

THE MONT-DE-PIÉTÉ.



COMPARATIVELY few Americans have traveled in Europe without learning something about the institution whose name stands at the head of this article. On the Continent, at least, and especially among the Latin peoples, the lantern of the Mont-de-piété is an object as familiar as the three balls of the London and New York pawnbrokers' shops, while as an object of pecuniary interest it attracts much the same class of patrons. But the connection between the two, though apparently one of resemblance, is really one not only of diversity, but of open hostility. The Mont-de-piété is the avowed and deadly foe of the pawnbroker, as will appear in the short history with which we may properly begin this sketch.

The institution dates from the fifteenth century. At that time there was between the Church and the sovereigns a third power, which worked in the dark, which was despised by its own victims, but which often dictated terms to the proudest nobles in Europe. This power was the purse of Isaac the Jew. Isaac the Jew, as described by Sir Walter Scott in *Ivanhoe*, is the type of a class of usurers without which no picture of medieval society is complete, and toward which history is as bitter, and perhaps as unjust, as Front de Bœuf himself. These persons were of all degrees of wealth and power, from proud Shylocks who dealt with princes, to poor wretches who preyed on the improvidence of Christian peasants. The province of Lombardy was their favorite region in Europe; indeed, the term "Lombard" came to be almost synonymous with that of "Jew." Naturally, therefore, this province, or the Italian peninsula, witnessed the first systematic attempt to check the power of the rapacious money-lenders.

The popes had always hated the Jews, partly by reason of jealousy of their influence, partly because they were held to be the worst of unbelievers, and partly out of genuine sympathy for their victims. Accordingly the Church, which had failed to crush them by persecution, sought to destroy them by destroying their business. The Mont-de-piété was the first step in the new movement.

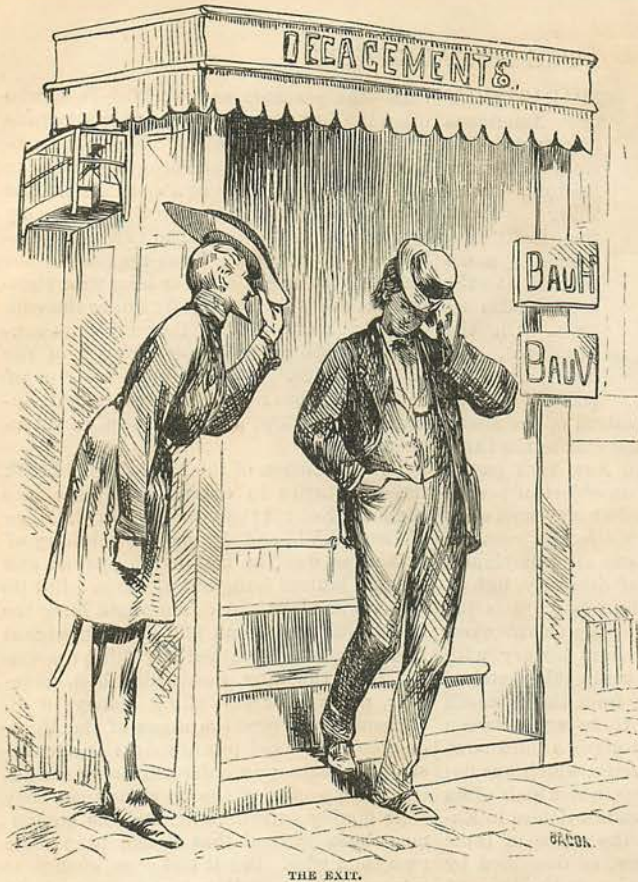
The Mont-de-piété was designed to relieve the poorer and more helpless class of vic-

tims—the peasants and working-men, who often lived in a species of horrible servitude to the greedy pawnbrokers. The first establishment was opened at Perugia, in Italy, in 1464, during the reign of Pope Pius II., and in a few years branches were found in every city on the peninsula. The necessary capital was obtained by pious appeals to the rich and the noble. For a long time these institutions were practically under the control of the Church, but they are now generally connected with some branch of the public service. Their original mission of benevolence has also pretty generally disappeared from view, as will be seen in subsequent pages.

The institution of the Mont-de-piété took three centuries in crossing the Alps into France. Not till the year 1778, in the reign of Louis XVI., and during the ministry of M. Necker, was the first house opened and the first lantern hung out at Paris. But its career was short. A dozen years later the Revolution broke out, and the Constituent Assembly, which loathed any thing associated with the king, and which had, moreover, a plan for furnishing money to all without cost, closed the doors of the Mont-de-piété. The old pawnbrokers at once resumed business; in order to recover the interrupted profits of the previous years they were doubly extortionate; and the government soon learned that it had been more rash than wise. But it had sense enough to retrace its steps. It not only restored the original Mont-de-piété, but it established others at Paris and all the chief towns of France, and placed them under rigid official supervision. They survived all the troubles that afflicted France for the next twenty years, and formed the nucleus of a system which in more peaceful times has expanded into its present proportions.

