



HALF-TONE PLATE ENGRAVED BY J. TINKEY.

THE OPÉRA.

BY RICHARD WHITEING,

Author of "No. 5 John Street," "The Island," etc.

WITH PICTURES BY ANDRÉ CASTAIGNE.

ART, literature, the drama, are not only the greatest spiritual forces in France; they are among the greatest of national industries. A man may purpose to live by them without having to feel that the first step is to run away from home. There is nothing that need shun the light in the pursuit. It leads to no grandmotherly shaking of the head, and it is not mentioned—at any rate, for banning, as distinct from blessing—at family prayers.

The French are not only ready to admire a great artist, but they are exceedingly proud to take service in his corps. Perhaps the crowning achievement of the career of Meissonier was his instalment as mayor of Poissy, his country place, a few miles from Paris. It signified the full and perfect acceptance of him by the ratepayer. So, while Paris was at his feet, you might find him, in the intervals of homage, at the beck and call of this humble commune, laboring in its little council, and fighting the good fight of local self-government on the question of a new foot-path or of a new lamp. He went from the council board to his fine château, and from

there to his finer mansion by the Avenue de Villiers, twin splendors that were well-nigh the ruin of him. The last was a veritable palace of art. He designed it himself, or, at any rate, he drew every detail of the wood-carving, and you went from floor to floor by a staircase of the Italian Renaissance, until you found the little man and the little picture in the recesses of the shrine. Art was his industry, and he devoted its rewards to ambitions worthy of the king of an oil trust. He earned by tens of thousands and spent by hundreds of thousands, and he ended his life as a hostage in the hands of the dealers, painting masterpiece after masterpiece to liquidate their claims, with only a bare percentage for his own share. The very color-man once struck for a payment on account.

The palace near the Avenue de Villiers is the ruin of many a good man. He begins to build as soon as he begins to sell, and his building may soon become a Frankenstein monster. Its claims compel him to paint for the market, instead of painting, in the first place, for his own good pleasure; and that way lies the lowest deep of ruin, the ruin of

the artistic soul. Still, the very temptation implies that his craft is, in a certain vulgar sense, one of the most profitable of trades—one that enables a man to look the successful grocer in the face without a blush for the poverty of his own calling.

So it is with all the arts in France. Happily, most of their professors are content to live at home at ease, and to "put by," with never a thought of sumptuary glories. I have known a successful producer of Holy Families who lived in great simplicity, though his time was worth so much that he was said to lose two hundred francs every time he sat down to lunch. Degas is another and a more honorable example of the same sort. He has never painted for the market; he has painted only to please himself and a circle of devotees. But these have been numerous enough to provide him with all the essentials of a happy life. He paints, sells when the wind blows a customer his way, hangs up what he does not sell on his own walls, rails at the Salon and at the Academy, and altogether enjoys himself immensely in a habitation which, by comparison, is but a tub of Diogenes. It used to be delightful to see the old man in the greenroom of the Opéra studying the flying squadrons of the ballet in their exercises at the bar. His passion was the rendering of movement—movement caught in its fugitive grace of pause. His tulle in the moment of transition to fleecy cloud, his twinkling feet on their way to become stars of the firmament, are abiding joys.

Nowadays, therefore, students may enter the arts, as they have long since entered the professions, as recognized careers commending themselves alike to ambition and to the prudence of the chimney-corner. The change is not confined to France. But there is a difference. A lad who goes to school at the London Royal Academy goes for his teaching and no more. He still follows his earlier way of life and his social traditions, and his day's work is only one of the things of the day. A lad who enters the Beaux Arts at once belongs to a veritable students' corps. He is a new man. The tomfooleries of the reception by the class—so often described—have still a meaning. It is not merely that the freshman has to sing a song by order, to do the meanest "chores," and generally to make an ass of himself. The real purpose is to take the nonsense of mere individualism out of him, and to make him feel that hereafter he belongs to a fraternity. The processions of the students, their mighty ball of the four arts, their very street rows, are

all parts of the same process. Every neophyte has still his eye on the great possibilities of his career, and a sense of the unity that is strength. His hopes make all his hardships easy. The horse-beef of the restaurants, where they manage the whole dinner of four courses and dessert well under two francs, is only an accident of the pursuit of glory. All things conspire to put the famished customer into good conceit with himself.

