

teuneuf [the secretary of state under whom Protestant affairs came] for *twelve lettres de cachet in blank*, which I shall use only in case of extreme need" ("Pour cela, j'ai demandé à M. de Châteauneuf douze lettres de cachet, le nom en blanc, dont je ne me servirai que dans l'extrême besoin."—"Correspondance des Contrôleurs-généraux des finances avec les Intendants des provinces," published by order of the Minister of Finance, Paris, 1874, 1882, ii., 23. I have referred to this passage and to the next in my 'Huguenots and the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes,' ii., 144.)

A month later M. Le Gendre again communicates with the Contrôleur-général (March 3, 1700), and encloses the copy of a letter which he has sent to Châteauneuf containing these words: "I have already had the honor to write to you regarding this matter [the gift of money to help needy 'new converts'] and to beg you to send me a few *lettres de cachet in blank*, the mere sight of which will cause those that may be threatened by them to tremble" ("J'ai déjà eu l'honneur de vous en écrire et de vous supplier de m'envoyer quelques lettres de cachet, le nom en blanc, dont la seule inspection fera trembler ceux qui en seront menacés."—*Ibid.*, ii., 28.)

(2.) As to the issue of *lettres de cachet in blank*: I have been unable to ascertain whether the King granted to Le Gendre, at Montauban, the blank orders which the latter requested. Happily, however, there is no doubt that the King had granted them, fifteen years before, on the eve of the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, to another officious intendant. The 'Mémoires de Nicolas-Joseph Foucault,' published by the Ministry of Public Instruction in the great "Collection de documents inédits sur l'histoire de France," contain at least two distinct references to the receipt of orders granted with the ominous vacant space for the insertion of the name of the victim. Foucault had just set on foot in Béarn the "Great Dragounades" which were soon to spread to almost every part of France. On page 124 of his 'Mémoires' we read: "On the 16th of July [1685], M. de Croissy notified me that the King had given an order to arrest Sieur Dusseau, deputy of the Protestants of Béarn, and sent me six *lettres de cachet* to consign [to the Bastille or elsewhere] the gentlemen that I might think proper" ("pour reléguer les gentilshommes que je jugerois à propos"). These letters must have been in blank in order to be used thus.

Just one month later Foucault notes again that M. de Croissy has forwarded to him *some orders of the King in blank* for the same purpose: "M. de Croissy m'a envoyé, le 16 août, des ordres du roi en blanc pour reléguer les gentilshommes opiniâtres" (*ibid.*, p. 126).

It will be seen, therefore, that the solicitation and the grant of *lettres de cachet* was not a "legend," but an indisputable fact, in the reign of Louis XIV. Consequently the conjecture of M. Funck-Brentano as to how the "legend" arose is as superfluous as it is unsatisfactory. We are told that printed forms did not displace the *lettres de cachet* fully written out by the hand until the last years of Louis XV. Here, however, are written *lettres de cachet*, with blanks left to be filled, asked for by intendants and issued to them, as instruments of intimidation and punishment, about three-quarters of a century earlier. Moreover, nothing in the tone of Le Gendre indicates that he was proffering a novel and unprecedented request, as there is no hint in the brief memoranda of Foucault that the

grant was out of the ordinary course of things.

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#### ILL-EDITED TEXT-BOOKS.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE NATION:

SIR: While joining in "Y.'s" protest against editions with vocabularies of foreign texts for advanced students (*Nation*, Dec. 5), I beg at the same time to point out another fault deserving equally strong condemnation. I do so with the consciousness of the obligation under which teachers of modern languages are to editors and publishers for the scores, nay, hundreds, of school editions of German and French authors brought out in this country within the last dozen years—handy and attractive little volumes, many of which, because of the real value of the critical and historical introductions, and on account of the industry, scholarship, and pedagogical skill shown in the preparation of the notes, deserve the highest praise, and are equal to anything of the kind produced in any country. But some of the editors of modern-language texts have apparently gone to work without any definite idea of the help needed by the students, or, if they had a plan, have made no conscientious effort to carry it out. They have given at random a few translations of words to be found in small dictionaries, and explanations easily obtainable from the most common reference-books, but failed to elucidate passages or to comment on persons and things concerning which students not provided with a somewhat complete literary apparatus find it difficult to inform themselves. The amount of work put upon some editions of this class is hardly more than a good worker may accomplish in one summer afternoon or winter evening—certainly not sufficient to justify the editor in associating his name on the title-page with that of some great poet or historian whose pages are in some cases reprinted without having even received the necessary care of the proof-reader. It is difficult to understand why scholars of reputation and leading publishing-houses should engage in this kind of business. The least that we have a right to expect of an annotated edition is, that difficulties too great for the average student of the grade for which the volume is intended should be explained. To avoid scantiness as well as excess in the notes requires scholarship, experience, tact, and conscientiousness on the part of the annotator.

