, as it is alleged by French Jeremiahs, that the McKinley tariff bars out cheaper foreign goods, augments the prices of home labour in America, and clips the latter's wings for competition in the neutral markets of the world, what must be the future prospects of France for like case, like rule?

The French duties on cereals and cattle, like the laws of the Medes and Persians, changeth not. But supposing she concedes the minimum tariff on butter and cheese to the United States, on beer to England, on preserved fruits to Portugal, on toys to Switzerland, on iron to Belgium, on chromo-printing to Austria, on skins to La Plata, etc., can Germany claim the benefit of these reduced rates under the favoured nation clause of the Frankfort treaty of May, 1871? That's the little cloud, not bigger than a man's hand, in French McKinleyism.

The 25th October, in addition to being the anniversary of the "Charge of the Six Hundred," is sacred to the memory of Saint Crispin. Every shoemaker is born a democrat, and while he maintains that there is nothing like leather, he ranks politics, from the social side, next in importance. The shoemaker, whether *cordonnier* or *savetier*, is always the best man at a public meeting. He has ever a dash of Pasquin in his views. No candidate-deputy dare despise his guild. The sons of St. Crispin duly feted the anniversary of their patron by a procession, a banquet and a ball. The large boot and shoe making establishments gave dinners to their employees and their families, after which all united at the common professional ball. Shoemakers are as famous for their dancing as for their conversational powers.

It appears from a question paper sent to 23,000 labour centres in Paris and its department, that one-half of the replies are in favour of nine to eleven hours daily labour, and but 6,000, chiefly shop assistants and commercial clerks, desire the eight hours' scale. It is only an illustration of the difficulty of applying any Procrustean method for labour. Those who work for themselves, or by task, demand no restriction; and even those who advocate limitation would prefer long hours, were they paid by time, or had they a share in the profits of the firm.

With the report of the failure of negotiations between the moribund Panama Canal Company and the Government of Columbia the shares keep rapidly dropping. The ruined shareholders rage like the heathen against the liquidator of the Company, for not indicting the ex-directors for swindling them. The French are about running into another noose respecting a Trans-Saharan railway. The Russians made a line from the Caspian to the Oxus, hence, conclude the French, we ought to rail from the Mediterranean to Lake Tchad. Suez and Panama were not Siamese Isthmuses.

## GORING'S RIDE.

ONE bumper, our sweethearts! then up and away!  
For there's hot work to do ere the close of the day,  
The train bands of Essex are out in full force,  
And Cromwell's black troopers are mustered to horse.  
All round—the King's health! for morn's breaking light,  
Now up, boot and saddle! away for the fight!

What's here? A despatch! the North's up in arms!  
They swarm out like bees at the sound of alarms!  
Rupert's over the Humber like hawk on the wing  
And Lumsden and Astley have joined with the King,  
Each turnpike from Scotland to stout Oxford town  
Is clatt'ring to horse-hooves fast galloping down!

Unfurl the old flag! It has flown for the Right  
At Edge Hill, and many a tough, bloody fight;  
Who'd exchange its old tears, and its dingy blood-stains  
For the gayest new silk the King's army retains!  
And though tarnished its lustre still proudly it waves  
As we dash sword in hand at the psalm-singing knaves!

Open line, you in front! thrust a torch in yon pane!  
Give the churl a house-warming in high Spanish vein!  
Let the jade go, you sirs! Close up the rear ranks!  
You Roger and William—out on the flanks!  
Noll's pets are abroad—it were best to take care  
Or we'll stumble full tilt on their pikes unaware.

Eustace, ride on ahead! we are nearing the plain;  
Keep a sharp look around! gag that ribald refrain!  
Look to priming's my men! pass the word through the  
troop!

And see that each carbine hangs right of the croup!  
The churls if we're careless may play us a trick.  
And the'll follow Noll's nose as the fiends follow Nick.

Boy, whom see you there? by St. Denis of France  
The sight of a Roundhead's like the prick of a lance!  
What make you their colours? you rogue look again!  
Pray God it be Ludlow's or Ireton's men!  
Left wheel! Line advance! Steady! Give your nags  
breath,  
These foxes don't run that we hunt to the death.

Now fellow, your trumpet! a good rousing blast!  
Pikes to front! Ready? DRAW! We have them at last!  
Three cheers—for the Church! for the King! for the  
Cause!

Now down with all traitors, and up with the laws!  
No quarter my lads! Cut the Knaves to the gorge!  
Charge, Cavaliers, CHARGE! Now for God and St. George!  
CRAVEN LANGSTROTH BETTS.

## THE FIRST SONNET IN ENGLAND.

AMONG the uncertain stories which have gathered about the life of Geoffrey Chaucer, there is one to the effect that in the year 1368, when Lionel, Duke of Clarence, took for his second wife, Violante, daughter of Galeazzo Visconti, Duke of Milan, the greatest living poet of England and the greatest living poet of Italy met; but should this purely conjectural episode not be credited, there is another more authentic piece of history by which the happy meeting may be brought about by those who would delight in such a probable and desirable event.

In 1372 Chaucer and two Genoese citizens were appointed by King Edward III. to negotiate with the authorities at Genoa for the establishment of a factory at one of the English ports, and at the end of that year Chaucer, having drawn some sixty-three pounds for expenses, proceeded to Italy. There he stayed for about a year and it is said he visited Florence, Padua, Milan and other places.

In the "Prologue" to "The Clerkes Tale," the "worthy Clerk of Oxenforde" (supposed to be Chaucer himself) says:—

I wol you tell a tale, which that I  
Lerned at Padowe of a worthy clerk,  
As preved by his wordes and his werk.  
He is now ded, and nailed in his cheste;  
I pray to God to yeve his soule reste.  
Fraunceis Petrarch, the laureat poete,  
Highte this clerk, whos rethorike swete  
Enlumined all Itaille of poetrie.

Tyrwhitt, referring to the above passage, writes: "This, by the way, is all the ground that I can find for the notion that Chaucer had seen Petrarch in Italy." Perhaps for persons not too critically inclined this passage, coupled with the fact of the Genoese commission of 1372, will be ground enough. It is known that Petrarch was living at the little village of Arquà, thirteen miles from Padua, from January until September, in 1373, and it is most likely that Chaucer paid the old poet a visit during that period. If so he probably saw Petrarch's Latin translation of the story of Griselda, from the Decameron of Boccaccio, or Petrarch may have called his attention to the very popular story, which afterwards formed the subject of "The Clerkes Tale."

Though not actually proven, there can be little doubt of this meeting. On the 18th July, in the year following, Petrarch died of apoplexy at the age of seventy and was found among the books in his library. We cannot refrain from repeating that fine stanza from "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage," where Byron wrote at his best:—