

65305

THE VOLUNTEER CRISIS.

BY AN OLD LINESMAN.

DURING the discussion in the House of Peers upon the Suspensory Bill, the Marquis of Salisbury, and one or two other noble lords, took occasion to sneer at what they were pleased to call "the Eminent Foreigner's opinion," respecting the Irish Church. Now, without committing ourselves to one side or the other upon the question of church disendowment and disestablishment, we must protest against the doctrine that the opinions of other nations are not valuable to those of whom they are spoken. It is quite true that no Englishman cares—few of us even know—what the regulation Mossoo, who comes to London for a week, lives all the time of his sojourn in Leicester Square, and believes that Ministers of the Crown and members of the Legislature are to be found in the Argyll Rooms during their hours of relaxation—thinks about us or our institutions. With all our many faults we are not a thin-skinned nation. We abuse others—we can afford to be abused by others—but we abuse ourselves far better than any others can do so for us, provided we are convinced of our own shortcomings. There are, however, foreigners, and more particularly Frenchmen, whose opinions are worth listening to; and when such men as the Count de Montalembert, Louis Blanc, and more than one writer in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, speak in unqualified praise respecting some of our customs and institutions, surely we ought to listen with patience when they find fault with those of which they cannot approve.

But there is another class of

foreigners, also chiefly Frenchmen, who have of late years found their way to England, whose opinions are spoken, not written, and whose professional praise ought to go far towards making amends for the never-ending grumbling of many amongst our own countrymen. We allude to the French military officers, a party of whom visit England every year, on a sort of semi-official mission, and who are nearly always to be found at any of our great Volunteer reviews. If the sentiments of these gentlemen respecting the Volunteer movement in England, could be published, those who take part in those citizen-soldier demonstrations would have no small reason to be proud. Praise is sweet to every man, and we do not think that even the Marquis of Salisbury himself would sneer at the opinions which *these* eminent foreigners entertain of the English Volunteer force. It was the lot of the present writer to act as cicerone on Easter Monday, at Portsmouth, to a party of French officers, who came over expressly to see the review; and, although they found fault with much of what they saw, and were deeply inoculated with the true French military spirit—which seldom allows that anything good can ever come out of any system save their own—they were obliged to confess that our English Volunteer movement was a wonderful one, and that it quite changed their former opinions as to whether England was, or was not, a military nation.

And this is the point to which we would first lead our readers—this is

"Shall we reach the New York pier at the foot of Canal street by Saturday noon?" If we do, there is for us all long life, prosperity and happiness: if we do not, it is desolation and misery. For Monday is New Year's Day. On Sunday we may not be able to leave the city: to be forced to stay in New York over Sunday is a dreadful thought for solitary contemplation. We study and turn it over in our minds for hours as we pace the deck. We live over and over again the land-journey to our hearthstones at Boston, Syracuse and Cincinnati. We meet in thought our long-expectant relatives, so that at last our air-castles become stale and monotonous, and we fear that the reality may be robbed of half its anticipated pleasure from being so often lived over in imagination.

Nine o'clock, Friday evening. The excitement increases. Barnegat Light is in sight. Half the cabin passengers are up all night, indulging in unprofitable talk and weariness, merely because we are so near home. Four o'clock, and the faithful engine stops, the cable rattles overboard, and everything is still. We are at anchor off Staten Island. By the first laggard streak of winter's dawn I am on the hurricane-deck. I am curious to see my native North. It comes by degrees out of the cold blue fog on either side of the bay. Miles of houses,

spotted with patches of bushy-looking woodland—bushy in appearance to a Californian, whose oaks grow large and widely apart from each other, as in an English park. There comes a shrieking and groaning and bellowing of steam-whistles from the monster city nine miles away. Soon we weigh anchor and move up toward it. Tugs dart fiercely about, or laboriously puff with heavily-laden vessels in tow. Stately ocean steamers surge past, outward bound. We become a mere fragment of the mass of floating life. We near the foot of Canal street. There is a great deal of shouting and bawling and counter-shouting and counter-bawling, with expectant faces on the wharf, and recognitions from shore to steamer and from steamer to shore. The young woman who flirted so ardently with the young Californian turns out to be married, and that business-looking, middle-aged man on the pier is her husband. Well, I never! Why, you are slow, my friend, says inward reflection. You must recollect you have been nearly out of the world these seventeen years. At last the gangway plank is flung out. We walk on shore. The little floating-world society, cemented by a month's association, scatters like the fragments of an exploding bombshell, and Gotham swallows us up for ever from each other's sight.

PRENTICE MULFORD.

ELLE ET LUI.

65306
PICTURE to yourself a salon of 1833, one of those famous gatherings of the beauty, the fashion, the genius of Paris that glorified the Sunday evenings at the Arsenal. Poets and painters chatted together in the quiet corners; Lamartine and Sainte-Beuve, Alfred de Vigny and Victor Hugo, with the other young journalists who had been setting the Seine on fire with their revolutionary

notions in literature as well as politics, might be seen like wandering comets threading the mazes of the revolving crowd: Chateaubriand and De Balzac were there to represent sentimentalism and realism, while M. Beyle (Stendhal) was gathering materials for his caustic critiques. His mission was to put down vanity, and he seemed to be looking for it in every one he met, that he might