

committees have been formed in Florence and Paris. It is well known that the great painter of the Renaissance died in Amboise where he passed the last days of his life. The search will be conducted under the control of Leonardo Society in Florence which has already done much for the memory of the great master. Henri Houssaye, the member of the French Academy, was one of the first to offer his assistance, in memory of the darling wish of his father, Arsène Houssaye, who tried to find Leonardo da Vinci's grave 40 years ago. The King of Italy will be represented at the excavations which are to take place, by a number of scientists and artists.

Vitriol can hardly be recommended as an insecticide, judging by the fate which has just overtaken a poor woman by name Madame de Besançon, living in the Boulevard de Charonne in Paris. She had tried various methods to rid her apartments of the presence of a certain insect which seemed proof against all remedies, however drastic. Madame de Besançon, in despair, at last determined to have recourse to the dangerous expedient of coating the walls, floor, and ceiling of her room with sulphuric acid. Unfortunately, while kneeling down to paint the floor with this medium, her head came by chance into such violent contact with the jar containing the acid that it broke, and its contents poured over her head, filling her eyes, mouth and nostrils and the poor woman died in great agony.

The *Frankfurter Zeitung* publishes an anecdote of Mark Twain which is probably new to most of our readers. The genial humorist was asked recently to write something in a child's commonplace book and with his usual good humour at once complied and feeling that the exigencies of the case demanded some moral sentiment hastily wrote down "Never tell a lie", and closed the book. But the saving grace of humour which never leaves him, prompted him to add to this bald apothegm and again taking the book, he added as a postscript, "unless you are afraid of getting out of practice!"

Less convincing and more akin to the fruit of the chestnut tree is a story, related by the same paper, of a Chicago millionaire who had ordered from Paris an exact replica of the world-famed statue known as the Venus di Milo; on its arrival the pork-packing magnate was indignant at finding the statue minus its arms. A claim was at once made upon the railway company, which sent a representative to the millionaire's house, and he, finding that the statement as to the armless condition of the statue had not been exaggerated, reported the same to the company and the directors being apparently in the same state of blissful artistic ignorance as their complainant, at once agreed to pay damages.

M. Watriny, a butcher, living near Throuville, has had a real life experience of taumachy under remarkable circumstances. He was leading a young bull to the slaughterhouse when, at a level railway crossing on the Metz railway, the beast broke loose and bolted down the line, with the butcher in hot pursuit. The man succeeded in grasping the halter, when the bull turned and pinned him against a waggon. With great difficulty he evaded a couple of ugly lunges from its horns, and had almost given himself up for lost, when he felt his hand touch his butcher's knife at his side. Whipping it from the sheath, he waited for the next lunge, and then drove the blade up to the hilt through the eye of the bull, which sank to its knees dying. The knife had penetrated to the brain. M. Watriny, however, had received serious contusions, and is under medical treatment.

THE HANDCROSS MOTOR ACCIDENT.

The inquest into the Vanguard motor accident which occurred at Handcross Hill on the London and Brighton Road on July 12, when a party of excursionists were thrown out of a Vanguard 'bus, ten of them being killed, ended last week.

At the close of the evidence the police brought in lamps and candles for the coroner, counsel, and the press, it being then eight o'clock. The inquest was being held in a marquee at the back of the Red Lion Hotel.

The Coroner, having intimated that the jury did not require the Vanguard Company to call evidence rebutting the statements of the driver, proceeded with his summing-up. The first question the jury would have to answer was "What was the cause of death?" the second, "What was the cause of the accident?" and the third and most difficult, "What exactly did happen?" As to that there were two theories. If they could come to a conclusion on that point the next thing would be to fix responsibility. They would have to consider whether there was culpable or illegal neglect such as would justify them in returning a verdict of manslaughter. Such a verdict, however, must be founded on something more than an error of judgment. He saw no neglect of duty on the part of the driver unless it was that he had

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driven at a speed which was possibly unlawful and dangerous. As to what the speed really was estimates varied, as they needs must, but the evidence did not seem to bear out any idea of excessive speed. As to the company it had to see that the car and its fittings were in such a condition that there should be no danger to the persons on the car. The company could not be held guilty for a hidden flaw. The question was whether they took all reasonable precautions.

