

# THE GOSSIP OF PARIS

## Panama Scandals Prevent French Opposition to Nicaragua.

### TWO NEW ACADEMICIANS

#### Indifference Toward Martinique—Exposition Nearly Ready—Its Success Questioned—Le Ressoré Censored.

Foreign Correspondence NEW YORK TIMES.  
 PARIS, Feb. 16.—The question of the Nicaragua Canal has not excited French public feeling very greatly. The people who lost all their money in Panama have no means of rousing the press to action, and their grievance is of so old a date, and the political scandal involved in it was so terrible, that nothing more is likely to be heard about them or it. Panama has, to all intents and purposes, been wiped off the slate of French history. Charles de Lesseps still lives on his modest farm in the east of France, surrounded by a host of unmarried sisters and young brothers, and he has no wish to fling himself again into the vortex of international finance. Mme. Ferdinand de Lesseps, the young widow of the "Grand Français," survives and is fascinating in spite of her widow's weeds. M. Emile Loubet is President of the French Republic, and for reasons which it is unnecessary to go into, his enemies call him the "Panamist."

Baron Christiani, who knocked Loubet's hat off on the Auteuil racecourse, with the idea of substituting for it a large Panama hat which he held hidden in a coat pocket. Is still in prison at Fresnes, and the last we have heard of him is that he is ill and has been transferred to the Penitential Infirmary. "Panama! Panama!" This is an old street cry like that of last year's "Fresh Lavender!" The people who invested their money in the hopeless Panama enterprise are dead or for some other reason silent. France will never again create a Panama. The very name is as melancholy in sound to her as that of Waterloo or Sedan. However bright the financial possibilities of a Panama Canal, completed with new capital and under new auspices, might be, the savings of the French peasants would never go into such a canal again. For this reason the French Government has no desire to oppose the Nicaraguan scheme. To oppose it would be to rake up old stories which are best left in oblivion, the destroying again of reputations which have managed to reform themselves in accordance with that law which is eternal in France that everything is forgotten sooner or later, that everything blows over. To oppose the Nicaraguan scheme would involve the release of Baron Christiani, the triumph of Rochefort and Millevoje, and a direct personal attack upon the French President, the consequence of which it is impossible to foresee.

This morning M. Loubet paid an official visit to the tomb of his predecessor, Felix Faure. The memory of Felix Faure is getting very dim, and it requires an act of piety of this kind on the part of Faure's successor to revive it. On the whole France has been quieter with Loubet at its head than it was with Felix Faure. M. Loubet is in no sense of the word an intriguer. He has no passion for self-advertisement. The dignity of his situation loses nothing thereby, it must be admitted, and he is less an object of jealousy to some brilliant contemporaries. On the whole, his Presidential career has so far been a credit to him, and nothing that he has done has given rise to spiteful comment or caused any difficulties to the Ministry.

The riots at La Martinique have created excitement here, but in spite of the interpellation of M. Denis Guibert, the Deputy for La Martinique, the Government is indisposed to treat the matter very seriously. M. Denis Guibert is a strong Clerical, and a convinced Conservative. When Magnard edited The Figaro it was Denis Guibert who was his right-hand man. After Magnard's death Guibert edited The Figaro for a time, and every morning published short articles giving the note of this widely read organ on home and foreign affairs. But the Dreyfus case separated him from the management of The Figaro, and after his election to the Chamber as Deputy of La Martinique, to which he was invited by his black constituents without having any special knowledge of the affairs of the island, he ceased to write for any Paris paper. He is a man of considerable wealth, with a very charming manner, and wide political knowledge. He is opposed to any American intervention in the affairs of La Martinique, but the Government is none the less quite capable of striking a bargain with the United States for the transfer of this troublesome possession, which brings in annually a good deal less than it costs and supplies France with little else except rum.

### TWO NEW ACADEMICIANS.

Two new Academicians have been elected, M. Paul Hervieu and M. Emile Faguet. The former of these is an artist in the fullest acceptability of the word. Within the last few years he was looked upon as the most promising young man of letters in France. As is so often the case, his promise was greater than his performance. But two of his pieces, however, had considerable success at the Comédie Française, and the delicate precision of his observation and the distinction of his style are a relief from the vulgarities of Paul Bourget and the rhodomontades of Rostand and Richepin. M. Hervieu started in life as a diplomatist, and though he was too much a man of letters to consent to go to Brazil as an attaché of the legation there, he has remained in a great measure a diplomatist ever since, he abandoned the carrière. His diplomatic reserve is one of the reasons why his pieces have never attained great popular success. It is also an explanation of his election to the Academy.