The chief office of the Mont-de-piété of Paris is in the Rue Blanc-Manteaux; and there are two great branches, or *succursales*, one in the Rue Roquette, and one in the Rue Bonaparte. The latter is the most important, and is the one which we have chosen for description. Extremes meet in the Rue Bonaparte, for the École des Beaux-Arts, one of the noblest institutions of the city, is a near neighbor of the great pawnbroking house. One enters the Mont-de-piété through a passage leading into an open court, which is surrounded on all sides by the different buildings of the concern.

To the left, as one enters, is the department of *Dégagements*, where the prosperous go to redeem the pledges of their little loans. Next is the hall of *Engagements*, where the articles are received; and farther around the



THE EXIT.

auCTION-room, where the unredeemed articles are sold. The upper stories are mostly used as store-houses, and they are well-filled store-houses too. The general appearance outside is not unprepossessing. There is no noise and no confusion. Every thing is neat, after the French fashion, and the attendants are polite. The receiving department is first in the logical order of treatment, and it is to that that we first invite the reader's attention.

The goods which may be received are divided into classes, and a separate office is given for each class. The most important division comprehends jewels and linen—rather a singular combination on the face of it, but one which carries its own explanation to every person who reflects that these two articles form by far the larger class of pawns, not only in France, but in America; therefore the bearers of bedding and watches and chains and jewels have the largest and most sumptuous office.

The dimensions of this magnificent room are about ten feet by six; its furniture, a wooden bench around two sides; its occupants, an indefinite number of forlorn-look-

ing creatures awaiting their turn with the clerk. The characters shown in the illustration are fair types of the sort of patrons whom the Mont-de-piété attracts. The tall young gentleman standing is a student who has used up his little allowance in dissipation, and is now come in a fit of needy desperation to pawn his watch. The young lady, who appears to like the student better than she does her immediate neighbor, is a shop-girl, daughter of an invalid mother, for whom she is going to pawn a little necklace on which she sets great store. The man at her side is a coarse wretch, who is doubtless exchanging some of his wife's linen for the price of another spree. The two little girls at the window have a curious experience. The oldest barely stretches above the counter, and when she has deposited the big bundle of linen she is wholly concealed.

"Whose bundle is this?" says the clerk, returning to his post, and failing to see the tiny owners. Some one calls his attention to the girls, just as the elder timidly replies,

"Mine, Sir!"

"Are you alone, my children?"

"Yes, Sir," replies the elder again, while the younger clings tightly to her dress.

"Where do you live?"

"Rue de Bac, No. —."

"What does your father do?"

"Father—father—don't know him, Sir."

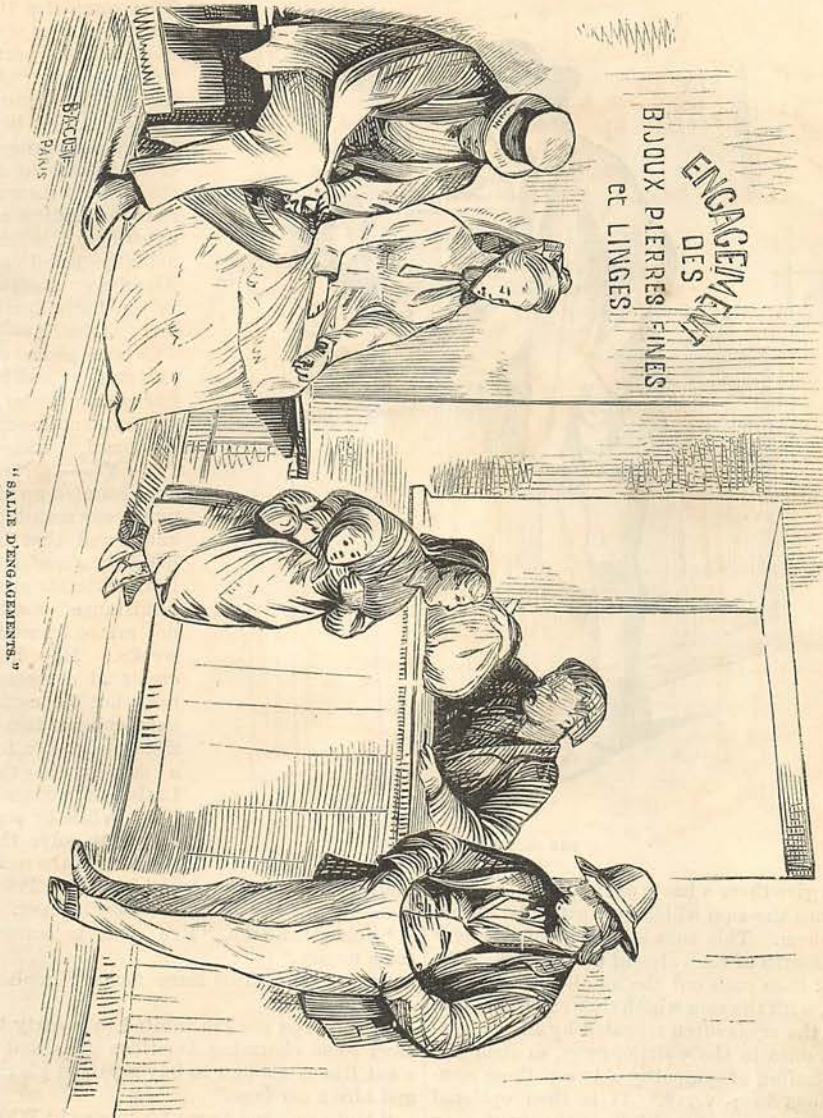
"Well, what does your mother do?"