The jury retired to consider their verdict at a quarter to nine o'clock, and were absent nearly an hour, when it was announced that they had returned. This was an error arising from the fact that the licensed house in which they were deliberating had to close at ten o'clock, and they proceeded to the Mission House.

THE VERDICT.

At eleven o'clock the foreman of the jury, the Rev. H. R. White, read the verdict as follows: "We find the immediate cause of death was as described by Dr. Matthews in his evidence. The injuries resulting in the death of ten persons were caused by the Vanguard motor omnibus No. A 9,158, belonging to the London Motor Omnibus Company (Limited), coming into violent collision with an oak tree by the side of the road on Handcross Hill. The accident was caused by a breakage of the machinery brought on by the efforts of the driver to check the speed of the omnibus when he found it was beginning to go too fast, the machinery not being of sufficient strength to stand the strain. We consider the driver, Blake, committed an error of judgment in allowing the omnibus to attain so high a speed before taking means to check it. We do not hold anyone criminally responsible. We are strongly of opinion that this type of omnibus is unsuitable for use on country roads."

The verdict was received with loud applause, and the Coroner thanked all those who had assisted the Court in the performance of its duty.

THE NÉGRIER-ANDRÉ DUEL.

A STORY WITH A MORAL.

On Tuesday last two elderly and respectable French generals, supported by four other gentlemen of equal age and distinction, met each other in the gardens of Prince Joachim Murat's hôtel at Paris for the purpose of fighting a duel. The challenger, General André, had the first shot, but missed his opponent, who declined to fire; after which they returned home without being reconciled. This encounter, farcical as it may seem to English readers, is in reality the epilogue to a tragic-comedy in which vast interests were at one time involved, and which cost a great French Minister his reputation.

Briefly, the situation was this. In the 1885 war with China the French troops suffered a repulse at Lang-son. General Négrier was severely wounded, and there was a panic in France. Jules Ferry, the protagonist of French colonial expansion, was discredited by the supposed failure of his policy, attacked by the Opposition and driven from public life. Time heals all, and the French are on the eve of erecting a monument to M. Ferry in the Tuileries. Simultaneously the publication of certain *mémoires* of General André has once more raked up the Lang-son scandal. References of a slighting nature to General Négrier brought a response which General André considered a wound to his honour. The day after the "fight" the *Eclair* publishes a letter in which it is roundly stated that General Négrier was not only free from all responsibility in the Lang-son affair but had actually questioned the orders given by the commander-in-chief, General Brière de l'Isle, to advance on Lang-son, on account of the inferiority of the forces at his command. In answer to this he was told: "The order comes from France." Result—a repulse, disorderly retreat (before an enemy who were themselves too frightened to pursue), panic in France, and the fall of Jules Ferry. General Négrier is to be credited with having maintained silence on a point of professional etiquette for twenty-one years, and so afforded an unusual instance of discipline and self-control, especially as he was for some years the subject of many calumnies.

Told thus, in briefest outline, the story is a dramatic one, and ending with that meeting behind the Hôtel Murat—the two old men fronting each other in the broad sunlight, the proud, aristocratic Négrier facing the pistol of his adversary and disdaining even to reply to his fire, André throwing up his arms with a gesture of baffled indignation—this vignette, as the pendant of the events of 1885, furnished a picturesque chapter in history. The details of the story, if they could be told, are as full of interest and local colour as many romances, and there is a comic side which only those behind the scenes can appreciate.

The writer of these lines was behind the scenes at the time of the Tonking campaign. With three other correspondents (two are since dead) he shared the extremely uncordial reception afforded by the French at that period to Englishmen who wanted to pry into affairs in Tonking. He earned for himself (as *Times* correspondent) the title, bestowed by Jules Ferry, of *Ce Francophobe évagé*, and

he was also Négrier, who tended to t

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