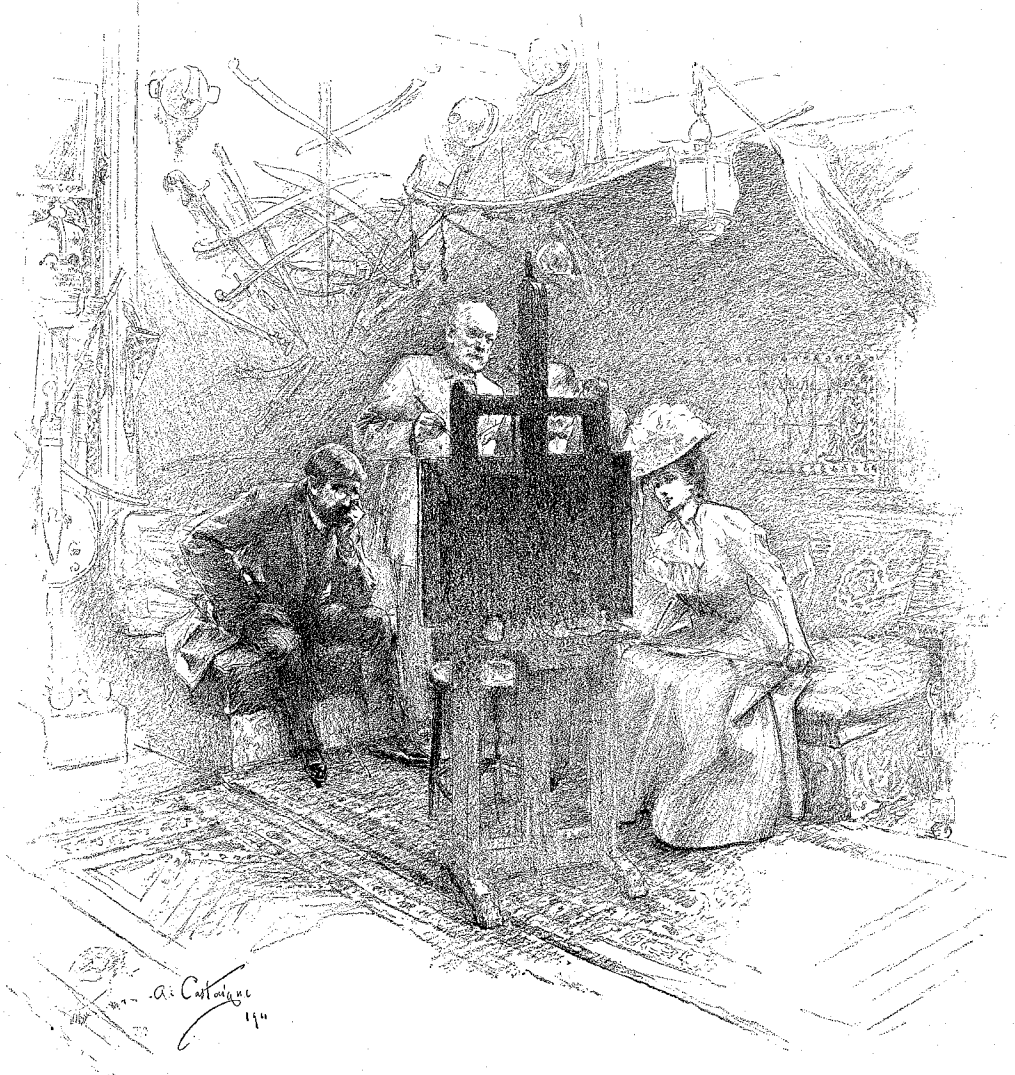
Paris lives even more obtrusively for art than it lives for commerce. There is art everywhere—in the streets and gardens as well as in the picture-galleries, in the churches and town halls, decorated by liberal commissions from government. The very bill-boards are galleries of black and white. The government does its part just as if the industry were a question of coal or iron. It is fostering and protecting, if not protective. The elementary-school system, as we have already seen, is a net thrown over all France to catch children of promise. If they do well in their rudiments of drawing, they are passed on to schools where they may do better. If they do supremely well in these schools, they will assuredly be urged to go to the Beaux Arts.

Of course most of the students enter that institution without any call but the inner one. However, there the school is, for all. It is a masterpiece of contrivance to a given end, with its grade upon grade of teaching right up to the highest. Nothing is left to chance. You are supposed to know your rudiments, and more, when you go there: it is no school for the a-b-c. You must bring drawings or paintings to the professor as evidence of vocation. If he thinks there is promise, he gives you leave to "aspire." This means that you may enter the section of the antique, where he will quietly keep an eye on your work. If you fail there, you go no further. If you succeed, you one day get your promotion to the life-class, and rank as a member of the atelier of your chosen master. From this time forth he takes something of a personal interest in you. His devotion to art, if not to the student, never fails. I have seen Gérôme propped up on a bed of sickness to look at the drawings of a raw hand from the other side of the sea, a lad who was not even his countryman. And remember that men like Gérôme teach virtually for nothing. Their stipend from the state is ridiculous—a mere drop in the bucket of their earnings. They come down to give of their best to all these youngsters, from all quar-

ters of the world, just for love of their art and pride in it.

In the atelier you have the stimulus of all sorts of competitions. There is the monthly contest for the right to choose your place.

ception of the niceties of form. The other things were for other teaching, for other stages. Yvon's best man was able to draw anything in any position, and to be beyond the reach of surprise by the eccentricities of



IN THE STUDIO OF A MASTER.

The professor looks at your work, marks it as first, second, third, and so on, in the order of merit; and as it is marked, so you have the right to plant your easel where you will for all the month to come. It registers a step in honor, and it precludes bad blood. Then comes the annual competition for the medal, or a tremendous struggle for a place in some special class. Yvon's used to be a favorite for the rigor of the game in drawing. The professor held that, whatever else a man carried away with him from the Beaux Arts, he should not fail to have an impeccable per-

contour. With this we have examinations in history, ornament, perspective, anatomy. Students are supposed to know something about these collaterals of their great subject. Many take the history and the perspective in a perfunctory way, feeling that the strain is not there, and that drawing and painting are still the heart of the mystery. In the final heat for Yvon's the few that were left did their best in a drawing from the figure, which had to be completed in so many days of two hours each.