"Washes."

"Have you any paper?"

"Yes, Sir," answers the child, and produces a written permission from her mother for the sale of the objects.

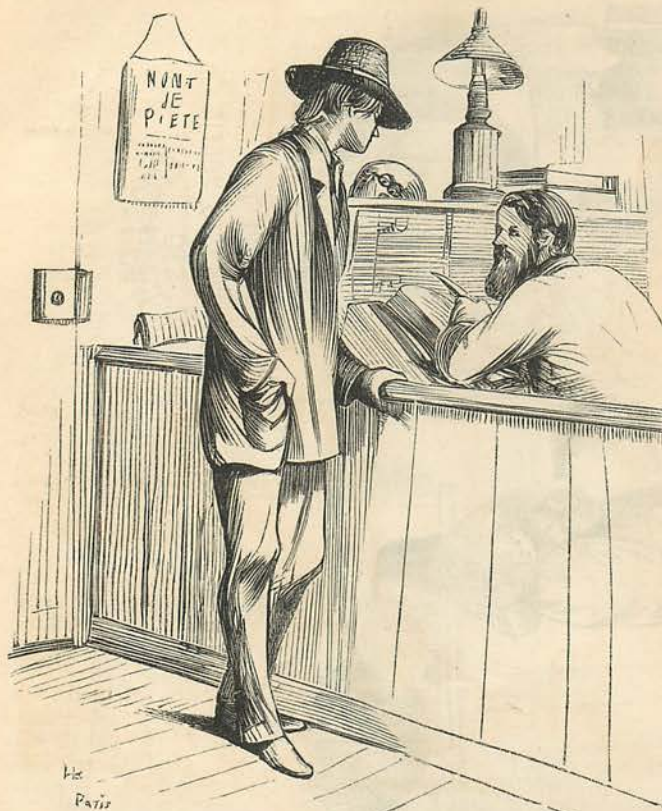
Then the incident terminates. Every day witnesses similar scenes. The persons who deal with the Mont-de-piété are of as many sorts as the articles they bring with them. Children and octogenarians stand side by side at the counter, and in accents equally feeble conduct their negotiations.



Students, soldiers, and roués, orphans and widows, shop-girls and danseuses and domestics, are among the regular clients, while the list of occasional patrons embraces men and women of nearly every description of life. Paris is pre-eminently a city of pretenders, or, in other words, of the show and splendor of wealth without its substance. Not a few of the exquisites of the Champs Élysées know all the secrets of the Mont-de-piété, and its books not infrequently contain the name of a count or a marchioness. But it should be said that there are often to be seen at these offices persons of real respectability, and even of wealth, who are suffering from a temporary embarrassment,

and find a loan on some valuable the easiest means of raising a little sum. The lady admirers of M. Beau Brummel would doubtless turn up their pretty noses if they should trace him to the Mont-de-piété, but M. Beau Brummel himself might pawn his watch any day, and suffer no loss of self-respect so far as the action itself is concerned.

The mode of operations in the receiving department is very systematic yet very simple. The applicants sit in the waiting-room till their turn is called, when they approach the counter, deliver the articles which they offer, receive a check therefor, and sit down again. Meantime the articles, be they jewels or linen, are passed in to the appraisers,



THE CASHIER.

who give them a hasty examination, and announce the sum which may safely be loaned on them. This sum is in general not over one-fourth of the value of the articles. The clerk then calls out the number of the articles, with the sum which they can command, and the cry is often repeated by all the anxious ones in the waiting-room, so strong is the feeling of sympathy between these companions in poverty. It is then optional with the party to withdraw the articles, or to accept the sum offered, the answer being yes or no, according as the offer is or is not accepted. If the answer be yes, another formality must be followed before the money is delivered.

