

THE WINTER PALACE, ST. PETERSBURG.

The Winter Palace, where the marriage of the Duke of Edinburgh with the Grand Duchess Marie Alexandrovna was performed on Friday last, is thus described by George Augustus Sala:—

It is an enormous pile constructed of that kind of stone which the Americans term "brown," but which is in reality reddish in hue, which, when fresh hewn from the quarry, can be carved almost as though it were wood, but which hardens considerably by exposure to the atmosphere. The Winter Palace communicates by a bridge somewhat resembling the Ponte de' Sospiri at Venice, with an older palace—the Hermitage, so much affected by the Empress Catherine. The old Winter Palace, burnt down in 1837, was built by an Italian architect named Rastrelli, in the Empress Elizabeth's reign, and so vast were its dimensions that it was said to be inhabited by more than six thousand persons. The Imperial High Chamberlain used frankly to confess that he had not the least idea of how many apartments there were, or who lived in them; and I often heard the well-nigh incredible, but, I am assured, authentic story that when, while the conflagration was at its height, the firemen ascended to the roof, they found the leads inhabited by whole families of squatters, who had built log cabins, and kept poultry and pigs and even cows among the chimney pots. The origin of this strange colony was ascribed to the circumstance that it was customary to detail for service on the roof of the palace a certain number of labourers whose duty it was to keep the water-tanks from freezing in winter time by dropping red-hot cannon balls into them. Perhaps the oversetting of one of the stoves used for heating the bullets was the primary cause of the fire of '37. Naturally these poor fellows tried to make themselves as comfortable as they could in their eeries. A chimney pot does not afford a very complete shelter from the asperity of a Russian January; and logs for fuel being plentiful, what was more reasonable than that the cistern-thawers should utilise a few billets to build themselves huts withal? And a calf, discreetly smuggled up to a house-top in its tenderest youth, will grow into a cow in time, will it not? Who does not know Charles Lamb's story of the young donkey kept by a foolish urchin on the roof of the dormitory of the Bluecoat School, and which would never have been discovered had not the feeble-minded animal, waxing fat with fodder and kicking, chose to bray loud enough to have blown down the walls of Jericho; when it was of course confiscated by the authorities, and dismissed, "with certain attentions," to Smithfields?

Eighty thousand workmen had been employed at the erection of the Old Palace, which was most splendidly decorated, and the loss of valuable furniture and works of art at the fire was, of course, immense. The catastrophe took place in the night, and it was with the very greatest difficulty that the guards and police could prevent the mob from rushing into the burning ruins, not for the purpose of plunder, but with the view of saving the goods and chattels of their "Little Father." The soldiers were imbued with the same feeling; and it is said that the Emperor Nicholas, who was watching the progress of the flames with the greatest composure, was only enabled to put a stop to the self-sacrificing efforts of a party of grenadiers who were trying to wrench a magnificent mirror from the wall to which it was nailed, by hurling his double-barrelled lognette at it. Nicholas had the strength of a giant; and the well-aimed missile shattered the mighty sheet of plate-glass to fragments. His Majesty turned, laughing, to an aide-de-camp, as the grenadiers held up their hands in horror. "The fools," he said, "will begin to risk their lives in trying to pick up my opera-glass. Tell them that they shall be fired on if they do not desist." The story of the sentry who refused to leave his post and perished in the flames because he had not been properly relieved is, I fear, apocryphal—at least, I have heard it told of half a dozen sentinels, at half a dozen fires.

The Winter Palace was rebuilt in a year. The Emperor sent for an architect and told him that the new house must be finished within twelve months, or he would know the reason why. And Nicholas was not a Czar to be trifled with. At the end of the stipulated term the New Winter Palace was finished. A grand ball was given at Court, and nobody was sent to Siberia. To be sure the enterprise had not been completed without a considerable expenditure of roubles, and even of human life. In the depth of winter more than six thousand workmen used to be shut up in rooms heated to thirty degrees Réaumur, in order that the walls might dry the more quickly; and when they left the palace they experienced a difference of fifty or sixty degrees in the temperature. These little atmospheric variations were occasionally fatal to Ivan Ivavitch the moujik; but what cared he? To die for the Czar (there is a popular Russian drama on that theme) is a sweet boon to the loyal Muscovite.