Beyond this, of course, there is the strug-

gle for the Prix de Rome—very properly restricted to Frenchmen. It is something like a prize—the winner has free quarters in the art capital of the world on a liberal allowance from the state. The first heat is a sketch in oils, and the result, of course, leaves many out of the race. The second is a figure in oils. For the third, the few left standing are sent to paint against one another for their lives on a subject given by the school. Now, there are all sorts of possibilities of unfair play in a competition of this sort, and against them authority has taken due precaution. A man may get outside help, and bring in a work that is only half his own; and even if he does every bit of it, he may still have fed his invention on the contraband of borrowed ideas. So, to prevent all that, they put him in a kind of monastic cell in the school itself, and there for three mortal months, until his task is done, he has to live and work, with no communication from the outer world. He is what is called *en loge*. He brings in his own traps, and he is as effectually under lock and key as any Chinese scholar competing for the prize of Peking. The moving-in day for the Prix de Rome is one of the sights of the Latin Quarter, with its baggage-trains of personal gear ranging from the easel of study to the fiddle of recreation. When it is all over, and the best man has won, he settles for four years in the capital of Italy to rummage at his ease in its treasure-houses of the art of all time. Of course he has to rummage on a plan. Paris requires of him a work every year, to show that he has been making good use of his time. If this is of unusual merit, it is bought by the government.

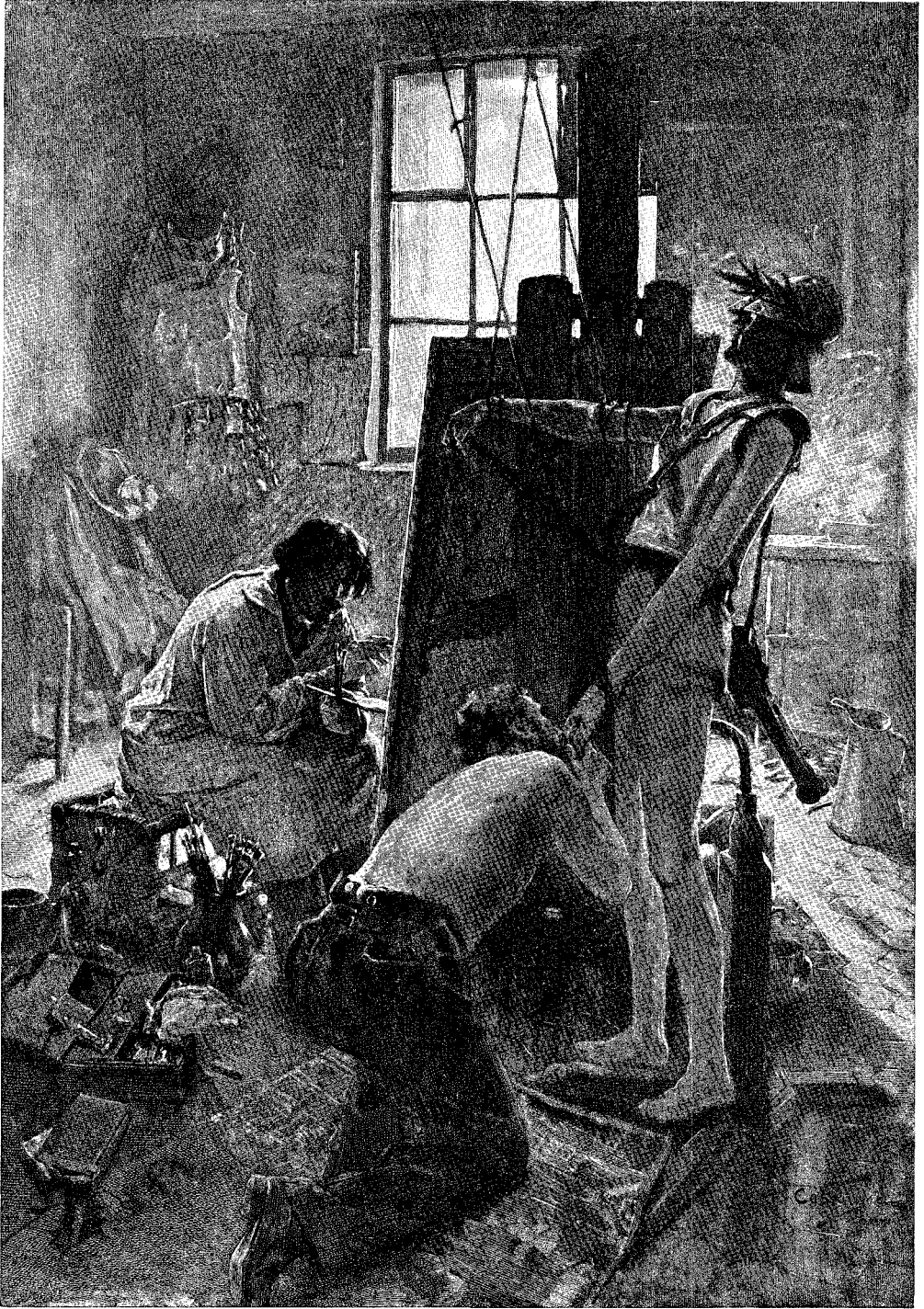
The Beaux Arts is an all-round institution, like most others in France. It is for sculpture as well as for painting; for architecture, for line-engraving; even for the cutting of gems. In every one of these branches the government offers encouragement by the purchase of good work. In every one it stores the best examples, many of them the spoil of vanquished nations, and provides the best teaching and the best libraries of critical and historic reference. The lectures cover the whole field. Yet, complete as it is in itself, the great school is only one of the sections of the Institute of France.