The owner is summoned into a smaller room filled with desks and occupied by the cashier and clerks. Here he is required, first, to produce some paper establishing his identity, and then to answer a variety of questions as to his age, residence, *et cetera*. The answers are carefully recorded, the object being to prevent fraud. If every thing proves satisfactory, the money is paid over, accompanied with a *reconnaissance*, or certificate, on the presentation of which, with the sum borrowed, the articles may be redeemed.

This completes the process of *engagement*, and the party retires, richer if not happier than before.

We can not better explain the mysteries of this part of the establishment than by relating an experience which actually befell an American student in the Latin Quarter. John X— was the name of this student, and he had a friend, also a student, but less experienced, named Peter Y—. Now John counted up his money one morning, and found that he had only a few sous left, while his next remittance would not arrive for some weeks. He had credit at a restaurant, but he could only subsist there, and subsistence for a student in the Latin Quarter is not life. While he was trying to solve the problem of the next

budget the door opened, and his friend Peter Y— entered in a free and easy manner.

"John," said he, "I've come to borrow some money."

"Come to borrow some money!" replied John, amazed.

"Yes. You see I'm invited to a party to meet some charming American girls, and I want francs enough to buy a pair of gloves and hire a carriage."

"And you come to me for money! Why, my dear fellow, I was just going to borrow of you, for I have only seventeen sous."

"The deuce!"

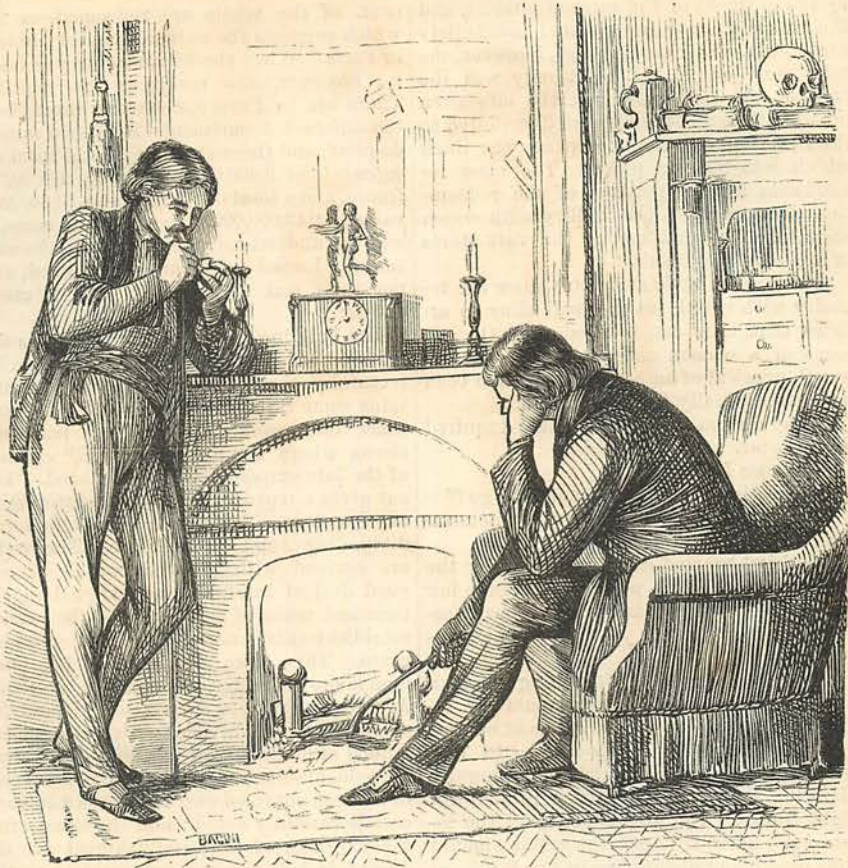
The two impecunious friends stared at each other for a few moments, and then, in spite of their position, burst into a hearty laugh. But Peter ended with a sigh, for he longed to go to the party. So John said,

"Don't give it up, Pete. Haven't you got something that you can *mettre au clou*?"

"*Au* what?" answered Peter.

"Haven't you got something that you can put *au clou*—that is to say, something that you can pawn at the *Mont-de-piété*?"

Peter reflected a moment, took out his watch and balanced it in his hand, and agreed to sacrifice it. John explained the



THE COUNCIL.

modus operandi, and his friend, promising to share the returns, started for the Mont-de-piété.

Now the watch in question, though a valuable one, did not bear the stamp of a French manufacturer attesting its quality, and the appraiser offered a very small sum for it. Still Peter was obliged to accept, and he counted on redeeming it in a few days. He entered the cashier's room.

"What is your name?" demanded that urbane official.

"Pierre Lefranc," replied the student, who, through shame, had determined to give a false name.

"Your residence?"

"Rue Monsieur le Prince, No. —."

"What papers do you carry?"

"Papers?" inquired our friend.

"Yes, papers; something that will identify you—a receipt for your lodging, certificate of birth, passport, or something of the sort."

