FOREIGN CORRESPONDENCE

LETTER FROM PARIS.

The Day of the Plebiscite—How the Voting was Done—A Remarkable Vote—The Opposition in the Cities—Heavy Figures—The Army Vote.

[Correspondence of the Philada. Evening Bulletin.]

PARIS, Tuesday, May 10, 1870.—The day of the *Plebiscite* passed over, as many other similar days of apprehension have recently passed over in France, amidst complete tranquillity, and without any attempt to disturb the public peace. A few groups assembled near the Chateau d'Eau, and other points of the Boulevards, which are a usual rendezvous for the working classes on a Sunday; a few isolated cries of *Vive le Republique*, and a attempt now and then on the part of a score or two of *gamins de Paris* to sing the *Marseillaise*—these were the only "demonstrations" which distinguished the 8th of May, 1870, from that of any other Sunday in the year. There were races, as usual, in the Bois de Boulogne, and the weather was of the very finest description. As early as midday the entire population of the city, of all ranks, seemed to be moving in that direction; and if a stranger had happened to enter Paris on Sunday last, in the afternoon, *via* the Triumphal Arch of the Champs Elysées, I venture to assert that the very last thing he ever would have suspected would have been that the people were engaged that day in a solemn vote upon the most vital questions which could be proposed to a nation. Amusement, and the enjoyment of the holiday and the fine weather were the predominant external features. The business of the day was soon despatched. I visited several of the polling places about 3 o'clock, when I found them in general quite deserted. The electors had deposited their bulletins, and were all away to the country with their families. And the same seems to have been the case all over France. A constituency of ten millions of electors has been polled, apparently without the excitement of a single row, or the incident of a single broken head. Certainly, the French are, in outward bearing, and a sense of decorum and propriety on all public occasions, a highly civil people.

Well, the vote has been taken under the above favorable circumstances, and the result has been all, and even more than all, that the Government and the party of order could anticipate or even desire. At the moment I write it is announced to be, in round numbers, seven millions of *oils* against a million and a half of *nons*, and it seems probable that the majority will prove eventually to be even considerably beyond what is above stated. Not to be under five millions has been generally considered as what was sufficient to place the Government out of reach of jeopardy; and the actual vote in its favor has therefore been more than two millions beyond what was considered as strictly essential. It seems probable that the final declaration of the numbers will hardly show less than nine and a half millions of votes polled, counting blanks and irregular votes as well as *oils* and *nons*. And if this be so, the result will certainly be very remarkable as regards numbers. For the whole number of registered electors in France at the time of the election was just under ten millions and a-half (10,416,000). There will—therefore have been—the present occasion, less than a million of abstentions *from all causes*, accidental and casual, as well as political; whereas, at the last election, the abstentions were over two millions. Nothing can show more clearly than the above result how completely the abstention system, on the one hand, has failed and broken down, nor, on the other hand, how eager the nation has been to speak its mind upon the questions addressed to it. No doubt those questions, as generally understood by the masses of the people and distinguished from the theories and views of different political parties, meant a decision between order and disorder, between revolution and the acceptance and consolidation of the government as it now exists. The answer has been, above all, a complete repudiation of the "irreconcilables," and all their mad doctrines of a socialist republic. This is the one great and paramount significance of the universality of the vote and the immense majority, and for the sake of expressing which the nation has widely overlooked minor points of difference as matters which may be quietly arranged and made the subject of compromise hereafter, when once the common and public energy was safely put down and disposed of. The value of this vote consists above all in this strong expression of public feeling in favor of order and tranquillity.