A. L.

DECEMBER 9, 1895.

#### ACETYLENE AND ALCOHOL.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE NATION:

SIR: A great deal has been printed in the papers lately in regard to acetylene gas, and I think it is time that chemists should characterize some of the statements made. It has been represented in the stock reports, etc., and the writer has even seen it stated or implied in the *Nation*, that acetylene could be made at such prices as to confirm its use for the manufacture of alcohol, benzole, or nitro-benzole, and aniline, from which the colors could be obtained.

Now there is just enough chemical truth in this to deceive the ignorant or the partially educated. It is true that acetylene can, to a small extent, be decomposed into benzole, that it can, by a roundabout method, be decomposed into alcohol; but it is utterly false that it can be done on any commercial scale to ad-

vantage. We might as well say that because marsh gas, which is the main constituent of the natural gas of Pennsylvania, can be decomposed by chlorine into chloride of methyl, and from that can be made into wood alcohol—we might, I say, as well advertise that alcohol can be made at fabulously cheap prices in this method, as to claim the same for acetylene.

The decomposition of water power into electricity, and that electricity into chemical energy, the use of that chemical energy to decompose a mixture of carbon and limestone, and the subsequent use of the carbide of calcium, is a very interesting, and, for some purposes, may be a useful process; but any one who will for one moment consider the matter will see that the original electricity directly converted into light must inevitably be far more economical than this very roundabout method, implying large losses in lime, in coal, and in electrical energy which are incident to the process.

To chemists who have examined the process critically and without previous bias, it seems a very great pity, if not a shame, that such an interesting chemical discovery should be so exaggerated as to become almost as much falsehood as truth. There is an old adage that "a lie that is half the truth is ever the blackest of lies."—I remain, sincerely yours,

CHEMIST.

#### TRADUTTORE, TRADITORE.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE NATION:

SIR: Permit me to protest against the wrong done to a great artist and a huge public. The December number of the *Century* contains an engraving, after Titian's "Flora," which has eyes out of drawing, a mouth pulled out sideways, a nostril with a mean shadow under it, and an undulating cheek-line, which turn the splendid original into a caricature. One of the pretexts for engraving rather than processing is that the tone can thus be better preserved; but while Titian's "Flora" is a blonde of the blondes, the "Flora" of the *Century* engraver is a dark woman of the Venetian type of beauty. Titian's "Flora" is fleshy, and that is already bad enough; the engraver's "Flora" is flashy as well! Why, in the name of all our duties to the public, present it with engraved caricatures when the cheapest processed reproduction of a photograph costing fifteen cents would do the original infinitely greater justice?

B. BERENSON.

FLORENCE, December 4, 1895.

#### Notes.

DODD, MEAD & Co. are to be the American publishers of Henry Harrisse's notable piece of research entitled, 'John Cabot, the Discoverer of North America, and Sebastian his Son: A Chapter of the Maritime History of England under the Tudors' (London: B. F. Stevens). There will be eleven maps and illustrations.

A Life of the late F. A. P. Barnard, President of Columbia College, by John Fulton, is in the Columbia University Press (Macmillan & Co.).—The Life of Cardinal Newman, by Edmund Sheridan Purcell, will be issued directly by this house.

The Peter Paul Book Co., Buffalo, announce 'The Man Who Became a Savage,' by the traveller and naturalist W. T. Hornaday, with illustrations by Charles B. Hudson.

Silver, Burdett & Co., Boston, will soon is-