"But," stammered Peter, "I am an American, and I have no papers of any kind, though I might get a passport at the American embassy. Can you wait for that?"

"Of course," replied the official.

"Very well," said Peter; "I'll take the watch, and bring it back when I return."

"Oh no; the watch is already entered, and can not be released. You must get your passport before you can have your watch or your money."

Then the truth flashed through Peter's mind. He could not get a passport on a false name, and he could not get his money or his watch on his true name; so there was no escape. He had lost his *soirée* and his watch; and when he reached John's room again the two friends found refuge in the old song, familiar to all French students:

"Je suis dans la débine,
J'ai tout au Mont-de-piété;
Je présente ma future,
On ne veut pas me prêter."

The process of *dégagement* is very simple. At any time after an interval of one day, and within one year, an article may be redeemed by the repayment of the amount loaned with interest at a trifle above the legal rates. At the expiration of one year the article may be "extended" for another year

by the payment of the accrued interest, and the extension may be repeated indefinitely every year. During the siege, however, the rules were suspended. Not only was the regular sale postponed, but the city even invaded the store-houses, and distributed to the suffering, at its own expense, the linen which was held in pawn. The most remarkable feature, perhaps, of the redemption department is the facility with which an article is found among the vast stores of miscellaneous goods.

A number of little anecdotes show the tenacity with which persons will cling to articles that they can not redeem. On one occasion a woman called to make the fifteenth renewal of an article which had been pawned originally for three francs.

"Why do you not release that?" inquired the director.

"Because I am too poor."

"Well, then, why do you not let it go?"

The woman burst into tears. "Because 'tis the last relic of my mother."

The kind-hearted director, moved by the filial devotion of the poor woman, gave her three francs and redeemed the precious treasure. It was a coarse *jupon de basin*, or under-garment.

There is a story equally touching of a man who for seven successive years paid the interest on an article, which he was at no time able to redeem, for thirty sons! In 1849 there was sold a watch which had a singular history. It had been pawned in 1817 for eight francs. The owner had paid the interest regularly till 1847, the whole amount thus paid being about twenty-five francs, or three times the original loan. When the watch was sold, some curious person traced it back to its owner, and learned why the extensions had stopped so suddenly. The poor man had died in 1847. Scarcely a day passes in which the Mont-de-piété is not the scene of some such pathetic little drama.

A few statistics, collected before the war, will be of interest. Out of one thousand patrons of the Mont-de-piété there are, on the average, of traders, manufacturers, and shop-keepers, 112; of real-estate owners and proprietors, 84; of the liberal professions, 31; of mechanics, 39; soldiers, 4; of working-people, 730. The latter, it will be seen, pass for two-thirds of the whole number. But the comparison of amounts shows a different result. Out of one thousand francs taken at the Mont-de-piété the first class appears for 367, the second for 156, the third for 61, the fourth for 56, the fifth for 10, and the sixth for 350. Thus the last class, or working-people, though six times as numerous as the first, actually pawn less in amount. The annual business at Paris before the war amounted to about 1,530,900 articles, of which 1,000,000 were worth from three to five francs each. Not more than six per

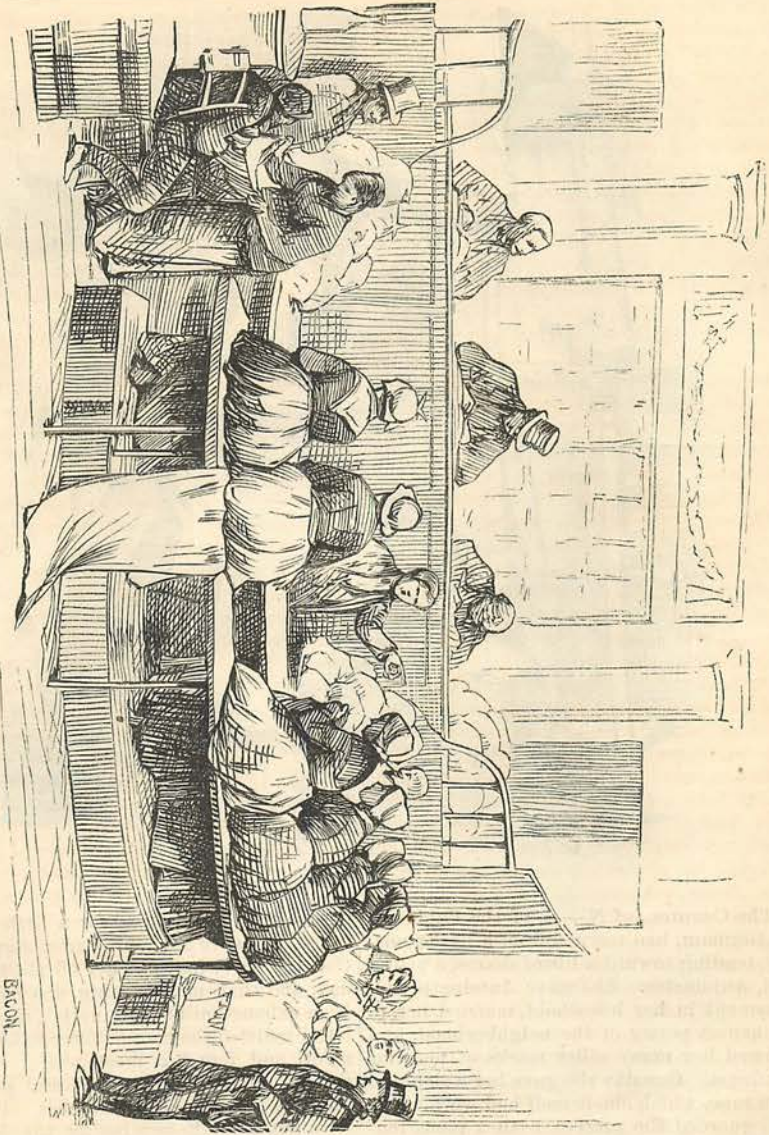
cent. of the whole are redeemed—a fact which suggests the extreme poverty hidden in Paris. When the whole country is taken in, however, the result is less painful. There are in France, scattered throughout the different departments, forty-two *monts-de-piété*, and these show an annual total *engagements* of 3,400,000, valued at 49,000,000 francs, and a total of *dégagements* of 3,300,000, valued at 43,000,000 francs. These sums, it will be understood, represent the amounts actually loaned on the articles pawned, and not their real value. The latter is much greater.