Of course there are exceptions to the above general inference. But though strongly marked in themselves, and when considered singly, they are altogether much less to change the popular verdict. Thus Paris heads the opposition list by a return of 150,000 *nons* to 111,000 *oils*. But all that need be said of this, as well as of the general vote of the Department of the Seine, is that it is considerably less unfavorable (by about fifty thousand votes) than was the case at the last elections. The liberal reforms which have been granted, and the violences of the socialist party at the public meetings, have at least made the metropolis less hostile than it was before. In several large provincial cities, also, the *nons* are in a large majority. Marseilles returns thirty-four thousand *nons* to eighteen thousand *oils*; Bordeaux 18,000 to 10,000; Nimes, 8,000 to 2,000; Dijon, 5,600 to 1,500. These are amongst the most remarkable. Strasbourg returns 6,000 *oils* to 5,000 *nons*; Grenoble (the city which once first opened its gates to Napoleon I. on his return from Elba) now returns 4,000 *nons* to 3,000 *oils*. The strong garrison town of Metz returns 4,000 *nons* to 3,000 *Oils*, with more than 5,000 abstentions; a singular mark of disaffection. The little town of Beaune distinguishes itself by 1,600 *nons* to 120 *oils*; and there are several others where the votes are balanced, or nearly so. But these exceptions are, as I have said, as nothing compared with the loudly-expressed national voice. The vote of the army, so far as yet known, gives a result of 210,000 *oils* to 56,000 *nons*, or very nearly the same, allowing for difference of numbers, as that of 1851. The general vote, also, on the present occasion, it will be remembered, seems likely to fall very little short of that of 1851. It was then about eight millions, and will probably be more than half a million under that now.

And so ends the French *Plebiscite* of 1870, respecting which I believe the general wish to be, now that it is over, that it may be very long before the necessity arises to have recourse to such an operation again.

LETTER FROM POTTSVILLE.

An Ancient Railroad—Some Curious Reminiscences—Stephen Girard's Coal Lands—The First Coal-tunnel—Sagacity of Engineering.

[Correspondence of the Philadelphia Evening Bulletin.]

POTTSVILLE, May 24, 1870.—On the 8th previous to that on which Philadelphians celebrated the one hundred and twentieth anniversary of the birth of Stephen Girard, your correspondent had occasion to visit one of his memorials in Schuylkill county, and is minded to tell what he knows about it.

The Danville and Pottsville Railroad Company was incorporated in 1826, its object being to draw the productions of the entire valley of the upper Susquehanna, as well as the coal and lumber of the southern anthracite coalfield, to Philadelphia, by way of the Schuylkill river, instead of letting them go, as they otherwise must, to Baltimore, following the course of Susquehanna. The road was expected to control nine million acres on the North Branch and five millions on the West Branch of the Susquehanna, with a population, then, of 500,000, and shipping annually 117,500,000 feet of lumber, 240,000 bushels of wheat, 41,000 tons of iron, pork, whisky, flour, &c., besides a large Baltimore coal-field, with an expected yield of 50,000 tons annually—the annual value of the annual production being $2,440,000, of which the Danville and Pottsville, called by its friends the "Central" Railroad, was expected to carry at least one-half, together with 100,000 tons of anthracite coal from Shamokin and Mahanoy, and a return trade equal to one-third of the amount descending. It was estimated that $626,611 would build the road from Danville to Pottsville, with a branch from Shamokin to Sunbury, and cover all expenses; and on this expenditure a very moderate system of tolls was to yield an immediate return of at least 14 per cent.

This was in the early days of railroad enterprise. The road was not commenced as soon as the company was incorporated, but in 1828, six years after. In 1828 the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, the first great railroad venture of the kind in this country, was commenced, Charles Carroll, of Carrollton, "laying the first stone, in the presence of an assembled thousands," on the fourth day of July in that year, and in 1829 a committee of the D. and P. Railroad Company state that "the thirteen completed miles of that road at Baltimore have exhibited, during the last summer, a beautiful example of railway traveling, and produced in this way (passenger traffic) five hundred to one thousand dollars per week."

In 1834 we find the Danville and Pottsville Railroad finished, and shipping coal from Girardville, in the Mahanoy Valley, to Philadelphia. At that time the Schuylkill Canal was finished, and "The Little Schuylkill Railroad and Coal Company" had a road, 22 miles in length, from Port Clinton to their land in the coal region, "at which point they built the town of Tamaqua." A report at that time says: "Locomotive steam-engines are used on the whole line, and their performance gives entire satisfaction." This was the road which was to develop industries in the entire anthracite region, though at first the locomotives of large power were used to carry the products of the mines to the different canals.

Thus the Danville and Pottsville Railroad remained so long in embryo seems to have been owing to the fact that it was the first of the road on the part of its projectors, but to want of money, and it remained for Stephen Girard to furnish that.

