

THE LATEST PARIS IDEAS.

TRADE DULL IN THE FRENCH CAPITAL
SINCE THE ZOLA TRIAL—TINTED
PRINTS—NOVELTIES IN
PAPERS AND MENUS.

"NEVER has business been so bad as it has been during the last month," Parisian tradesmen are saying, with what appears to me a good deal of truth, says the Paris correspondent of the Stationery Trades Journal. In fact, the Zola trial, or rather the agitation it produced, has been as bad as a panic. Nearly all the visitors left Paris, and were not unwise in so doing, for if the jury had brought in a verdict of acquittal, and if they had not been a set of arrant cowards that is what they would have done, Paris would have been at the mercy of the military and the mob. Now, it is very easy to start a French mob pillaging, but it is by no means so easy to stop them, and in this particular instance there is good reason to fear that there would have been a revolution. France has learned very little in the last hundred years, and a revolution in the present day would be almost as terrible as it was in 1789. Naturally quiet and sensitive people preferred to be out of the reach of the mob, and, of course, commerce has languished in consequence. Zola alluded to this in his speech, but, though I am with him heart and soul in his desire to see justice done and a cruel wrong righted, I cannot agree with him in thinking that the disturbance his acquittal would have entailed would have been the shortest way of restoring commercial prosperity.

Some day the nation or the Government will be brought to see the truth; but, till they do, the agitation will go on, and whilst it does business will languish. I know of some cases in which large wholesale houses have seen their businesses decrease during the last two months not by 5 per cent., but to 5 per cent. of what they were in former years.

Carnival this year afforded a striking instance of the paralysis of trade. In former years the boulevards were lined with itinerant vendors of paper confetti, but this year there was not one along the edge of the pavement, and very few had established themselves at the corners of the streets. It has been calculated that the amount of confetti used in an ordinary carnival requires 100 tons of paper for its manufacture, but I should be very much astonished to learn that ten tons were used last Sunday and Tuesday. The weather had something to do with this, no doubt. It was cold, windy and wet, and, on the Tuesday, Nature afforded the Parisians the opportunity of judging what the other sort of confetti was like, by supplying a sharp hailstorm in the middle of the afternoon. If the Pierots

dressed in white calico, and the young women with bare necks and arms, enjoyed the pelting of the pitiless storm, they must have been in an ultra-Tapleyean mood. A friend of mine—wild horses should not drag from me his name—said that what was wanted to make the carnival a success was a good deal less of the Zola influence, and a good deal more of the solar influence.

If the manufacturers of the little paper disc and spirals prepared a large stock this year, they must have been woefully disappointed, but, perhaps, they will be able to recoup themselves—partially, at least—at the mid Lent festivities that take place in about three weeks' time. The weather then is usually much milder, and there is always a procession to see, which is, at least, something that the crowd can appreciate. At present the only things which have derived any benefit from the decline of carnival are the trees on the boulevards. In previous years they have been swathed in countless bands of colored paper, till they looked like Gulliver tied down by the pack-threads of the Lilliputians. This year there is hardly a streamer on any of the trees.

I mentioned in a former letter that a new method of tinting photographs and prints had been invented, and named by its inventor "Radiotint." With three bottles of colors and a bottle of "medium" any tint can be procured, and as the tints are not "laid on" but simply "washed in," the process is so easy that a child can perform it after only a few hours' practice. The company established for the sale of the materials for this new process, have opened several shops in Paris, and in spite of the high prices asked, —24 francs, or about 19s. 2d.—seem to be doing a good business. My reason for alluding to it again is that it has now been found that the process can be adapted to coloring "posters." If so it would seem to me that a great saving would be effected. At present a poster which is printed in several colors must be drawn on the stone as many different times. In addition to the artist's work there is the rent of a huge studio, the cost of the stones or slabs, the working of a huge press, and the wages of a small army of skilled workmen, for every sheet will require very careful "laying on." If the Radiotint process can do all it professes much of this expense would be saved. The design would only have to be drawn once on the stone, the printing could be done ten times as rapidly, and a few girls could color the designs well and cheaply. If each girl used one color only, the subdivision of labor would greatly increase the output, and if great rapidity were necessary for the execution of a large order it would be easy to supply each colorist with a stencil plate. I do not profess

to know very much about color printing, but it seems to me that there is an opening for a man with practical knowledge to make a good thing out of the idea. I may mention that the colors are permanent, and will not wash out even in the heaviest rain.

Trade being so bad, it is needless to say there are few novelties in papers, though this and the next two months are the best seasons for novelties. Heavy red, of almost exactly the same hue as that used to cover cardboard boxes, is still very popular, and is matched with an equally heavy blue. I pity the taste of anyone who could be found to use either. "Alsatian cloth," which is the latest novelty, is properly speaking, not a novelty at all, but simply paper made to resemble colored linen. Except that it is made in a variety of hues, it does not differ from a dozen other imitations that I have seen elsewhere.

In menus the only novelty that I have seen is to have a small and beautifully executed chromo lithograph across the top of the page. There are a few designs I have noticed that I regret to say are extremely vulgar. They are very much of the "peony valentine" style of art in idea, and not very much better in way of execution. The French are a funny people, and when they produce anything they oscillate between the best possible taste and the very worst.

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