

PARIS LETTER.

FRANCE is truly the land of novelties. Up to the present it was the custom here, and still practised elsewhere, not to review a book till it was published. That philosophical joker, M. Renan, has handed the manuscript of a volume that will appear about Christmas next, to be reviewed by a critic of *Le Temps*. Even Dumas fils never carried the puff preliminary for his works to such a length. Only "Almanacs for the New Year" were accorded the privilege to appear four months before the arrival of the coming New Year's Day.

In M. Renan's writings there is nothing to be expected but style; expressive words delicately coupled, with a velvety flow and harmonic cadence. But search his volumes from cover to cover, and you will not find a concrete fact in which you can stick a pin and museum it. His forthcoming Christmas-box to purchasers will be called the *Avenir de la Science*. It was written in 1849, when he seceded from the Catholic Church as a member and as a graduate for its priesthood. His science is not that of electricity, etc., nor yet that of the economic order tending to make the poor rich, and the hungry full. It is the science of history, or rather the science of everything that is opposed to doctrine, revelation and biblical faith—that will not help taxpayers in arrears, nor dock-labourers federating for an extra penny an hour to buy beef, beer and bread—that working man's trinity.

Mind, reason, asserts Renan, ought to govern the world. In the worlds of Plato and More, and which only existed on paper, that was possible; but reason no more guides the car of the State than logic does people. The French Revolution, following Renan, was sublime, because it applied reason to emancipate the world. Now it was by not confining itself to its own country that the Revolution of 1789 committed its hugest blunders, and that France of to-day suffers from the recoil. There were countries—England and Holland—that were emancipated centuries before the volcanic eruption of '89. The "reason" the eleven million of electors of France desire to know is why their taxes augment, and their national debt swells; why their exports are sickly; why their deputies rage like the heathen; why the Republicans with a majority of 130 in Parliament cannot vote the ameliorative reforms for toiler and bread-winner, that similar classes enjoy elsewhere; while their colonies are anemic or consumptive, and why France is kept isolated in Europe. All other than this bread and butter "reason" is but leather and prunella.

On the philosophic Tom Tiddler's ground, M. Renan is again all fog. He lays down that the "work of Creation being full of necessary imperfections," it is incumbent on this open sesame reason to remedy them. "Humanity ought to be organized scientifically," continues Renan. Why not embody his organization in a short Bill—set forth his co-operative plans for cheap food, cheap clothing, sanitary domiciles, a Christian-like share to the worker in the profits of capital, where the hewer and drawer will have less crumbs and more of the cake, and where the stomach of Lazarus will not be taxed *ex equo* to that of Dives? Renan concludes by ruling that it is the province of this science, of this reason to "make God perfect," and to commence the universal work to first "organize humanity," and then to "organize God." And to think that Renan was elected an Academician for being the standing counsel of such nonsense—the created to create their Creator! That is the philosophy of the President of Superior Instruction in France. The State pays the Catholic, Protestant, Israelitish and Mahomedan religions, a total of 57 million frs. for the maintenance of their creeds, and salaries Renan to demolish them. It is akin to the Emperor Charles V. shutting up the Pope in the Castle of St. Angelo, and then ordering the clergy to pray for his deliverance.

The French press devote much attention to the progress of Russia in Palestine, and applaud the extension of Muscovite expansion in that region. There was a time when France was more jealous of Russia's edging into the Holy Places. Even now it is a two-edged sword. His Holiness will hardly allow the Greek to oust the Latin Church from the guardianship of the cradle of Christianity; if France throws up the "keys," the Papal trump card, Italy or Austria might secure it; even Bismarck himself, Lutheran though he be, and a doctor of divinity, might utilize the vacancy. In the religious or the pilgrimage point of view Russia exceeds all other nations in the number and extent of her churches and monasteries round the territory sacred to the Saviour. On the other hand, Germany has numerous agricultural colonies throughout Syria. And the silent Turk looks stoically on at all the infidels fighting for edifice space round the Holy Sepulchre; he has no idea of moving on—till Constantinople be taken from him. Richelieu cannonaded the Huguenots, while at the same time he sought the aid of German Lutherans to pommel Spanish Catholics; even Louis XIV. at one time negotiated with the Sultan of Turkey to lend him a *corps d'armée* of the Faithful to make Christians obey the Decalogue as interpreted by the boudoirs and the courtiers of Versailles.