He owned a vast tract of land in the Mahanoy Valley, much of which is now the property of the city of Philadelphia, and some idea of its extent may be gathered from the fact that the boundary line of that portion now owned by the city is fifteen miles in extent. Girard was invested with splendid timber and underlaid with rich deposits of coal; the projected railroad crossed it about the middle, and Girard saw in it an avenue to immense wealth. He accordingly bought up the whole, or nearly the whole, of the stock; and the road thereafter was known as the "Girard Railroad."

In those days "canal-boats" were unknown, and steam engines incredible; and neither Stephen Girard nor his successors for many a year deemed it possible to take a locomotive over the Broad Mountain. So the road crossed the mountain by means of inclined planes, connected by levels, on which the cars were propelled by horse-power. It was magnificently built, too; there are walls of undressed stone along the route which present a perpendicular front twenty feet, or more in height, as smooth and perfect as on the day they were finished, thirty-five years ago, while the planes need only new rails and sleepers to put them in good condition. At the foot of the mountain, in the Mahanoy Valley, Mr. Girard built a town, which he called by his own name, and drew a tunnel to the coal veins in Broad Ridge. This, which is now known as the "Old Girard Tunnel," was the only representative of its class in that valley from 1834 to 1845. It was driven until the high war prices of coal developed it wherever it was to be found. From the level of this mine to the summit of the Broad Mountain the ascent was overcome by single plane, very huge and very perfect, and as water power was abundant the superintendent of the road devised a plan of conveying the coal to the top of the mountain without the expense of a stationary engine. He calculated the weight of the cars to be loaded at the tunnel and constructed a water tank large enough to raise the load by its weight. At the foot of the slope a gate in the bottom of the tank would permit the water to run out, and the weight of the empty cars would be sufficient to raise the empty tank, and in such a manner that the weight of the loaded cars, assembled to witness the event of the first train of cars, "the tank was given, and they danced on their upward way, but soon attained such momentum that when they reached the top, instead of gliding off quietly along the level, according to programme, they continued their upward flight, knocking the sheaves at the top of the plane down about the ears of the inmates, and falling in a heap some distance beyond it; while the tank buried itself in the ground at the bottom. The superintendent had used a water-buffer to break his tank but altogether too heavy for the train it had to raise.

But the best of new enterprises is pretty certain to have some unlooked-for impediments and imperfections at the outset, and they are irremediable. They were not in this case. The road was finally placed in running order and operated for a short time—17,000 tons of coal passing over it from the Girard Tunnel—and then it was pronounced a failure; the rails were taken up, and the splendid road-bed abandoned to the supervision of the public roads—set of vandals who have been trying ever since to ruin it, and have pretty well succeeded by this time. By construction a cheap break-neck ascent round the planes, the levels were made available for engines, and it now operates of the principal routes from Pottsville to the Mahanoy Valley, and if kept in repair, would be one of the finest mountain roads in the country, but each succeeding supervisor thinks if it has lasted so long, it will last out his term, and lets it go to ruin, accordingly.

Ten years ago that valley was but little known and entirely undeveloped; but, as I said above, the war caused a demand for coal lands, and these rich tracts were soon made available. The Philadelphia and Reading Railroad Company stretched a long arm from Tamaqua to Ashland, developing the valley throughout the entire length, and built another—the famous Mahanoy and Broad Mountain Railroad—mentioned in a former letter, connecting the mountain parallel with the Girard Railroad, and scarcely more than 100 yards from it; while scarcely more than a stone's throw from the plane on which the watercask experiment had such an inglorious ending; is a model of engineering skill, in the shape of a "vertical curve"—like half a rainbow turned upside down—up and down which ponderous stationary engines drag heavy trains of cars by means of mighty wire cables; and the heaviest locomotive, when it finds its master in that steep ascent (for even Reading engines cannot climb a precipice), has but to attach itself to the cable, and ascend as lightly as if its forty tons of solid avoirdupois were but a feather-weight.