The Institute is for the higher learning in all its branches. Its five academies include the Académie Française, which, be it remembered, is only another sovereign state of this mighty federation of the things of the mind. For others still, we have the acad-

emies of Inscriptions and Belles-Lettres, of Science, and of Moral and Political Sciences. In its entirety it is a sort of "Inquire within for everything"—France luxuriating in the sense of universalism of mastery over all that pertains to knowledge. Nothing ought to come amiss to it. When the Chinaman in "Cham's" caricature boggles over the bill of fare, the waiter leads him by his pigtail to the Institute to ask for an interpreter.

Literature is another of the great industries, for France still does a considerable export trade in that article. Nothing is wasted. The still-born fiction of the year is regularly exported to South America as the latest rage of the boulevard. Most of its job lots are simply paradoxes that have failed. The French are always on the lookout for the new thing, and this is at once the worst danger of their literature and its alluring charm. They have their spring patterns in ideas, as in muslins, and a fashion seldom outlasts the season. The literary schools are about as short-lived as the governments, and founders come and go just like ministers of state. You meet young fellows who have had their day—graybeards of failure still with raven locks. For they must be very young at the start. Paris likes them tender, since she means to eat them up. I have known a lad of parts quite put out because his "system" was not ready for publication before he had turned eighteen. France believes in youth just because of her age. The contact warms her blood. She has believed in it more than ever since the German war. The school-boy lauds it in all the arts, and the salons discover an infant prodigy every day. It leads to some waste of effort, of course. The eccentricities of these young men in a hurry are appalling. Critical indignation is thrown away upon them, and the only corrective is the rude justice of their struggle for survival.

The history of French schools from the beginning of the century is a history of nature working by tooth and claw. The pure romantics, after a vigorous attempt to destroy the classicists, were themselves destroyed by their own offspring of diabolism, as these, in turn, fell before the romantics of the epileptic variety. These revolutions in art devour their own children, just like the others; and there is always a Mountain brooding rapine at the expense of the fatness of the plain. The Parnassians and the plastics, who swept the last romantics out of the field, are themselves only a memory. It seems a far cry to the time when the first care of



HALF-TONE PLATE ENGRAVED BY S. G. PUTNAM.

WORKING FOR THE PRIX DE ROME.

the intelligent foreigner on reaching the boulevard was to buy the latest volume of the "Parnasse Contemporain." Charming little volumes they all were, creamy to the eye and to the mind. But their cream is now the yellow of age, and they mature for the collectors in covers of price. What futile headaches are between the boards!

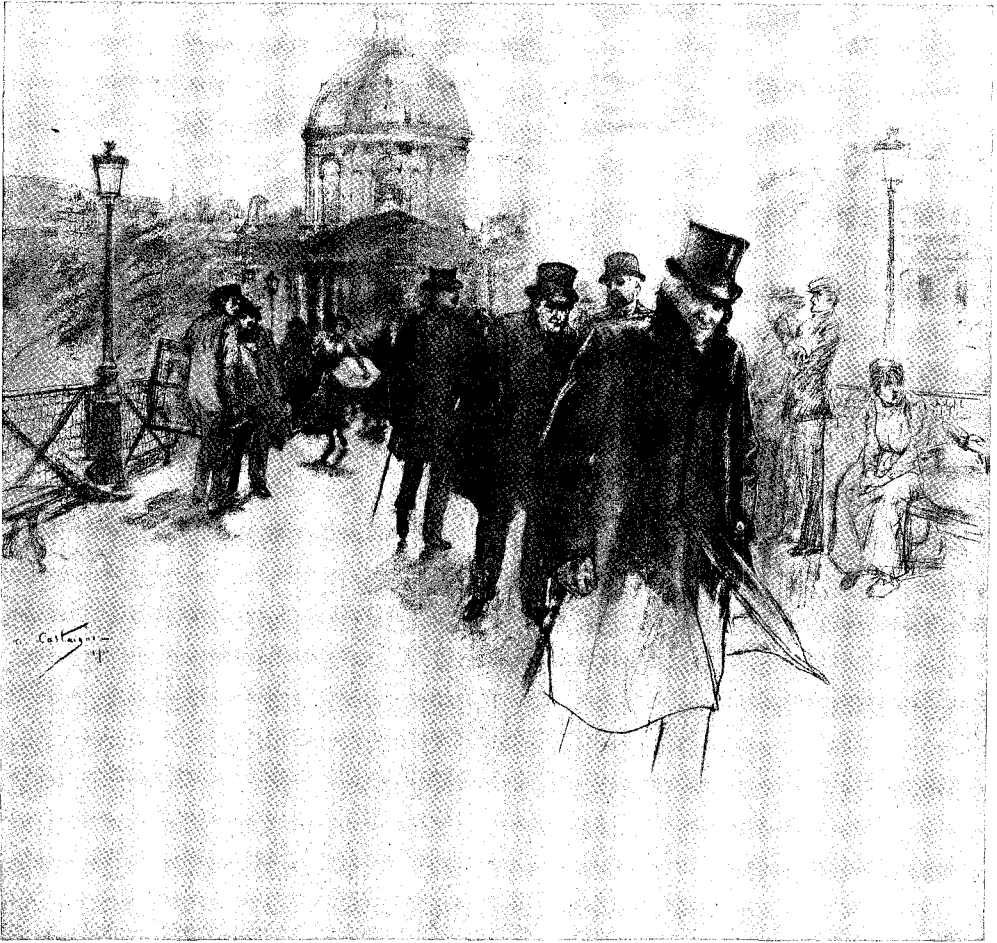
Zola and his naturalists are graybeards in every sense, yet it seems not so very long since they went out every day to take the scalps of the sachems of more ancient lodges, and seldom returned without a trophy. They were wont to celebrate their triumphs by feasts in the wigwam of the patron, with much boiled and roast, and still more talk, in the twilight, of that literature of Gautier and his mates to which they had given the death-blow, and of the other literature which was to take its place. Of this last, "O king, live forever!" was to be read between the lines on every page. Well, well, where is it now? But why say more than *Mr. Justice Shallow* has said already—"All shall die"? And has not Béranger sung the "old clo'" of the warriors who have had their day? The imperious necessity of the new thing drove the disciples themselves into revolt against the master, and one by one they set up rival schools, and demolished him in epigrammatic prefaces—generally the best things in their books.