The actual palace is an enormous parallelogram, of which the principal facade is four hundred and fifty feet long. It has often been compared architecturally with the ex-Royal Palace at Madrid; but the Czar's residence is on the bank of the broad and beautiful Neva; whereas the abode of defunct Spanish royalty only overlooks the miserable little streamlet called the Manzanares. I should be talking guide-book were I to tell you of all the lions of the Winter Palace—of the grand staircase of marble encrusted with gold; of the prodigious banqueting saloon called the Salle Blanche (there is an analogous apartment in the old Schloss at Berlin), where covers are sometimes laid for eight hundred guests; or of St. George's Hall, which is one mass of gorgeous ornamentation in Carrara marble. That I am not talking guide-book may be apparent from the admission on my part that I really forget whether it was in this St. George's Hall or in a saloon of the adjacent Hermitage that I saw a vast collection of portraits in oil of distinguished Russian generals. These pictures, all let into the walls, without frames, produced a very curious effect.

During eight months out of the twelve the Winter Palace is inhabited by the Imperial Family. There is one apartment in it, which I have omitted to mention, but which should not be passed by in utter silence. It is a little plain room, most modestly furnished, and containing a simple camp bed without curtains. It was here in the beginning of 1855 that "General Fédor turned traitor," and that the Emperor Nicholas died from a terribly brief illness which, at the outset, had been deemed to be merely a slight attack of influenza. The room, as is customary in Russia (and in some parts of Germany likewise), has been left in precisely the same state in which it was when the spirit of its mighty master passed away. The Emperor's gloves and handkerchief lie on a chair; his military cloak hangs behind the door; a half-finished letter is on the

blotting-pad on the bureau. There is the pen with which he wrote; there are the envelopes and sealing wax he used. The shadow of the hand of Death seems to pervade the whole place. You creep away hushed and awe-stricken from the potency of that presence, and the magnificent lines of Malesherbes strike like a tolling bell on your memory—

Le pauvre en sa cabane, où le chaume le couvre,
Est sujet à ses lois;
Et la garde qui veille aux barrières du Louvre
N'en défend pas nos rois.

WHAT POETRY IS AND ISN'T.

The editor said, that Mr. Bret Harte once told him, that in his experience of editing "The Overland Monthly," in California, he found ninety-five per cent. of the "poetry" was sentimental, and that nine-tenths of this was of sentiment which it was impossible the authors should have felt themselves. It was sentiment of which they had read other people's descriptions; and those descriptions had fired them to attempt their own.

"I told Mr. Harte," said the editor, "that our proportion on the Atlantic coast was about the same." All of you have observed how many poems we have about the death of little children, and the agony and the faith of their mothers. Has it occurred to you to notice that none of these poems are written by mothers, and that most of them are written by young girls who have no knowledge of their own of what they describe?

Mr. Carter said, that if the verse-makers could be kept down to writing only of emotions they had felt, or on subjects which they understood, or of scenes which they had looked upon, the month when you read the poems would be the easiest month of all.

"But there is a perfect fascination about the unknown," he said, "and the unknowable. What was that you wrote to the boy who wanted to know why you returned his love-story?"

"I told him that I had never known a lady who dragged her only daughter to the hymeneal altar to marry a Polish count whom they both despised, simply because he had a title. I said I had read of many such in 'Graham' and 'Godey,' but never had seen one; that, therefore, in my own stories, I had never described such characters. I told him, that, as he was not half my age, I did not believe he had ever seen such a mother or daughter, and that, therefore, I would advise him not to attempt the description."

Mrs. Macmatak muttered, that the editor was always a sad realist, and that that was the reason some people thought his stories were prosy.

"True enough," said Mr. Ingham boldly. "But still the editor's advice was good advice for the boy; and, if I had to draw a circular which would be sent with returned 'poetry' to the authors, the first requisite I would make should be, that they should not write about things they knew nothing about. I do not think they ought to say 'palm-tree,' unless they have travelled as far as Norfolk."

They laughed at this pure Inghamism; and somebody asked Mr. Carter what he would put into such a circular.