The building occupied by the auction department is a little more pretentious, architecturally, than the others. The front contains some rather fantastic scroll-work and other ornamentation, while the pediment shows where the monogram "N," emblem of the late emperor, has been effaced. The cut gives a representation of the interior, or auction-room. It is semicircular in form, dirty, dingy, and disagreeable. The walls are covered with placards, which give a good deal of information in regard to the time and mode of sales, lists of the branch establishments, names of the directors, *et cetera*. Thus, sales are made during business hours on nearly every day of the week. Articles bought are delivered and paid for on the spot. All articles which are not extended or redeemed at the end of one year are sold, after a few days' grace; the excess of the sum obtained over that loaned in each case is carefully noted; and the same, after the expenses of the establishment are deducted, is held for one year subject to the order of the owner. If not taken within one year, it is consigned to the general hospital fund.

The sales begin at ten o'clock in the morning. A few semicircular rows of benches without backs—benches with backs are a rare luxury at Paris—are filled with the regular bidders, while other benches along the walls accommodate visitors. The buyers, it will be observed, are nearly all women, and women of a somewhat questionable aspect, socially if not morally. The first fact may be explained by the recognition always given in France of the superior commercial capacity of the sex. The second fact leads to a few words on a peculiar branch of Parisian trade.

The sales at the Mont-de-piété are become little more than an auxiliary of the great commerce in second-hand goods carried on at *bric-à-brac* shops, furniture and clothing stores, bazars, and the countless number of establishments which attract by their suspiciously cheap prices. The women whose backs impolitely stare at us in the illustration are engaged in this sort of trade. They are vulgar and impudent in their manners, filthy in their dress, but wide awake in a

THE AUCTION-ROOM.



EACON.

bargain. They have an unerring judgment of both the intrinsic and the commercial value of a watch, or a diamond, or a bundle of bedclothing. They never start a very active competition among themselves, for they are governed by a prudent sense of a common interest. The average price of "staples" changes but little; so when a set of sheets, for instance, is put up, the first speaker names the price, which is seldom raised much. The male representatives of each of these "merchants" often stand by to take care of the purchases and to assist in other ways. The scene is lively and curious, without being altogether impressive. The women come at an early hour, secure

the best places, take out their knitting, and work and gossip till the sale opens.

Thus a large share of the Mont-de-piété treasures finds its way to the shops of these characters, where the articles may be purchased by the original owners for about three times the sum loaned on them. Many are the students who have found their unredeemed watches hanging in the window of second-hand dealers, and many the young *cuisinières* who have passed longingly the shop where a treasured necklace is held for sale by a greedy sister. There is one sad tale kept in the traditions of the Mont-de-piété, which shows vividly the character of this usurious traffic.



VICTIM OF THE MONT-DE-PIÉTÉ.