For naturalism is by no means to be confounded with naturism, which is one of our later births of time. The schools generate just as the midges do, and each may suffice for its hour. One springs out of the other. "Rousseau," said Tocqueville, "begat Bernardin de St.-Pierre, who begat Châteaubriand, who begat Victor Hugo, who, being tempted of the devil, is begetting every day." It might be put in still another way: Zola hunted Hugo, Huysmans hunted Zola, and now Saint-Georges de Bouhélier hunts Huysmans, and with him the symbolists and the decadents. This stripling's new pattern for the shop-windows is the rehabilitation of virtue, and the simplicity of nature,—always, of course, of nature as an article de Paris,—and the reestablishment of the old friendly relations "between the plant, the bird, and the emotion of a man." It is all very well, but it tends to bring literature down to a question of mere procedure, and to reduce its entire priesthood to a gang of workmen squabbling over the make of their tools. Le-maitre is right; if we do not take care, letters will become but "a mysterious diversion of mandarins." The peril drew very near when

Robert Louis Stevenson tried to reduce the magic of a fine passage from "Troilus and Cressida" to a series of cunning alternations of consonants. Amid all these distracted and distracting novelties we have Brunetière still hitting out for the classical tradition, as Nisard hit out in Hugo's time—striking too short at Zola and the naturalists; at Le-maitre and at Anatole France as mere impressionists of criticism; at modern science for its "bankruptcy" in regard to the solution of the mystery of being. He would bring all these innovators under the wholesale tyranny of great critical laws, and teach them that individualism is the enemy, alike in art and faith. No wonder that Édouard Rod, with an equal concern for individualism and for law, is one of the most interesting literary figures of the day.

The literature is backed by the institutions, above all by the French Academy. It is an error to suppose that the Academy exists mainly for the purification of the language and for the completion of the dictionary. Its great aim is the production of the normal man of letters, the equipoised personality of wisdom, wit, gravity, gaiety, the harmony of sometimes conflicting opposites which old-fashioned people look for in the perfect writer. This product of fancy is as exquisitely proportioned as a Greek temple. All his powers are subordinate to sovereign reason, working in a medium of good taste. Taste is the enemy of excess, so he has to be not too much of anything, but just exactly enough—a sort of Grandison of the desk.

The attempt to create such a type in its wider application to life at large has been the delight of every age. Newman sketched it with a master hand in his character of the gentleman. The gentleman of his and the British ideal is very much the perfect writer of the French ideal. Our greatest stress of admiration lies in the domain of manners; theirs in the domain of the arts. Newman's great exemplar carefully avoids whatever may cause a jar or a jolt in the minds of those with whom he is cast. He is against all clashing of opinion, all collision of feeling, all restraint or suspicion or gloom or resentment, his concern being to make every one at ease and at home. He has his eyes on all his company; he is tender toward the bashful, gentle toward the distant, merciful toward the absurd. He guards against unseasonable allusions or topics. He is seldom prominent in conversation, and never wearisome. He makes light of favors while he does them, and seems to be receiving when



HALF-TONE PLATE ENGRAVED BY G. W. CHADWICK.

MEMBERS OF THE FRENCH ACADEMY, AFTER A SESSION, CROSSING THE PONT DES ARTS FROM THE INSTITUTE.

he is conferring. He never speaks of himself, and, except when compelled, never defends himself by a mere retort; has no ears for slander or gossip; is scrupulous in imputing motives to those who interfere with him; interprets everything for the best. He is never mean or little in his disputes, never takes unfair advantage, never mistakes personalities or sharp sayings for argument, or insinuates evil which he dare not say out. In short, he is "just so."