Even in the omnipotent days of Wilson, it was difficult for a female to obtain the decoration of the Legion of Honour, a farmer's wife with fifteen children was refused it, and there was no pair of red-breeches reward—as Disraeli used to bestow—for the husband, for meritorious conduct and salutary example. The Supérieure of the Sisters of Charity in Tonkin, in religion Sœur Marie Thérèse, but when belonging to the world 42 years ago sister to a well-known Marquis, and herself a fashionable beauty—has just been decorated with the Order. It

is the Victoria Cross that ought to be pinned to her badge of the Sacred Heart. The general commanding ordered all the troops to parade in gala uniform; they formed a square, when the Sœur was led into the middle; the General then addressed the lady: "*Ma Sœur*, hardly aged 25 years, you were wounded at Balaklava, while you were succouring the wounded; at Magenta, you were in the first ranks of combatants, and were also wounded; since, you have nursed our soldiers in Syria, China, and Mexico. On the battle-field of Reichshofen, you have been found severely wounded, in the midst of our dead cuirassiers; on a later occasion, a shell fell in the ambulance confided to your care, you seized it, carried it to a distance of 90 yards, when it exploded, inflicting on you frightful wounds; hardly cured, you were the first to volunteer for Tonkin." Then the General drew his sword and touched the religious three times on the shoulder, said: "In the name of the French army, I accord upon you this Cross of the Legion of Honour; none has more glorious title to the recompense; none has done more than you in giving your life to the service of the country and the army. Soldiers, present arms!" Henceforth, this new comrade of glory whenever she encounters a sentry, he will present arms, or a soldier, he will make the military salute. Z.

TO HER WHOM IT MAY CONCERN.

CANST leave the spoil of Eden on vintage morns
To see the waste with toil and hardship quelled;
Canst thou go forth as one who had rebelled,
Still innocent, and meet the bitter scorn;
Canst take with me that journey through the thorns
And thistle-fields, undriven—self-compelled;
Can Love be thy flame-swordsmen, unbeheld,
With sterner heed than his who visibly warns?
God's consecrated curse be on us, then;
We shall fare forth unanxious, hand-in-hand,
To labour, prospering as our days increase,
Redeeming deserts for the world of men;
Spring shall be with us in a winter land;
Grief we shall know, but also love and peace.

ALBERT E. S. SMYTHE.

A MEMORY OF MOORE.

THE house is still standing, at Ste. Anne Belle Vue, on the Island of Montreal, in which Thomas Moore passed some of the days he gave to Canada. A stone, white-plastered, high-walled house, like most of the houses erected at that period in French Canada, it has a gray, slanting roof, from which projecting windows start like astonished eyes; a house to be remarked upon at once, in viewing which one mentally and immediately ejaculates, "That house has a history." But what house has not? Time turns all things into the history which, all unknown, unread, moves the universe of souls.

When you muster courage to climb the creaking steps, to push open the door, trellised in cobwebs, you find yourself in the room the poet inhabited, and in which he wrote that melodious strain, "The Canadian Boat Song." In the corner stands the clock by which he timed the inspiration—sublime idea! A tradition which, though it has but transitory value, a moment's thought does away with it as effectually as Sappho's Suicide! Solomon's Songs! Cleopatra's Cunning End! the truth being that these simple verses were written in the open boat on the St. Lawrence during a five days' journey between Montreal and Kingston, and were suggested to the imaginative mind of the poet by the peculiar measure of the *voyageurs'* *chansons* as they plied the oars.

The same metre is found in that exquisite poem, "Paradise and the Peri"; the Peri's closing cry has caught the musical jingle.

Joy, joy for ever!—my task is done,
The gates are passed and heaven is won.

We are authentically informed that the words and music of "The Canadian Boat Song" were ever dear to Moore, recalling vividly a happy period of life. This is easily realized, for where the affection is concerned association has much to say, and time turns to treasures many trivial things. Those who are not poets also possess precious memories; land-marks of long ago. But it seems almost inconceivable that a man of Moore's mental calibre should at the moment have considered the lines worth committing to paper.

So we wander with this touch from Genius's torch still flaming the memory. "And of the time when full of blissful sighs we sat and gazed into each other's eyes; silent and happy; as though God had given naught else worth looking at this side heaven!"

Montreal.

MAY AUSTIN.

THE death of Sir Tindal Robertson, the member for Brighton, by his own hand, is a lamentable event. His figure in the lobby of the House was a well-known one, and to see him arm-in-arm with his attendant recalled to many the times when Mr. Fawcett still lived and moved in the political world. Both lost their sight in early manhood, and both, nevertheless, fought their way into the House of Commons. But I fear the excitement and high-pressure life of the modern politician was too great for the Brighton doctor, whose mind must have become unhinged, probably from the depressing conviction that the new life he had chosen was too much for his physical powers. Nowadays a Parliament man must be made of steel, and have a constitution like iron.

THE SONNET.—IX.