The Countess of N——, of the Faubourg St. Germain, had rescued from a life of misery, tending toward a life of shame, a young girl, Antoinette. She gave Antoinette employment in her household, married her to an honest porter of the neighborhood, and showed her many other marks of peculiar kindness. One day she gave her a rich and rare robe, which she herself had worn. The girl guarded the present with a pious tenderness, not daring even to wear it lest she soil it. She assured her mistress that she would always treasure it as a family trophy. But one day the kind countess fell ill, and soon died. Antoinette's heart was nearly broken, and she clung more closely than ever to the robe. Being obliged to seek other employment, she took, with her husband, a little room on the fifth floor of a house occupied by the poorest sort of people, and there continued her life of humble industry. One evening, on returning to her room, she found stretched out before her door the body of a woman. The stranger was aroused, and explained that she lived on the floor above; that she had a sick husband and several children; that she had

gone out to get her pay for a little sewing in order to save her family from starvation; that the party had put her off till the next day, and that, on returning, she had fallen from exhaustion at Antoinette's door. The latter assisted the poor sufferer to her apartment, and found a most pitiful state of things. Then she returned and got some food for the famished wretches. But that was not all. Remembering the kindness which had rescued her from a fate even worse, she determined to raise some money for the unfortunates. All her little savings were in the care of a small banker of the neighborhood. Thither she hastened the next morning, only to learn that the banker had absconded the day before, with all the funds in his possession. This was a serious blow to the poor woman, less on her own account than on that of her more wretched neighbor. But one resort remained. She took down the precious robe, looked at it tenderly, and said, "You are not alive, dear lady, but your robe may yet relieve the needy." The Mont-de-piété loaned her sixteen francs on it, and this sum was given to her poor neighbor.

But in the course of time Antoinette herself met misfortune. Her husband was one day brought home in a horribly mutilated state: he had been run over by a heavily loaded wagon, and nearly killed. The next day he died, and left Antoinette with four small children, and no money. She struggled along for a short time, always intending to redeem the robe, when she found herself compelled to take her child in her arms and beg on the street. A cruel police officer comes along, arrests her, and sends her to prison. At the expiration of her term she emerges with sixteen francs which she had hoarded, and with her thoughts, as before, faithfully on the robe. Passing along the street, at a villainous shop what should she see suspended for sale but the robe itself! Half frantic, she rushed into the store, threw down her sixteen francs, and cried out, "That is my robe—give it to me; here are your sixteen francs!" The merchant smiled. "Not so fast, my good woman," said he; "I have been offered fifty francs for that robe; it is a very rare piece, and I will not sell it for less than sixty francs." Antoinette uttered a cry of anguish—"Sixty francs! that is three napoleons, and I have less than one. Oh, my God!"—rushed to the door, and fell on the threshold—dead.

The sale begins. Behind a little platform stand two auctioneers, supplementing each other, and further back the clerks sit at their desks. The first auctioneer throws down a bundle of linen. The women grasp it, tear it open, chattering meanwhile like magpies, and shout out a bid or two. "Five francs!" "Five francs and one-half!" "Six francs!" "The linen is thin, worn, and soiled." "I don't want it at any price." "Seven francs!" "Give us something better." "Not till this is gone." "Get out, you blackguard!" "This won't sell for a sou." "Seven francs—no more?" "Seven francs!" "Going—seven francs!" "*Adjugé.*" The successful bidder passes up her seven francs, rolls up the wares, and tosses the bundle over her shoulder to the partner who takes care of it. Thus goes on, day after day, one great branch of Parisian trade.

Besides the three main establishments, there are twenty-four branches distributed throughout the city, or, in general, one to each *arrondissement*. They are all under one administration, and report to the general office. But few of the branches, however, have an auction department. In most cases they are only authorized to receive goods in pawn, and then to forward them to the chief store-house, where alone they may be redeemed. There is another class of dealers who receive goods on their own valuation, and run their risk—not a very great risk—of pawning them in turn for a little more

at the Mont-de-piété. They are obliged to take them to the Mont-de-piété to avoid a technical infraction of the law against pawnbrokers, though of course their traffic is a substantial violation of it. Finally, there is a third class who make a business of buying up *reconnaissances*, or receipts for articles pawned. Taking advantage of those who begin to despair of ever redeeming their articles, these wretches offer them a slight premium on their receipts, and thus gain the right to redeem at a small price goods which they can sell for three times as much. This is one of the most painful features or consequences of the Mont-de-piété system. The surrender of a *reconnaissance* is a trifling matter in itself, but it often implies a sacrifice which no amount of money can measure.

The Mont-de-piété is made the innocent accessory in two species of fraud. One is the reception of stolen goods, and the other is the reception of bankrupt stock. The former is comparatively rare, owing to the precautions taken, and the risk incurred by the thief. The other is more successfully practiced: at certain seasons, when failures are more common, the business attains startling proportions. The first resort of a small trader, when he sees failure staring him in the face, is to get as much of his property as possible in the Mont-de-piété before the crash comes, so as to diminish the amount which may be seized for his creditors. If the officials at the Mont-de-piété do not know the person, they can only suspect; and they generally do suspect one who brings an unusual quantity of new goods. Their safeguards are two rules: one forbids the issuing of more than two receipts to one person on the same day; the other requires the publication in a bulletin of lists of new goods which have been pawned. Thus the bankrupt can not dispose of a very great quantity of his goods if his creditors are sharp. The last rule was only adopted last spring, and was called forth by an astounding increase in the sort of business described.