Of course he is only Chesterfield, with the difference of the application to ethical character, and Chesterfield, it is needless to say, was French to the heart's core. That noble lord's ideal in manners is the Academy's ideal in literary art. His forgotten and overmuch derided letters should be read again as a help to the comprehension of this singular institution whose concern is the good breeding of style. Where he enjoins dignity of

demeanor, and warns against horse-play, romping, loud fits of laughter, jokes, and waggishness in company, the Academy condemns their analogues in books. The man who takes the floor in print is, in the Academy's view, only the buffoon of a larger society than the one that Chesterfield had in his mind. As the good little child of nursery ethics is seen, not heard, so the good little writer of the academic ideal is heard, but not seen. Lie low in self-assertion; disdain to shine by tricks, says the Academy. Whoever is known in company, says my lord, for the sake of any one thing singly, is singly that thing, and will never be considered in any other light. It is the plea for universals, for balance. Chesterfield's contempt for the man who boasted that he had written for three years with the same pen, and that it was an excellent good one still, is the Academy to a hair. It was an individualizing

boast, and the grand style knows nothing of individualism. His horror of those who have a constant smirk on the face and a "whiffling" (precious word) activity of the body may be matched by the Academy's horror of the professional humorist. His scorn of proverbs and of cant sayings is the Academy's scorn of cheap and easy reference. His admiration of the man who comes into company without the least bashfulness or sheepishness, but with a modest confidence and ease, is the Academy's admiration of the writer who makes no attempt to recommend his work by tricks of apology, but just leaves it to speak for itself. His pregnant saying that the wise man will live at least twice as much within his wit as within his income is the Academy once more.

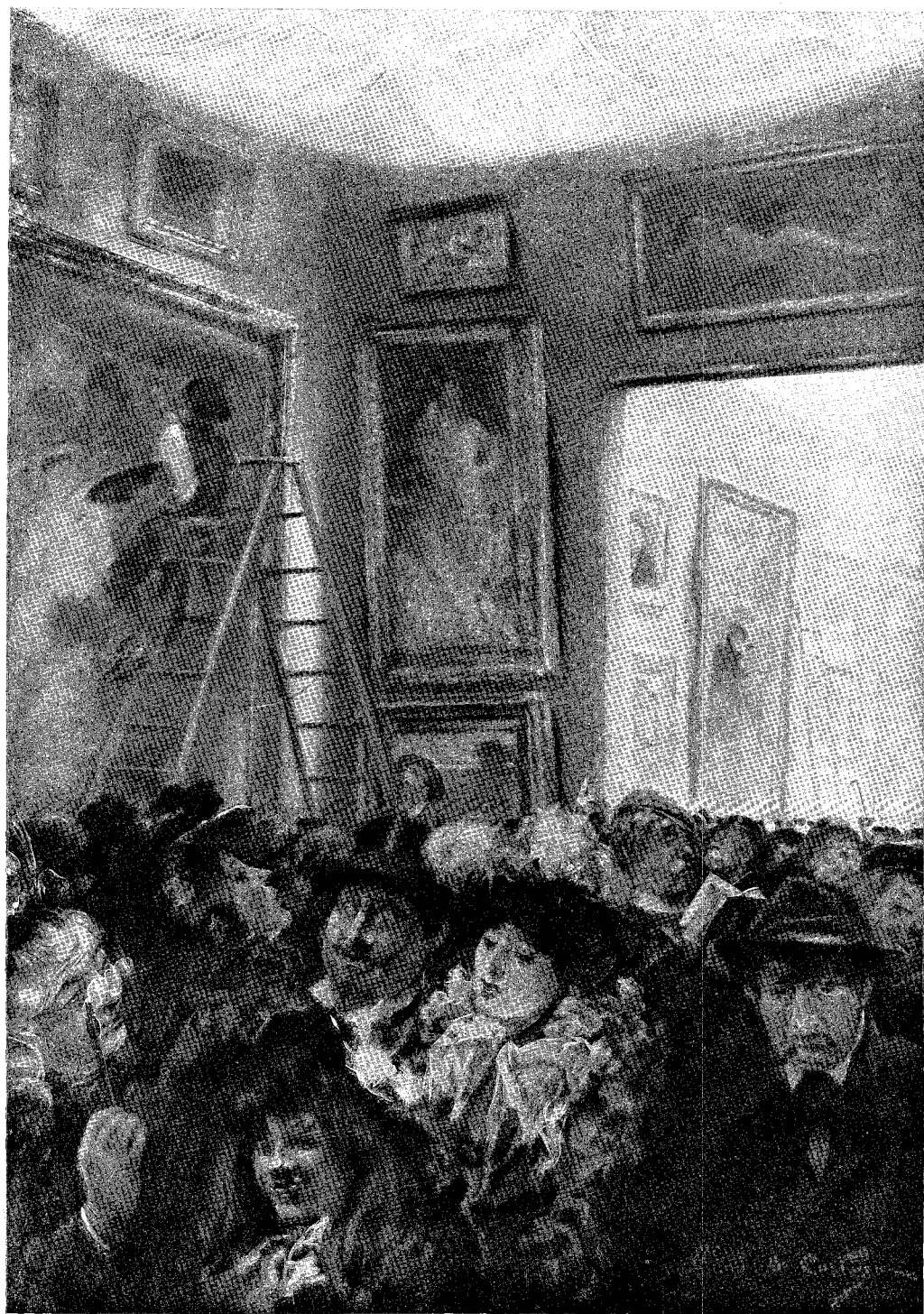
That illustrious body, as it is ever represented in French critical literature by some great pedagogic figure, is constantly rapping the whole class of successful writers over the knuckles, and ordering them to leave off making a noise. It was represented by Nisard when the fierce torrent of romanticism burst over the classic plain; it is represented to-day by Brunetière, who may be figured as some weary schoolmaster flogging an unruly class—flogging till he drops. He has flogged them all in turn,—Flaubert, Zola, Daudet, Loti, and Maupassant,—yet still, somehow, too much of their lawless riot goes on, with all the base trickery of the devices by which they win the kingship of their despicable world. It is nothing to the purpose to say that those he castigates are sometimes of his own household. He would flog half his brother Academicians, if he dared, for their occasional treason to the tradition.