"I think," he said, "that I would begin somewhat as Ingham does; but I would lay more stress on their not sending us their cakes before they are baked.—Fausta, give me my portfolio." And he turned hastily over a pile of notes which had accompanied verses, and read scraps from them:—

"As I went to bed, the idea flashed upon me; and I have dashed off some lines, which I send to Old and New."

"Returning from the uplands of the Sierra this afternoon, these lines formed themselves in my brain; and, if the jolt of my horse has not made them too rough, &c."

"The valuable paper by Dr. Toomston in the July Old and New, which we have just received, suggests to me the verses which are enclosed, &c."

"Don't think I can do no better than this. I send this because, &c."

"There are forty such phrases," said he sadly, "in this pile of forty-two letters. Do they really think that we have any right to give the readers what they know themselves is not their best work? Do they think that anybody ever 'dashes off' poems, which can be printed for eternity? Do they think that Tennyson, or Lowell, or Holmes, or Longfellow, or Alfred de Musset, or Béranger, or Christina Rossetti, or any other writer of lyrics whom they ever loved or valued, 'dashes off' things' and sends the 'dashed thing' to the printer? I do not suppose one of them ever read Horace. I suppose," he added, cynically, "that half of them never heard of him; but I did suppose that the *postarum limus labor* had worked itself into the proverbial philosophy of the world, and that even the poets in the corner of 'The Buncombe Eagle' new that nothing could be polished that was not somehow filed, and that filing took time.—Mr. Hale in Old and New for February."

FEMALE TEMPERANCE REFORMERS.

The woman of "Smith's Four Corners," in Iowa, who recently tried to sing the heads out of the beer barrels of a burly Teuton, were greatly disappointed at the result.

That obdurate person received them kindly, and ordered fifteen mugs of beer to be placed before them. Then he lit his pipe and sent his wife out to summon half a dozen other veteran smokers.

The ladies sang and the seven Germans smoked. The place grew dense with smoke, and at the end of the third hymn two of the singers looked extremely pale and unhappy.

The proprietor saw that the enemy wavered, and promptly sent out for a fresh half a dozen of Germans. Soon thirteen pipes were in full operation, and the fifth hymn was sung by but eight voices.

Utterly disgusted at the stolid refusal of the beer seller to burst into tears or repentance, the ladies then turned to leave; but first, as a solemn protest against beer, they emptied the fifteen glasses on the floor.

The German sent out for a policeman at once, and then politely asked the ladies to pay for fifteen mugs of beer. He stood in the doorway, and, being a fat man, completely blocked them, while he pressed his demand for payment. Faint with tobacco smoke, but strong in principle, the ladies refused to pay.

But presently the policeman entered, and to him the German explained: "These women comes in here and dakes my beer. And den they doesn't pay nothings for him, and they sings till my wife she is all over one blush. If they doesn't pay me and gear out I gits them in sharge as trunk and disorderly."

And those unhappy women under the advice of the policeman paid for their beer and went sadly homeward, and took all sorts of medicine to counteract the effects of the smoke. To this day they can't understand why that German didn't do as the temperance paper led them to suppose he would.—*Daily Graphic*.

Scraps.

The paid choir of Boston worship God in song for \$142,000 a year.

The Duke D'Aumale is about to marry the Duchess de Chevreuse.

Bazaine's portrait has been removed from the gallery of marshals at Versailles.

Chicago has 17,000 persons living on charity. The papers neglect to say whether they take it cold.

The London *Times* administers comfort to the unappreciated many by saying that great men are always in debt.

An acute Liverpool firm, foreseeing the inevitable necessities of the case, has shipped off two cases of gravestones to Sierra Leone.

A lady accounts for changing her maids every year by saying that after that period she finds they become the mistresses of the house.

The King of Ashantee is not allowed to have more than 3,333 wives. Fortunately for the poor man, the ladies' millinery bills are not very large.

There are five English families at present with rival claimants to baronetcies—the Codringtons, the Fredericks, the Paynes, the Vases, and the Tlobornes.

Several Catholics of Crefeldt have given notice in the *Gazette* of that town that in future they will take no notice, by way of greeting, of the Old Catholics of their former acquaintance.

Good news for sufferers at law. Two lawyers, members of the same firm, are suing each other. Won't they pile on the costs. When Greek meets Greek then comes the tug of law.