Could Stephen Girard have kept his hand until now, his former wealth would seem like poverty itself compared to this. Forty years ago, the best developed coal land sold for $16 per acre. Twenty-five years ago, Mahanoy Valley lands were scarcely worth the money. Now, they are held at $500 per acre, and few owners care to sell even at that figure. Some of them I hope to give an account of these coal lands, and which have neither time nor space for it. There is some curious history connected with them.

WICO.

OUR WILMINGTON LETTER.

Delaware Politics—Republican Nominations—The Negro Voters—Candidates for Governor—Tagarites of a Lunatic Asylum.

[Correspondence of the Philada. Evening Bulletin.]

WILMINGTON, May 24th.—The Republican nominative election on Saturday was a most exciting contest, there being no less than four candidates in the field for the nomination for Sheriff, and five for that of Coroner. Five of the candidates for the first-named office received over 700 votes each, the successful one, Thomas Harvey, of this city, received over 1,000.—All the means used at regular elections were resorted to; voters, without regard to color, were marshalled and importuned by candidates and those working for them, and all sorts of stories were circulated against opponents. Over 4,000 votes were cast in the county, which is an unusually large vote for such an election, in which the one party can participate. Such contests are severe strains upon a party's unity, and the bitterness of feeling engendered by this one leads many to call in question the propriety of direct popular nominations. The feeling is subsiding rapidly, however, and already one of the leading defeated candidates is out in a card calling on all his friends to lend a hearty and unanimous support to his successful competitor. Several Democrats voted at the election, taking the usual pledge to support the successful nominee. Whether they will keep this pledge remains to be seen.

The colored people of course actively participated in the contest, and canvassed and buttonholed with all the ardor of practiced politicians. The approaching Republican Convention in Dover bids fair to prove an interesting one. I have already indicated in this correspondence that there are two conflicting influences in the Republican party here. One is called by its opponents the "Dover Ring," and Judge Fisher, of Washington, is looked upon as the other is called by its opponents the "Wilmington Ring," and it is hard to say who is its active head, as it appears to be a combination of the leading Republicans of the northern part of the State, together with some of the more radical members of the party from the lower counties, to overthrow the control, which, up to the beginning of the present Administration, its opponents exercised over Federal appointments in this State. At the beginning of the present canvass the Wilmingtonians offered to make a compromise, to endeavor to nominate for Governor Thomas B. Coursey, Esq., of Kent county, a gentleman identified with neither party, but the other party said they had promised the place to Dr. Isaac Jenkins, of Dover, a gentleman of standing and influence in Kent, and the Wilmington ring identified with them, while admitting Mr. Coursey's eminent fitness for the office, and the fact that he was personally unobjectionable to them individually, said they could not go for him. They offered, however, if the others would agree to immediate Jump, to leave to them the nomination for Congressman. To this the Wilmington party replied that they had no power to bind the people of New Castle county to any course of action, or the disposition to bargain if they had the power, but that whatever influence they had should be given in favor of Mr. Coursey. The result will be indicated by the action of the State Convention.

This morning a young man named Thomas F. Clayton, a resident of Delaware county, Penna., arrived here on one of the steamboats to visit some friends in the northern part of the city. If I am correctly informed, he visited them. About noon this afternoon, in passing along King street, he was seized with a sudden madness, and became possessed of the idea that God had commanded him to enter the Central Presbyterian Church and preach. He grasped the lock on its gate with all a maniac's strength, and with a single wrench twisted it off. He then attacked the heavy oaken doors and threw himself against them again and again, with such force that they were beginning to give way before his assaults, when a policeman rushed in and attempted to arrest him. He turned and fought the officer with perfect fury, but other officers and some citizens coming to the assistance of the first, the madman was at last overpowered and carried, struggling and uttering terrifying shrieks, to the city prison, where he was put in irons to restrain him from doing further injury. He continued his shrieks, as he was borne from the church door, and appeared to go into fits, frothing at the mouth, and biting his tongue. Some gentlemen, who recognized him, have sent word to his friends of his whereabouts. He is said to be of a very respectable family, and to have a brother who is Governor of one of the Western Territories.

The City Council should refuse to take any part in the parade on Decoration day, before published a card, saying that they do not object to the presence of colored bands in the line, but object to one of the latter being given the post of honor at all the ceremonies. Suffice it to say that this was not the original objection.

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