The tragedy of his life is that the balanced man has gone out of fashion, and that the shifting, wayward million has come into the judgment-seat. These lawgivers of an hour, careless of what is true, ever demand something new, and the popular writer prefers a first place in the meanest village to a second in Rome itself. Tocqueville, who in politics could judge on the evidence, was the slave of tradition in literature. For him the seventeenth century was the last of the great style, and its goose-quill was the true pen of gold. Men wrote for fame, he said, as fame was bestowed by the small but enlightened public. A century later the process of disintegration had begun. Manner took the place of matter; ornament was added, since clearness and brevity were no longer enough. In a succeeding age the

ornamental ran into the grotesque, just as the clear style of the old Norman architecture gradually became florid, and ultimately flamboyant. For these principles of liking and of aversion the French Academy stands; on these principles it was created; and, to promote them, it has become a dictionary-maker only as a means to an end. The right word in literature is only its test of the right thing.

Hence the philosophy of the Academic discourse. The occasions of such discourses are easily found. A member dies; another member takes his place. The newcomer has to pronounce a eulogy on his predecessor; a member, deputed by the Academy, pronounces a eulogy on both. It is merely an opportunity of showing by example how a discourse should be written. It is a masterpiece of the most elaborate art. It must not contain a single expression foreign to the usage of the best writers. It must not contain a single thought that is too obtrusive in form or in manner. It must deal with the whole subject as if men dwelt in a paradise of reason, temper, urbanity, taste, and all the virtues, set off by all the graces. It assumes the like perfection in its auditory. The discourse is polished to the last turn,—by the writer himself in the first instance, by the Academy in the second,—until it shines without glitter, like so much table-talk of the gods.

When M. Dufaure departs this life, early in the eighties, M. Cherbuliez takes his place. M. Cherbuliez pronounces the discourse on M. Dufaure. M. Renan, director of the Academy, replies to M. Cherbuliez. M. Renan, after his wont, is unctuously appreciative, candid, tolerant—in short, everything that human beings might be if they were able to send in specifications for their own make-up before birth. M. Cherbuliez has nothing but nice things to say of M. Dufaure's career in politics and in public life. M. Renan has nothing but nice things to say of M. Cherbuliez for having said them. "M. Dufaure [I do not translate literally] belonged to an age when political life was but a tourney between rivals full of courtesy, who had a perfect understanding in regard to fundamentals. He could make allowance for political opponents. He had none of the spirit of party which was the bane of politics later on. To the eight Beatitudes of the Gospel I am sometimes tempted to add a ninth: 'Happy the blind, for they alone are sure of everything.' We thank you, monsieur, for having set before us, in enduring praise, this



HALF-TONE PLATE ENGRAVED BY H. DAVIDSON.

VARNISHING DAY AT THE SALON.

generous and noble character," and so on. M. Cherbuliez was a Swiss who had become a naturalized Frenchman, and had joined his new country shortly after the war. It was necessary to say as much with discretion and with taste. "How well you chose your hour, monsieur, to attach yourself anew to a country from which you had been separated by a fatal error of the politics of the past! The issue of one of our Protestant families compelled two centuries ago to choose between their nationality and their freedom of thought, you have always cherished an affectionate sentiment for the land of your fathers. While France prospered, that was enough for you. But there came a moment when this venerable mother, abandoned by those who owed her most, had to bear the taunt, 'She saved others; herself she cannot save.' On that day, when ingratitude became one of the laws of the world, you felt a new love for your country of the past, and you consecrated your talent to a vanquished cause."