It remains only to speak of the success with which the Mont-de-piété fulfills its mission. This will be esteemed great or little according as it compares with one's expectations; but it would be wrong to suppose that the pious purpose of the enterprise has been observed in all its original purity. On the contrary, the administration of its affairs is essentially secular and selfish. The positions which it affords are scrambled for, and enter into political calculations, as thoroughly as those of any other branch of the service, and it pays large dividends. The estimates on articles submitted are shamefully low, and, in fact, would make the most usurious pawnbroker blush. But the Mont-de-piété offers absolute security to its patrons, and having a monopoly of business and an intelligible system which never varies, it

renders, on the whole, a service which ought not to be underrated. It is a great institution, which might be improved, but which is already a vast improvement on the system which it superseded.



SONG OF THE PALM.

WILD in its nature, as it were a token
Born of the sunshine and the stars and sea
Grand as a passion, felt, but never spoken;
Lonely and proud and free.

For when the Maker set its crown of beauty,
And for its home spread out the torrid ring,
Assigning unto each its place and duty,
He made the Palm a king.

So when in reverie I look and listen,
Half dream-like floats within my passive mind,
Why in the sun its branches gleam and glisten,
And harp-wise beat the wind;

Why, when the sea-waves, heralding their tidings,
Come roaring on the shore with crests of down,
In grave acceptance of their sad confidings
It bows its stately crown;

Why in the death-like calms of night and morning
Its quivering spears of green are never still,
But ever tremble, as at solemn warning
A human heart may thrill;

And also why it stands in lonely places,
By the red desert or the sad sea-shore;
Or haunts the jungle, or the mountain graces
Where eagles proudly soar.

It is a sense of kingly isolation,
Of royal beauty and enchanting grace,
Proclaiming from the earliest creation
The power and pride of race,

Which has almost imbued it with a spirit,
And made it sentient, although still a tree,
With dim perception that it might inherit
An immortality.

The lines of kinship thus so near converging,
It is not strange, O heart of mine, that I,
While stars were shining and old ocean surging,
Should intercept a sigh.

It fell a-sighing when the faint wind, dying,
Had kissed the tropic night a fond adieu,
The starry cross on her warm bosom lying
Within the southern view.

And when the crescent moon, the west descending,
Drew o'er her face the curtain of the sea,
In the rapt silence, eager senses lending,
Low came the sigh to me.

Life of my life! How can I ever render
The full sweet meaning sadly thus conveyed—
The full sad meaning, heart-breakingly tender,
That through the cadence strayed?

O that the priestess, who with magic lyre
Sang last the South, ere death gave her to Fame,
Had, hearing, fanned her fierce poetic fire
Into "baptismal flame!"

That he, who, by the far Egyptian river—
The pilgrim worshipful from western shores—
Caught the grand inspiration which forever
The sunlight round it pours,

Again had listened, and again revealing
The intertropic summer of the soul,
Had made translation, redolent with feeling,
Beyond my poor control!

When the wild North wind, by the sun enchanted,
Seeks the fair South, as lover beauty's shrine,
It bears the moaning of the sorrow-haunted,
Gloomy, storm-beaten Pine.

The waves of ocean catch the miserere,
Far wafted seaward from the wintry main;
They roll it on o'er reaches vast and dreary
With infinite refrain,

Until on coral shores, where endless summer
Hangs golden banners round her queenly throne,
The Palm infolds the weary spirit roamer
With low, responsive moan.

The sea-grape hears it, and the lush banana,
In the sweet indolence of their repose;
The frangipanni, like a crowned sultana;
The passion-flow'r, and rose;

And the fierce tiger in his darksome lair,
Deep hid away beneath the bamboo-tree;
All the wild habitants of earth and air,
And of the sleeping sea.

It throws a spell of silence so intralling,
So breathless and intense and mystical,
Not the deep hush of skies when stars are falling
Can fill the soul so full.

A death in life! A calm so deep and brooding
It floods the heart with an ecstatic pain;
Brimming with joy, yet fearfully foreboding
The dreadful hurricane.

Fail love! fly happiness! yield all things mortal!
Fate, with the living, hath my small lot cast
To dwell beside thee, Palm! Beyond death's portal,
Guard well my sleep at last!

For I do love thee with a true-love passion.
Morn, noon, and night thou art forever grand.
Type of a glory God alone may fashion
Within the Summer Land.

Sigh not, O Palm! Fear not the final hour.
Full oft have lain within thy gracious shade,
Rose-crowned with garlands as from heavenly bower
Fair forms of dusk displayed,

Than which nor Paradise can boast more fair.
Nor can celestial bliss perfected be
Without thy beauty. Thou shalt not despair
Of an eternity!