In appearance M. Hervieu is good-looking and distinguished. His hair is auburn, and his clean-shaven face, youthful at a distance—is a network of partly suppressed wrinkles. Much of his fame is due to women, who appreciate his work immensely. He succeeds to Pailleron, to whom he is superior in every respect, and his speech at his forthcoming reception by the Academy is being looked forward to in literary circles, for it is certain to be a great and delicate treat, affording a refreshing relief to the shocking trash with which M. Deschanel recently supplied us. M. Faguet, the other Academician, is the typical critic in the direct French sense—a rechauffé of Sainte-Beuve and Edmond Scherer. He writes the dramatic reviews for the Journal des Débats, and anatomizes the dead bones of mediæval literature to the corpse-like audiences of the Sorbonne, dust rising to dust. It is the tradition of the Academy to include men of this kind among the Immortals. They have never belonged to any but a past life, and being still-born, there is no need to call their immortality in question.

### EXPOSITION NEARLY READY.

There is a question whether the exposition will be ready for the opening day. My own impression is that it will. Of course a vast deal remains to be done, but the rapidity of the progress which is made from week to week is really astonishing. The new bridge across the Seine requires now little more than a balustrade and a statue or two to be complete. The rest of the buildings, being almost entirely of iron and glass, are finished except for a general cleaning up. Many of the showcases are already erected, and a couple of weeks will suffice for putting the last touches to the international pavilions. The Avenue of Palaces, which leads from the new bridge to the Invalides, is really very fine. It crosses the roof of the new metropolitan railway, which is entirely made of glass. There are some very pretty points of view from the numerous balconies of the ornate buildings of which this avenue is composed. One in particular comprehends the bright gilded dome of the Invalides, and to the right the setting of the sun behind the Eiffel Tower and the great wheel over the smoke-laden roofs of Passy. This exposition will be less compact than was the last. It will be more than a day's journey to walk over it, and no less than three small iron bridges have been thrown over the Seine to enable visitors to go from one part of the exposition to the other without leaving its precincts.

As the date of the opening approaches it becomes more and more a moot question as to whether the exposition will be a success. Business in Paris is so shockingly bad that all the tradespeople are in despair. The number of visitors, both from the United States and England, has never been so small. Still, the fact is being relied on that a great number of passages have been booked in advance. I hear, however, that in England a very large proportion of those who had arranged to come over for the exposition by paying installments of money to one or

other of the tourist agencies, have asked for their money to be returned. Many of them were reservists, who were forced to go to the front, and under the circumstances the agencies did not feel that they could retain their subscriptions. Of course the provincial attendance will be enormous, but it will be interesting to see whether the abstention of a good many Englishmen and some Americans will produce a real effect upon the total results.

A sensational piece, "Le Ressoré," has been acted at the Nouveau Théâtre in the strictest privacy, its author being M. Urbain Gohier, whose attacks upon the French Army, and whose passionate defense of Dreyfus in the columns of the Aurore have rendered him famous. "Le Ressoré" has nothing to do with the army, but is the glorification of an imaginary modern commune with revolution and riot and barricades to wind up with. The hero of the piece is an impassioned democrat, whose spring of action is destroyed at the critical moment through his devotion to a woman who has more lovers than one. This woman's husband comes upon the scene, and in a curiously cynical act walks his own wife off in triumph, after warning the democratic prophet that his schemes will fail; that the spring is indeed broken, and that he has thrown away the great chance of a lifetime in an aimless and ridiculous intrigue. Finally the revolution takes place, the woman is shot in a cleverly staged street fight, and the democrat dies bravely with his faithful conspirators around him. A crowd of policemen in plain clothes rush forward, pile up the corpses, and cry "Vive la République."

What prevented the piece from passing the censors was the introduction upon the boards of policemen in plain clothes, one of whom murders his comrade, whose identity has been discovered by the conspirators—this to save himself and in the hope of obtaining the Legion of Honor. "Le Ressoré" was well acted, and has considerable dramatic merit. It was preceded by a lecture from M. Urbain Gohier, who prophesied that war would soon be impossible because the soldiers of the opposing armies before murdering one another would want to settle up old scores with their commanding officers.

### IN FOREIGN LANDS.

**RUSSIA GAINS CONCESSIONS FROM TURKEY.**—Advices from Constantinople to the Frankfurter Zeitung are that the recent rumors to the effect that France, seconded by Russia, is trying to obtain a reopening of the Egyptian question contain, little evidence in fact. But whatever may have been the original intention of France, it is now clear, it is said, that her Embassy is simply seeking to obtain certain commercial concessions in the Levant. The Zeitung also affirms, on what is said to be the very best authority, that Russia has already received a quid pro quo for making no objection to the concession to Germany of the Bagdad Railway.

A fortnight ago the Russian Ambassador to the Porte received an iradé from the Sultan, which was followed by the conclusion of a preliminary agreement relating to the construction of a railway from Kars to Erzeroum. The form of the agreement is said to be identical with that which was recently concluded between Turkey and Germany regarding the Bagdad Railway. It is further stipulated that Russia will receive the same preferential rights for the construction of all other branch lines which may be extended to the Russian frontier.

