

FRANCE.

The Reform banquets are continuing their career in France. One was held on the 21st at Vienne (Isere,) at which not fewer than 580 persons sat down to table, M. Jacquier de Terrebasse, formerly a member of the Chamber of Deputies, was in the Chair, and the company is described as containing an unusual number of the better ranks of society. The King's health was not proposed, but the toast of "To the sincerity of our representative institutions—to governmental probity," was received with repeated acclamations. The same day another Reform banquet took place at Grenoble, which was also most numerously attended.

M. Guizot has dispatched a copy of a note to the Cabinets of London, Vienna, Berlin, and St. Petersburg, in reply to the refusal of the Helvetic Diet to accept the mediation of those Powers. M. Guizot states in that note, that the Diet, having destroyed the federal pact, the Powers regard themselves as released from the obligations they imposed on themselves by the treaties of the year 1815.

OPENING OF THE CHAMBERS.

The Session of the French Chambers was opened on Tuesday last, with the usual ceremonies, by Louis Philippe in person. The weather was most unfavorable for the display customary on such occasions, there being a heavy fall of snow throughout the day. The following is a copy of the King's Speech:—

"Gentlemen, Peers, and Deputies,

"I am happy on finding myself again among you not to have any more to deplore the calamities which the high price of provisions has inflicted on our country. France has endured them with a courage that I could not behold without deep emotion. Never in such circumstances have public order and the freedom of transactions been so generally maintained. The inexhaustible zeal of private charity has seconded our common efforts. Our commerce, thanks to its prudent activity, has been but feebly affected by the crisis that has been experienced in other states. We are reaching the conclusion of those trials. Heaven has blessed the labours of the people, and abundant crops are reviving every where comfort and security. I congratulate myself on it with you.

"I reckon on your co-operation in order to bring to a conclusion the great public works, which, by extending to the entire kingdom facility and regularity of communication, must open fresh sources of prosperity. At the same time that sufficient resources shall continue to be applied to that fruitful enterprise, we will all watch with scrupulous economy over the judicious employment of the public revenue, and I am confident that the receipts will cover the expenses in the ordinary budget of the State, which shall be shortly presented to you.

"A special bill will be proposed to you for reducing the price of salt, and diminishing the postage on letters to a degree compatible with the good state of our finances.

"Bills on public instruction, prison discipline, and our customs tariffs are already submitted to your deliberations. Other bills shall be presented to you on various important subjects, particularly on commercial property, mortgages, the Mont de Pieté, and the application of savings banks to fresh improvements in the condition of the working classes. It is my constant wish that my Government should labour, with your co-operation, in developing at the same time the morality and the welfare of the people.

"My relations with all the foreign Powers give me the confidence that the peace of the world is secured. I hope that the progress of general civilization will be every where accomplished by a good understanding between governments and people, without impairing internal order and the good relations between states.

"Civil war has disturbed the happiness of Switzerland. My Government had come to an understanding

with the Governments of England, Austria, Prussia, and Russia, in order to offer that neighbouring and friendly people an amicable mediation. Switzerland will, I hope, acknowledge that respect for the rights of all, and the maintenance of the basis of the Helvetic Confederation can alone insure to her those enduring conditions of happiness and security that Europe wished to guarantee to her by treaties.

"My Government, in accordance with that of the Queen of Great Britain, has just adopted measures which must at length succeed in restoring our commercial relations on the banks of La Plata.

"The illustrious chief who has long and gloriously commanded in Algeria, has desired to rest from his labours. I have entrusted to my beloved son the Duke d'Aumale the great and arduous task of governing that French land. I flatter myself that, under the direction of my Government, and thanks to the laborious courage of the generous army that surrounds him, his vigilance and devotedness will secure the tranquillity, the good administration, and prosperity of our establishment.

"Gentlemen, the more I advance in life, the more I dedicate with devotedness to the service of France, to the care of her interests, dignity, and happiness, all the activity and strength which God has given, and still vouchsafes me. Amidst the agitation that hostile and blind passions foment, a conviction animates and supports me, which is, that we possess in the constitutional monarchy—in the union of the great powers of the State, sure means of overcoming all those obstacles, and of satisfying all interests, moral and material. Let us firmly maintain, according to the charter, social order, and all its conditions. Let us guarantee, according to the charter, the public liberties and all their developments. We shall transmit unimpaired to the generations that may come after us the trust confided to us, and they will bless us for having founded and defended the edifice under shelter of which they will live happy and free."

MISCELLANEOUS.

According to the weekly returns of the Bank of England, published on Friday, the amount of notes in actual circulation in the week ending Saturday, December 18, including seven days' and other bills, was £18,615,039, a decrease during the week of £567,137; the amount of gold and silver coin and bullion in the hands of the Bank, £11,991,376, an increase of £565,200.

The cold has set in with some intensity at Hamburg, reaching six degrees. The navigation of the Elbe was stopped.

It appears from an official document that in the several dioceses of England and Wales there are 11,386 benefices, and 7,785 glebe houses.

From a Parliamentary document just issued, it appears that the amount of duty received in the year 1846 for stamps on bills of exchange or promissory notes and bank notes, was £571,842 10 11.

The ship carpenters of Greenock have struck work, in consequence of a proposed reduction of wages, from 4s. to 3s. 6d. per day.

The Bank of France has reduced the rate of interest to four per cent.

A French club has been established in London, under regulations similar to those of the English clubs.

Winter has, at last, begun at Belgium, as a heavy fall of snow took place last week, and the face of the country has been everywhere covered with a white veil.

A monument to the memory of Joan of Arc is to be erected by subscription at Orleans.

The *Corsaire* mentions that a young enthusiast of the Parisian turf, who died lately, left his groom 800,000f., (£12,008,) but his family dispute the bequest.

Last week's *Gazette* contains notices of the dissolution of some twenty railway companies.