

MONTREAL LETTER.

IF it be as hard to discover the proper quarter for the bestowal of praise as it generally is for the doling out of blame, the man in whose fertile imagination the idea of the Canadian Carnival originated must be content to solace himself with secret satisfaction as he witnesses the repeated and improved editions of his invention by which Montrealers have made up their minds to enrich themselves, if not him. What may have arisen at first in a healthy and laudable desire to make merry with our friends, to prolong and linger over our youth, and to postpone or defy old age, has evidently wandered far from its native air, and departed more than a trifle from its pinafore simplicity. The imperative words *speculation* and *returns* have swept away the innocent snow-balls and liliputian shovels of tender and happy memory like faded patterns of last year's calicoes; and their companion, *organization* has stripped our school-day slides of the romance of sliding to live and decked them up in the toggery of living to slide. Unconsciously and unintentionally enough at first; but now there is little doubt we are wide awake. And the Jack Frost that led all the tournaments of our cherished garden fun, and the glistening snow which, with childish adoration, we fondled and mixed up with the twinkling stars in our notions of heaven, have been put into the sordid scales of the shop-keeper and labelled "commercial commodities." A regular stock market has been instituted, and men purchase their shares in the direct business-like proportion of seed-time to harvest, and in the frankest ratio of risk to profit. Railways, hotels, and fur dealers lead off the list, and costermongers of every description, from the butcher and baker to the candlestick-maker, bring up the rear. Committees are struck off with full prerogative in the respective departments, and an Executive Council has final and responsible control of the whole enterprise.

The Carnival Joint Stock Speculation of the present winter has been under the management of fourteen committees: Financial, Lodging, Transportation, Advertising, Press Reception, The Ball, The Citizens', Drive, The Fancy Carnival Drive, Fireworks, Hockey, The Ice Castle, Snowshoeing, Tobogganing, and Trotting. An exhaustive prospectus! There seems to have been but one important omission—a committee and chairman of the weather—and sadly must the neglect have interfered with the financial result of the whole. Since the more active preparations commenced, the whims, capers, and caprices of the thermometer have been without equal in the memory of carnivals. A few failures in the construction of the Ice Castle had ruined the entire enterprise but for the rare good fortune of a timely dip in the mercury, which armed the Executive with authority to contradict the conflicting rumours that the idea had been abandoned. And since the festivities commenced the offended atmospheric elements have conducted themselves in the way schoolboys do when they are "out of friends" and "don't belong"—as if it were not enough to endanger the castle and imperil the carnival by watering the stock with thaws without revenging themselves by a combine to corner the whole thing by snaps and spells and blizzards.

They are both over now, the storm and the Carnival, locked together in the embraces of the past. Trains piled in as the wreaths piled up; hotels were packed as solid as the snow; and the art of Montrealers succeeded in maintaining within doors a hospitality which showed up in bolder relief the inhospitality of nature without, of which in our quiet moments, if we had any, we must have been secretly ashamed. Lions and bears in solid ice decorated the streets; flags floated in the arctic winds; bunting draped itself on icicle-covered walls; shop-keepers spent their days thawing out their windows; and housekeepers were evidently so deeply engrossed in stoking furnaces that the hogs' backs drove an unusually roaring trade. As the mercury fell the wit and humour of the Canadian Pacific Railway rose, and the opening of the new Windsor station, a special Carnival effort, has provided it with another opportunity of immortalizing itself on our wooded fences.

The programme of the Festival was an artistic five cent production, a complete guide to the wheres and the whens of the events of the week, and a condensed encyclopedia of the natural advantages and business attractions of Montreal. We had invited the Governor-General as our guest, but owing to his extreme sense of propriety, based upon the unusual dimensions of his household, we were compelled to sit by and see him instal himself in a suite of eighteen rooms in the Windsor. His Excellency acquitted himself to perfection; brought down his own horses; invested in a blanket costume; suffered himself to be "bounced"; declared he enjoyed it (!); smiled through balls, races, drives, hockey, skating, snow-shoeing, tobogganing, and in general completely eclipsed the blizzard in the success with which he persevered in being in more than three places at one moment.

Above all he gave us a glimpse of his ladies as they watched the storming of the castle, the effect of which manœuvre, with the manifold colouring of the torches twinkling in and out among the brown branches relieved by the glistening and sparkling snow, and the newest inventions in pyrotechnics darting, shooting, breaking, bursting, bowing and curtsying to the blue and starry sky, was too novel and too enchanting for words. An hour of the attack, gradually pushing on to the seat of war, brought the snowshoers in muster to their respective positions surrounding the bombarded castle. Within, the defence, as if surprised, woke up to the peril of the situation. Bells clashed, guns boomed, whole mines of lights

raged out the fury of their resistance, until attack and defence had literally exhausted every device that the heart of man could conceive in aerial pageant and glory.