ALL the earlier Greek dramatists were more or less indebted to Homer for material and Æschylus, commonly known as the father of Attic tragedy, termed his works "dry scraps from the great banquet of Homer." Many Greek scholars would be glad to find more of the dry scraps than have been preserved. It is not altogether impossible, since so much new antiquity is now being brought to light. To day it is announced that Euclid's lost books have been found. The warrior poet has been variously criticized and compared with Sophocles and Euripides. His style has been termed Miltonic from his mighty words and power of expression. He has been compared with Shakespeare by many a critic. Two feelings predominate in Æschylus; religion and war. It must be borne in mind that he was trained in the mysteries of Eleusis, his native place, and that he was actively present at Marathon and Salamis. He lived in a most critical period and his genius rose to the highest point attainable. No less than seventy plays are attributed to him, though only a tenth of that number are known. It is to Æschylus that Mr. Aubrey De Vere addresses the following very artistic sonnet:—

A sea-cliff carved into a bas-relief;
Dark thoughts and sad, conceiv'd by brooding nature,
Brought forth in storm:—dread shapes of Titan stature,
Emblems of Fate and Change, Revenge, and Grief,
And Death and Life;—a cavern'd Hieroglyph
Confronting still with thunder-blasted frieze,
All stress of years, and winds, and wasting seas:—
The stranger nears it in his fragile skiff
And hides his eyes. Few, few shall pass, great Bard,
Thy dim sea-ports! Entering, fewer yet
Shall pierce thy mystic meanings, deep and hard:
But these shall owe to thee an endless debt;
The Elusian caverns they shall tread
That wind beneath man's heart; and wisdom learn with dread.

This sonnet is not equal to many written by Mr. Aubrey De Vere. It is poor in the structure of the octave; the rhymes are not altogether fortunate, the images are rather complex, and the introduction of the double rhymes in the second and third lines detract from the smooth flow of the verse. The octave runs into the sestet, and the final couplet would excite the wrath of some particular critics. Altogether it is a sonnet of most deliberate manufacture and therefore, although suggesting much of the subject, a failure.

The second of the three great Greek tragedians has not, so far as we can remember, been honoured directly by any sonnet notice; but there are two sonnets indirectly affecting the dramatist. The following is the first specimen we have given of the fine work of Edmund W. Gosse, and its subject is

THE TOMB OF SOPHOCLES.

A bounding satyr, golden in the beard,
That leaps with goat-feet high into the air,
And crushes from the thyme an odour rare,
Keeps watch around the marble tomb revered
Of Sophocles, the poet loved and feared,
Whose mighty voice once called out of her lair
The Dorian muse severe, with braided hair,
Who loved the thyrsus and wild dances weird.
Here all day long the pious bees can pour
Libations of their honey, round this tomb
The Dionysiac ivy loves to roam;
The satyr laughs, but He awakes no more,
Wrapped up in silence at the grave's cold core,
Nor sees the sun wheel round in the white dome.

The simplicity of the workmanship on this sonnet is in marked and favourable contrast with the laboured chiselling of the previous one. This is a picture of reasonable scope; that is a fresco of too large design for the painter, no matter what labour may be spent upon it. The story of Philoctetes formed the plot of one of Sophocles' dramas, and Wordsworth seems to have been greatly impressed therewith, for he refers to the great sufferer in at least two of his sonnets.

The following draws from the fact that the presence of a lower being in the order of creation may serve to brighten the lot of one who may be, as Sophocles makes Philoctetes:—

Without a friend,
Without a fellow sufferer, left alone,
Deprived of all the mutual joys that flow
From sweet society.

The sonnet written by Wordsworth was intended to convey a fact for the feelings and is part of the plan generally carried out by the great teacher; but it will serve here chiefly as an introduction to a very much finer one by Russell, on which Wordsworth has certain remarks of interest. It is one of the later sonnets, and is usually included with the miscellaneous group of his Poems of the Imagination, No. 12, reading as follows:—

When Philoctetes in the Lemnian Isle,
Like a form sculptured on a monument,
Lay couched; on him or his dread bow, unbent,
Some wild bird off might settle and beguile
The rigid features of a transient smile,
Disperse the tear, or to the sigh give vent,
Slackening the pains of ruthless banishment
From his loved home, and from heroic toil.
And trust that spiritual creatures round us move,
Griefs to allay which Reason cannot heal;
Yea, veriest reptiles have sufficed to prove
To fettered wretchedness, that no Bastille
Is deep enough to exclude the light of love,
Though man for brother man has ceased to feel.

This is straight from Wordsworthshire, as Mr. Lowell has happily named the poetic land of which Rydal was the capital. The teacher cites the captive of Lemnos as the example in the octave, and refers to the prisoner with the historic rat of the Bastille in the sestet to verify his lesson. The sonnet is, therefore, not classical; it is also not historic; but it is eminently didactic and Wordsworthian. In a letter to Dyce, the composer of more sonnets than any other English writer has some remarks to this effect, that although a sonnet should have a begin-