

As soon as they commenced to pray the sky became cloudy, and by the time the meeting was ended, a gentle rain fell. But it increased more and more and finally became so abundant that the Jews were requested to ask God to stop it. Even this God did at the request of the Jews.

IV.—TITUS AND THE MOSQUITO.

Titus was the General who destroyed Jerusalem. No wonder that strange stories should be circulated about him among the Jews.

I have been seriously told that this Roman once challenged Jehovah to war with him, upon which God sent a storm that almost annihilated his proud fleet. On seeing this, Titus exclaimed that he did not mean to fight Jehovah on the sea, but if God would meet him on land, he would be willing to fight Him anywhere. To this blasphemous challenge, God answered in a dream: "What need I fight with thee? One of my meanest creatures can do that. I will send a fly to fight with thee."

A short time after this a yet undeveloped mosquito crept into the imperial nose and found its way into the brains. Here it grew until it became very large, causing a terrible pain night and day. The emperor could find no rest anywhere. Only when somebody was hammering on an anvil close by the imperial ear was the monstrous parasite frightened to keep still. But it soon became accustomed to the noise, and after that nothing could keep it quiet. Finally Titus died from the pain caused by the mosquito in his brain. And no wonder; for at the opening of the head the parasite was found to be as large as a pigeon, and it had a mouth of brass and claws of iron. This is a true story, my informant added, for it is to be read in the Bible.

This last anecdote is, of course, the poorest one of the lot. But I have given it (and the first ones) as I had it. Reflections, I think, must be left to the imagination of the reader. To those who care to look into the conditions of the modern Jews their traditions are of great interest, only second in importance, I presume, to their history.

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JERUSALEM, November 27, 1889.

CURRENT TOPICS IN EUROPE.

History and politics are always at war in France. The glories of the old monarchy seem like a reproach to the Revolution, and the daring genius of Napoleon, who entered as victor nearly every capital of continental Europe, seems to taunt Republican France with weakness. In fact, there are very few historical personages in France of whom it may not be said that public sentiment is divided—one party claiming that they were the personification of all that is good and noble, and the other asserting that they were the very embodiment of evil. One personage, however, seems to have escaped this destiny. For more than 400 years Joan of Arc has remained a unique and heroic figure in the memories of the peo-

ple. Time has consecrated her career, and lifted her above the parties of the present day. And now that the anniversary of her birth is approaching, a more than usual interest is manifest from the fact that the greatest French actress of the present day—Sarah Bernhardt—is about to quit the round of her usual characters in order to appear as the "Maid of Orleans" in M. Jules Barbier's drama. In some respects it may seem strange that a Joan, a girl so deeply imbued with the faith, and even the superstitions of the age, should be an object of hero-worship to the free-thinking, artistic France of the nineteenth century. Yet there is something flattering to the republicans in the boast that when kings, nobles and priests failed to save France, a peasant girl rushed to the rescue and became the "Liberator of her native land." Had prince or priest, noble or heroine expelled the Germans from France in 1871, the people would have bowed in homage for the time. However estrayed France may be from monarchy, nobility or religion, she reveres Joan for the selfless patriotism of her career. But Joan of Arc, innocent and good, was something more than a mere country maid. She had courage, capacity and lofty thoughts; she heard voices, she saw visions. It would be puerile to inquire whether they were real or not—they were real to her. We must remember that Joan was remarkable for her personal purity in an age when the so-called Christian church was steeped in worldliness and drunk with sensuality. An actress who would rightly represent the "Maid of Orleans" must realize the heroic resolve, the calm purpose, the pure soul and perfect disinterestedness and simplicity of one of the most matchless figures in all history.

Those who have seen Madame Bernhardt in the tragedy of "Hernani," representing first the new-made wife, supremely sweet in her crowning hour of love, and then the woman desperate in her passion and her grief, as her young husband is summoned by the fatal horn and doomed to die, or those who have shuddered with her thrill of agony in the torture scene of "La Tosca" will admit that she is at least one of the greatest if not the very greatest tragic actress in the nineteenth century. If Sara Bernhardt can properly delineate the character of the historical Virgin of France, she will greatly add to her own laurels, and teach Parisians a lesson that should redound to the welfare of the French Republic.

One can well understand why Madame Carnot, the wife of the President, is so well loved when we learn of her numerous acts of kindness. Several hospitals she has richly endowed; under her patronage several schools, especially for young ladies, have been established, and indigent aspiring genius ever finds in her a sympathizing friend. Her latest proposition is not only to encourage public Christmas dinners to the poor and unfortunate, but she has also caused to be selected from the twenty arrondissements of Paris, two hundred little boys and

two hundred little girls who will have the pleasure of spending Christmas day at the *Palais d'Elisee* enjoying a good substantial dinner and going home in the evening each with a brand new suit of clothes. The destinies of France seem at last to be in the hands of a truly good man and noble woman.

If France is the country of revolutions, and Spain the land of pronunciamentos (political proclamations) surely Russia may justly be termed the home of jubilees. How few among the masses have known the nationality of Rubenstein. Of those, even, who have been delighted with his soul-stirring music, how few have been aware that in December, 1839, Rubenstein, then a little boy of ten years of age, gave his first public concert in Moscow, and his heart beat quicker at the deafening applause of an enraptured multitude. Since then the timid debutant has become the world-renowned master, skilled in discovering and embodying in heavenly tones the hidden soul of harmony. What Rubenstein has done since then to merit the title of the Michael Angelo of Music, is well known among the lovers of that noble art. What he has done for Russia as an artist and a man will never be adequately known, and the nation does well to honor her noble son. Not only did Rubenstein establish the Imperial Academy of Music at St. Petersburg, but likewise branch establishments in all the principal cities of Russia, and succeeded in diffusing a sincere love of music in all ranks, especially among the poorer classes, thus putting it in their power to raise their souls on the wings of divine harmonies, high above the fearful storm in which their miserable lives are mostly passed. Rubenstein's virtues as a man and a citizen are fully equal to his fame as an artist. Wealth came to him in abundance but he has exchanged it for the opportunity of making his fellows better and happier. Hundreds of thousands of roubles have passed through his hands into those of indigent artists, poverty-stricken students, and struggling musicians, to whom his encouragement has been as the sun's warm rays in spring to the leafless oak. He now occupies the post of president of the Imperial Academy, and receives a considerable salary, all of which goes to the relief of young men rich in nothing but rare genius. The Emperor has just allowed him a pension of three thousand roubles which will be sufficient to supply his wants.

The enthusiasm with which Rubenstein's Jubilee is being celebrated is positively indescribable. It borders on religious frenzy, and certainly realizes the highest form of Carlyle's ideal of hero-worship. Ladies of cultivated tastes and ample means have subscribed thousands of roubles to defray the expenses of the celebration, which will last six days. The vast hall and galleries of the Academy are clothed in a wilderness of flowers many of which came from the sunny vales of Southern France and Italy.