The Catholic Churches had distributed leaflets calling the faithful to special prayers and special abstinence from the festivities, as an atonement for the excess of sin which the week was expected to record. But it must be evident that for ennobling, purifying, and Christianizing influence, a spectacle of the earth touching heaven outside the church, and of heaven touching earth inside, must each stand upon an identical foundation,—the spirit in which it is approached.

VILLE MARIE.

THE ONLY DEATH.

WHEN you are dead, my dearest—no, I mean
When you are what this dull, strange world calls dead—
I shall not fail to hear your soundless tread,
And see the face by other eyes unseen;
On your invisible arm my soul shall lean,
And this weak heart that at your grave-side bled
Shall feel your presence and be comforted.
Death builds not the blank wall that comes between

Two souls that love, for this is earth-made. Doubt,
Neglect, the cold mechanical caress,
Unmoved indifference are truest death.
Ah, my one darling! what were life without
Each moment's deep, sweet breath of tenderness,
And love that, God-like, never vanisheth?

ETHELWYN WETHERALD.

PARIS LETTER.

GENERAL BOULANGER and the coming election, which will, I expect, be over by the time this letter reaches you, are absorbing all the conversation, the press, and even the sporting world of Paris, for large bets have been made *pour et contre* the General and his rival, M. Jacques. So certain does Boulanger feel of victory that he has given up his seat for the Department du Nord, a most foolhardy action if not justified by success in Paris. There is a third candidate, a M. Boule, put up by the Anarchists, and he will, I believe, draw off more votes from the other two than is expected, for most of the Parisian workmen are communist in heart. Boulanger is hoping much from the Orleanist vote. He has even promised them to get the Sisters of Charity reinstated into the hospitals, from which they have been so cruelly driven out, but *notre brave General* will probably find to his cost the difficulty of being all things to all men. Although he has worded his promise about the nuns very craftily—"The Sisters of St. Vincent de Paul shall no longer be superseded in the hospitals by lay nurses *bearing a bad character*" (the italics being my own)—such a bargain is not likely to please Rochefort and the readers of his paper, *L'Intransigeant*. And the Orleanist workman is a rare specimen in Paris, though I hear that many of the tradesmen would be only too glad to see the Comte de Paris king, but that will hardly induce them to vote boldly for Boulanger on the day of the election.

The rumoured engagement of the Czarewitsch to Princess Alix of Hesse, Princess Alix of England's youngest daughter, has given a shock to the Franco-Russian party both here and at St. Petersburg, for if true it means that the future Empress of Russia will be a German and allied in the closest manner to the Hohenzollerns. The future bridegroom, a nice though common-place lad of about one and twenty, has just been given a separate establishment by his father. He met Princess Alix frequently last year, the Grand Duke of Hesse having paid a long visit to his Russian relations last winter. It is said in Paris that Prince Bismarck is not so pleased as he ought to be at this forth-coming Russo-German alliance, for the young lady is very English in sympathy, having been practically brought up by the Queen since her mother's death.

There is an idea gaining ground day by day that the Eiffel tower is not solid in its base, and will shortly topple over. This would not be so great a misfortune as some might think, for the huge, dark red erection is beginning to get in everybody's nerves, and the inhabitants of the *quartier* of the Arc de Triomphe are sincerely to be pitied, for the monster stares them in the face every time they look out of the window, and seems but a few yards off. Meanwhile the Exhibition buildings are growing apace, and anyone visiting the Champs de Mars must acknowledge that the commemoration of 1789 will be an extraordinary proof of the versatility and genius of the French people. It is strange to think that all *real* memorials of the great and glorious Revolution will be carefully hidden out of sight. We shall not be shown the guillotines which ended so many noble lives, futile ambitions and utopian hopes. Again, although Charlotte Corday, Lafayette and Mme. Roland will be kept well to the front, Robespierre, Danton and kindred spirits must *par la force des choses* retire into decent oblivion, or more than three-quarters of the public would remain away after a first visit to *la grande Exposition Universelle*, for the First Revolution has decidedly gone out of fashion, being but little referred to even by the most Republican sheets. Among other "relics" will be a most interesting and unique collection of portraits by David and his artistic contemporaries.