The nuns of St. Joseph, Bordeaux, have sent to the Pope an offering of a golden *cœur de Jésus* filled with gold napoleons. The contents of the vessel thus named suggest an obvious remark.

The ladies of Turin are circulating a petition to the Town Council praying that the nude figures of the lately unveiled Cavour monument may be removed, as they violate public decency.

An ex-sheriff of Montgomery County, who has turned his attention to forming, gives a chromo to every purchaser of a load of manure. This is rather running the chromobusiness into the ground.

The Mexicans in Paris, the Spanish residents, and the political admirers of Bazaine, are subscribing to purchase the Isle of St. Honorat, close to St. Marguerite, and fit it up as a residence for Madame Bazaine and her family.

A French newspaper makes the following extraordinary announcement: "Lord Selkirk arrived at Paris this morning. He is a descendant of the famous Selkirk whose adventures suggested to Defoe his 'Robinson Crusoe.'"

Mr. C. Macnamara relates, in a late number of the *Indian Medical Gazette*, that he was called to see an infant child of nine weeks old belonging to a native gentleman residing in Calcutta. The mother of this infant was only ten and a half years of age.

The Good Templars of England are about to petition the Pope, through Archbishop Manning, to recognize their society. It is stated that many Roman Catholics would join it if it were taken out of the category of secret societies which are anathematized at Rome.

A wealthy London firm of four brassfounders has just dissolved partnership. Three of them could not sign their names, and have always put their cross to the firm's documents. If they could have used their pens well they might have become Government clerks at fifteen shillings a week.

A Welsh jury have returned the following verdict on a man who fell down a number of steps, receiving injuries which resulted in his death: "Found dead, with a few scratches on his head, and a bruise on the left knuckle, but how he came by his death there is no evidence to show."

M. Louis Veulliot thinks that "all America might go to the bottom of the ocean and humanity be none the worse for it. There is not a saint, an artist, a thinker," he goes on to say, "throughout the length and breadth of the land, unless we call thought that dexterity which consists in twisting iron so as to form railway lines." M. Louis Veulliot is a man of temperate words!

Oddities.

A stonecutter keeps ready-made gravestones with the name "Smith" cut thereon.

A Vermont debating club is struggling with the question, "Which eats the most chickens, ministers or owls?"

This is the way that the *Peoria Review* puts it: "The scarcity of new hats on the streets shows that very little interest was taken in the election."

A California paper tells of a boy who climbed a tomato vine to get away from a mad dog. Tomato vines attain an enormous size in California, and so do lies.

One of the young ladies at the Elgin watch factory, it is said, is at work upon a patent watch which will have hands so male and adjusted as to seize the wearer by the coat-collar every evening about ten o'clock and walk him off home.

Jones and Brown were talking lately of a young clergyman whose preaching they had heard. "What do you think of him?" asked Brown. "I think," said Jones, "he did better two years ago." "Why, he didn't preach then?" "True," said Jones, "that is what I mean."

A smoking bishop dined with Admiral Farragut once upon a time, and after dessert tendered a bunch of Havanas to the sailor, with the invitation, "Have a cigar, admiral?" "No, bishop," said the admiral, with a quizzical glance, "I don't smoke. I swear a little sometimes."

A young bachelor, who had been appointed sheriff was called upon to serve an attachment against a beautiful young widow. He accordingly called upon her and said, "Madam, I have an attachment for you." The widow blushed and said that his attachment was reciprocated. "You don't understand me, you must proceed to court." "I know it is leap year, sir, but I prefer you to do the courting." "Mrs. P——, this is no time for trifling, the justice is waiting." "The justice! why, I prefer a parson."

"An effeminate man," says a recent writer, "is a weak poultice. He is a cross between table-beer and ginger-pop, with the cork left out; a fresh-water mermaid found in a cow pasture with her hands filled with dandelions. He is a teaspoon full of syllabub; a kitten in trousers; a sick monkey with a blonde moustache. He is a vine without any tendrils; a fly drowned in oil; a paper kite in a dead calm. He lives like a butterfly—nobody can tell why. He is as harmless as a pennyworth of sugar-candy, and as useless as a shirt-button without a hole. He is as lazy as a slug, and has no more hope than last year's summer fly. He goes through life on tip-toe, and dies like Cologne water split over the ground."