\*\*\*

**TO IMPROVE INDIVIDUAL MARKSMANSHIP IN THE FRENCH ARMY.**—It is reported in military circles in Paris that Minister of War Gen. de Galliffet is preparing measures which will completely reorganize the shooting in the French Army. The Minister is said to have followed the war in South Africa with close interest, and has a number of plans on foot suggested by it; the first will be an attempt to improve the individual marksmanship in the army, particularly long-range work.

At present there are no extensive military ranges in France and very few short-distance ones. There are hardly any shooting grounds where the conditions of modern warfare can be realized. According to the present scheme of Gen. de Galliffet, fields of 2,000 hectares for infantry alone will be necessary, and, if grouped with other arms, 4,000 hectares are needed. The only practicing ground which at present exists is that at Châlon. Two other camps are projected, one at Mailly for the Twentieth Corps, and the other at Courtine, for the Twelfth Corps. Each of these will cost, it is said, 5,000,000f. each.

In Germany fifteen army corps out of twenty have a practicing ground established in war conditions. In France forty-four garrisons have practicing ranges which do not exceed 300 meters in length, and some have none at all. Sixteen garrisons have ranges which are extremely dangerous for the neighbors.

In view of the greater cost of land in France than in Germany, it is proposed to hire temporarily large tracts of ground for range purposes, and the plan of the Ministry is to establish butts at short distances close to barracks for the use of recruits, and a practicing ground on the required vast scale for each army corps, together with numerous temporary grounds.

\*\*\*

**ACTUAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE NEW FRENCH NAVAL PROGRAMME.**—It is the consensus of opinion in naval circles in Berlin, and in Paris, too, among the opponents of the Waldeck-Rousseau Ministry, that the new French naval programme, although formidable on paper, is not sustained by actual fact. Eight hundred thousand francs is to be spent on new ships during the next seven years, representing a yearly expenditure of a little over 100,000,000f., but the latter sum has been about the normal expenditure for some years past.

In 1896 the Minister of Marine of that day brought forward a strong building programme, but it has not been carried out, and apparently it is now to be dropped in favor of the new programme, although 225,000,000f. of the 800,000,000f. mentioned above is to be devoted to the completion of ships which have been begun under the 1896 scheme. It is further proposed to build 6 first-class battleships, 6 armored cruisers, 28 torpedo catchers, 112 torpedo boats, and 26 submarine or submergible boats.

The new ships are expected to be all completed by 1907, but it is hoped that two of the six battleships, three of the six cruisers, twenty of the torpedo-catchers, seventy-six of the torpedo-boats, and all the submarine boats will be ready for sea by 1905. A further large sum is to be expended on re-arming the forts, building new docks, the transformation of Bizerta into a first-class port and arsenal, and the creation of arsenals at Saigon, in Cochinchina, and Dakar on the West coast of Africa.

It is considered in foreign naval circles that the determination to create a first-class dockyard and arsenal at Bizerta is alone of serious consideration on the part of the powers, as it is a decision taken in defiance of existing treaties. It is also pointed out in Paris that the proposals are too modest to suit the views of M. Lockroy, the ex-Minister of Marine, and the colonial group who act with him, so that an attempt is sure to be made to force the Government to enlarge their measure. It is deemed a significant fact, however, that of late years the French Chamber has shown itself very reluctant to make additions to the naval estimates. In the meantime, popular faith in the prevailing power of a large fleet of submarines is daily augmenting.

\*\*\*

**THE KING AND QUEEN OF ITALY MAY VISIT THE PARIS EXPOSITION.**—Owing to the increased popular dislike for each other between France and Italy, it has several times been announced that King Humbert and Queen Marguerite of Italy would not visit the coming Paris Exposition. These stories are now denied in Rome as well as in Paris. President Loubet, it is said, will shortly send a formal invitation to the Quirinal, which will be accepted.

The problem of housing the royal guests who may come to Paris is said to be as far from solution as ever. The cause of the uncertainty is alleged to lie at the door of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which from the first has failed to take the necessary steps. At length the Minister has deputed to M. Crozier, the Master of Ceremonies, the duty to furnish royal abodes. M. Crozier protests that it is none of his business, and explains that the royalties once on the spot, it would lie with him, as Master of Ceremonies, to regulate their amusements and see that they fulfilled their official obligations in accordance with the demands of etiquette; but to find a lodging for the monarchs devolved, M. Crozier affirms, on the Civil Buildings Section of the Fine Arts Department. It is now the turn of the Civil Buildings to protest. Their services would only come into requisition when the palace had been chosen. Furnishing, they aver, is their legitimate specialty; but on no account would they accept the responsibility of selecting royal residences. The conflict has still to receive a solution, and in the meantime Paris remains without an official resting-place for crowned heads.