In spite of the failure of the Panama Canal, and of the absconded secretary-general of a great company of insurance allied to many important financial houses, in spite of the uneasiness created by the Paris election to come off on the 27th, and of the distaste felt by most moderate poli-

ticians at the alternative of Boulanger and Monsieur Jacques, it may still be said in Paris, as the *Figaro* oddly phrases it, that "Life is worth to live." Last week all Paris was dancing in the interests of different charities, at subscription balls organized for officers *en retraite*, for the *Ecole Centrale*, for *La Vieillesse*, and so on; while to-night comes off the great ball of the *Union des Femmes de France*, in association with the officers of the Territorial Reserve, and this splendid festivity is under the patronage of the Minister of War and of the Governor-General of Paris, not to mention other cabinet ministers. The *Femmes de France* number eighteen thousand members, and their work comprises an immense network of benefits conferred upon the army and the navy. In Tonkin and Madagascar a quantity of small luxuries have been gratefully appreciated by the soldiers detained in those unhealthy climates. Forty thousand pounds have been collected and expended since the Union was started. No pains are spared to make this annual ball as splendid as possible. The Town of Paris sends hothouse plants, the arsenals of Vincennes and of Cherbourg furnish brilliant trophies of the arms used on land and sea, and this year all sorts of new devices for increasing the attraction of the fête are to be carried out. Forty-eight of the prettiest actresses of Paris are to be dressed as *vivandières* of the different corps of the French army, and will supply refreshments and tobacco. The *Cantine Alsacienne* will be flanked by two immense fir trees, sent from *la bas*. It will sell Strasbourg beer and photographs of subjects taken in Alsace-Lorraine, and will be served by Mademoiselles Georgette Boulay of the Opera-Comique and Schmidt of the Porte St. Martin, dressed in Alsatian costumes.

Two days ago a very different scene was being enacted in the old town of Rochelle. General Callier was buried in his native place. After a long and important career, under Soult and in Algeria, he was entrusted with the defence of the Belleville district of Paris during the siege. After fulfilling this duty with admirable courage, he refused to accept the Grand Cross of the Legion of Honour, being unwilling to profit by a decoration associated with the misfortune of France.

M. A. B.

CORRESPONDENCE.

"SOUND CURRENCY" IN REPLY TO MR. HOUSTON.

To the Editor of THE WEEK:

SIR,—I have no desire to continue a discussion with Mr. Houston regarding the currency, and my only object in addressing you again is to answer certain points and questions made in his second letter.

Regarding his attempt to oppose Mr. Goldwin Smith's statement as to what is and what is not real money, I wish merely to remind Mr. Houston that Mr. Smith was attempting to define, as many modern writers have done, the scientific meaning of money in distinction to the vulgar meaning, or that given in a dictionary.

Mr. Houston asks "if there is no difference in principle between the greenbackers and those who advocate a national currency redeemable in gold, what difference is there in principle between a Government currency based on twenty-five per cent. of its own value and a bank note currency based on thirty-three and one-third per cent.?" I dealt at length with this point and I trust I had no other reader who did not grasp the difference. The difference is that it is the function of a bank to issue notes with reference to its ability to redeem them and it is not the function of a government to do so. History shows most clearly that as a whole bankers have performed this function satisfactorily and that governments have never performed it satisfactorily.

Mr. Houston says that "a run on the Government is almost inconceivable" and that "nothing but impending national destruction" can shake public confidence in Government currency properly limited. Financial writers are at the moment discussing the probability of a run upon the United States Treasury for the redemption of all notes payable in gold on account of the issue of silver notes having nearly upset the financial equilibrium. Mr. Houston's second statement regarding the difficulty of shaking public confidence in Government notes is utterly absurd. There are half a dozen nations in the world to-day, not to speak of past history, which are in no fear of "national destruction" but in which public confidence in the Government currency is absolutely broken. What we have to fear is that Government currency in this country would not be "properly limited" and that public extravagance and corruption would in the end produce the same inability to redeem in gold that has accompanied the attempts of other governments to borrow money in this manner.

Mr. Houston states that I deal somewhat obscurely with the power of the bank note currency to adapt itself to the needs of commerce. I did not attempt to deal with it from a banker's point of view at all. The bank circulation would be practically at an end if the Government took up the \$5 and \$10 notes and its flexibility would be almost entirely gone if the \$5 notes alone were taken.

Regarding the statement in my letter to the effect that Canada is not prepared for such a change as is involved in withdrawing from the banks a loaning power of \$30,000,000 to \$36,000,000 Mr. Houston falls into an error, common enough apparently "with the multitude," but which it was hardly to be supposed he would fall into. He thinks that the point to be considered is the *profit* to the banks now being made out of this loaning power and he advises that this sleeping dog be allowed to lie. I can