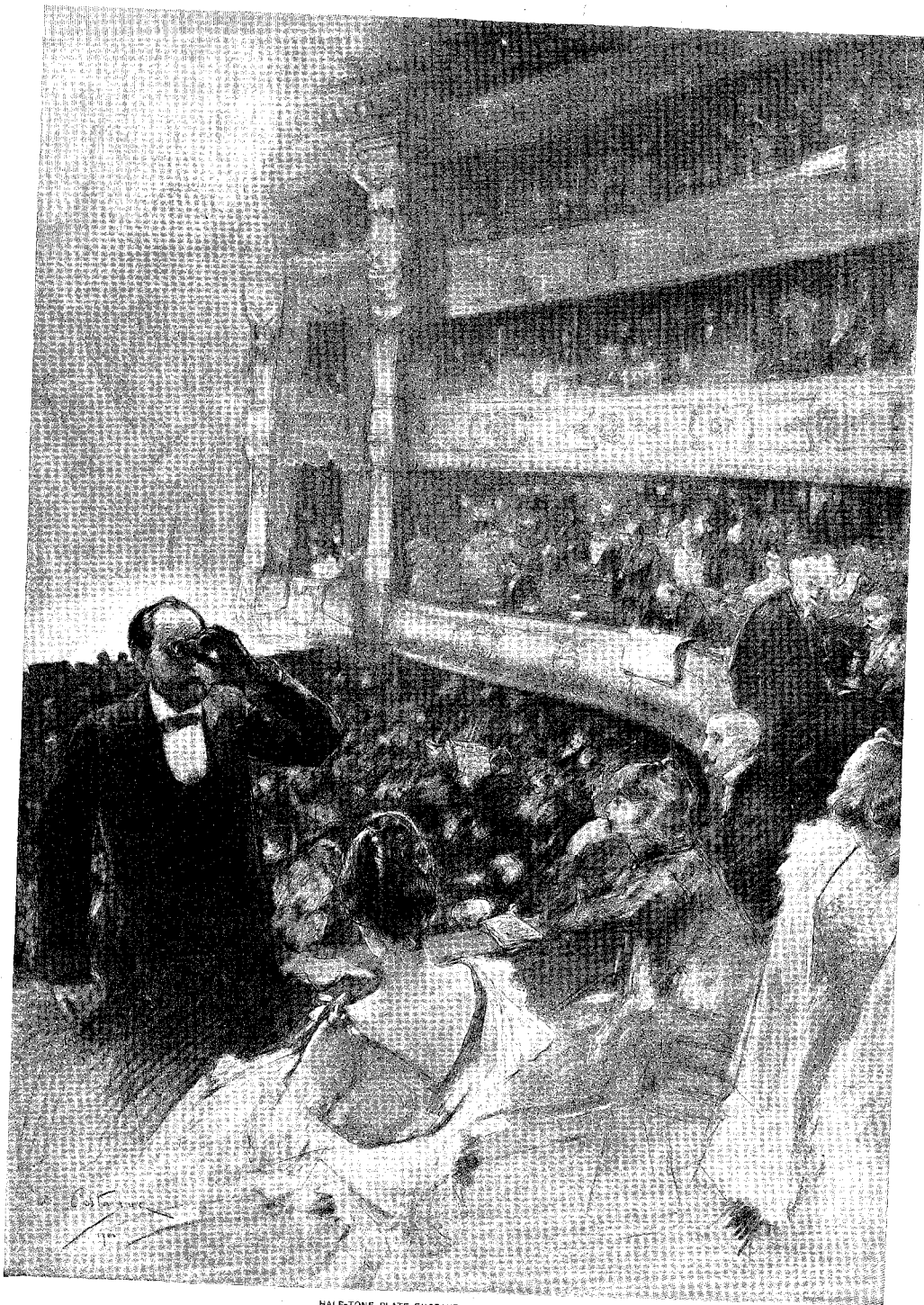
The thing is said, in a certain sense, just for the sake of saying it, and no one cares to apply to it the test of sincerity, so long as it bears the test of expression. The Academy exists to get it said well, and to set off precept by example. The one condition, the one sovereign obligation, is the grand style, the grand manner. At another time the author of the "*Dame aux Camélias*" discourses on virtue at the distribution of the Montyon prizes. His tongue may be in his cheek all the while, but it does not spoil his accent, and that is enough.

The evil is that the Academy has brought this solicitude for form so far that some who live by its laws have hardly a word to bless themselves with. They are like those masters of fence who are afflicted with a sort of paralysis of the power to attack. With the everlasting refinement of style, the writing of Academic French has become the labor of a lifetime. You had better say nothing than say anything less than perfectly well. Hence a misunderstanding between the Academy and the world that is very much like the misunderstanding between the church and the world. The Academy is apt to be remote, unfriended, melancholy, slow in regard to the time-spirit as it moves. It clutches now and then at the skirts of a celebrity just to show that it is not altogether out of the running, but, in its heart of hearts, it would fain do without him, and resume its quietism of the worship of ancestors. It recognizes no books that are not

formally sent in for its approval. It never seeks out a work, but waits until the author invites a judgment; and if he is too proud or too modest to present himself before the judgment-seat, it leaves him without notice. Hence, as M. Zola complained, in a notable diatribe, it affects ignorance of nearly the whole body of contemporary literature. Only the mediocrities, it is said, send in for the ceremony of the "coronation," and, necessarily, none but they receive the crown. With all this, the Academy is true, after a fashion, to the purpose of its being—the production of the perfect gentleman of the printed page, a perfect gentleman, it may be remarked, who enjoys a good deal of latitude of manners when out of his uniform of pen and ink.

The drama and music are other great interests backed by other great institutions. The state does just as much for them as it does for the vine, the beet, or the codfish. It subventions them, when needful, keeps them in good technical repair. It helps the stage of Paris by helping the Français and the Odéon, as also the Conservatoire in the dramatic department of that multiplex personality. These things in France are of such as go on forever. For all that, there are changes, and the most wholesome of them is that the actor is rapidly acquiring a proper social status. He has yet to acquire it fully: to this day, in this land of players, the player is still under a ban. Many affect to regard him as merely a *cabotin*—a stroller, or barn-stormer, to wit. Of course they do it only when they are angry, and when they do it, they know that they are doing wrong.

When Octave Mirbeau, forgetful of the time of day, once wrote an insolent attack on the profession, a hundred challenges came to him by return of post, and he seemed to stand in a ring of swords that were by no means the toys of the property-room. Yet there was quite a commotion in the Legion of Honor when Got, the veteran of the Français, received the Cross—Got, who had done so very much for French culture and happiness. However, it frightened the minister, and he held back a like decoration which Got's comrade, Delaunay, thought he had every right to expect. The disappointed artist took strong measures. He announced his retirement, and began to give farewell performances. The Français could not do without him, and the repentant minister had to come down in a hurry and decorate him behind the scenes. Perhaps the highest



HALF-TONE PLATE ENGRAVED BY WILLIAM MILLER.

A FIRST NIGHT AT THE THÉÂTRE FRANÇAIS.

register of recognition was attained when Coquelin was seen arm in arm with Gambetta at the height of his power.

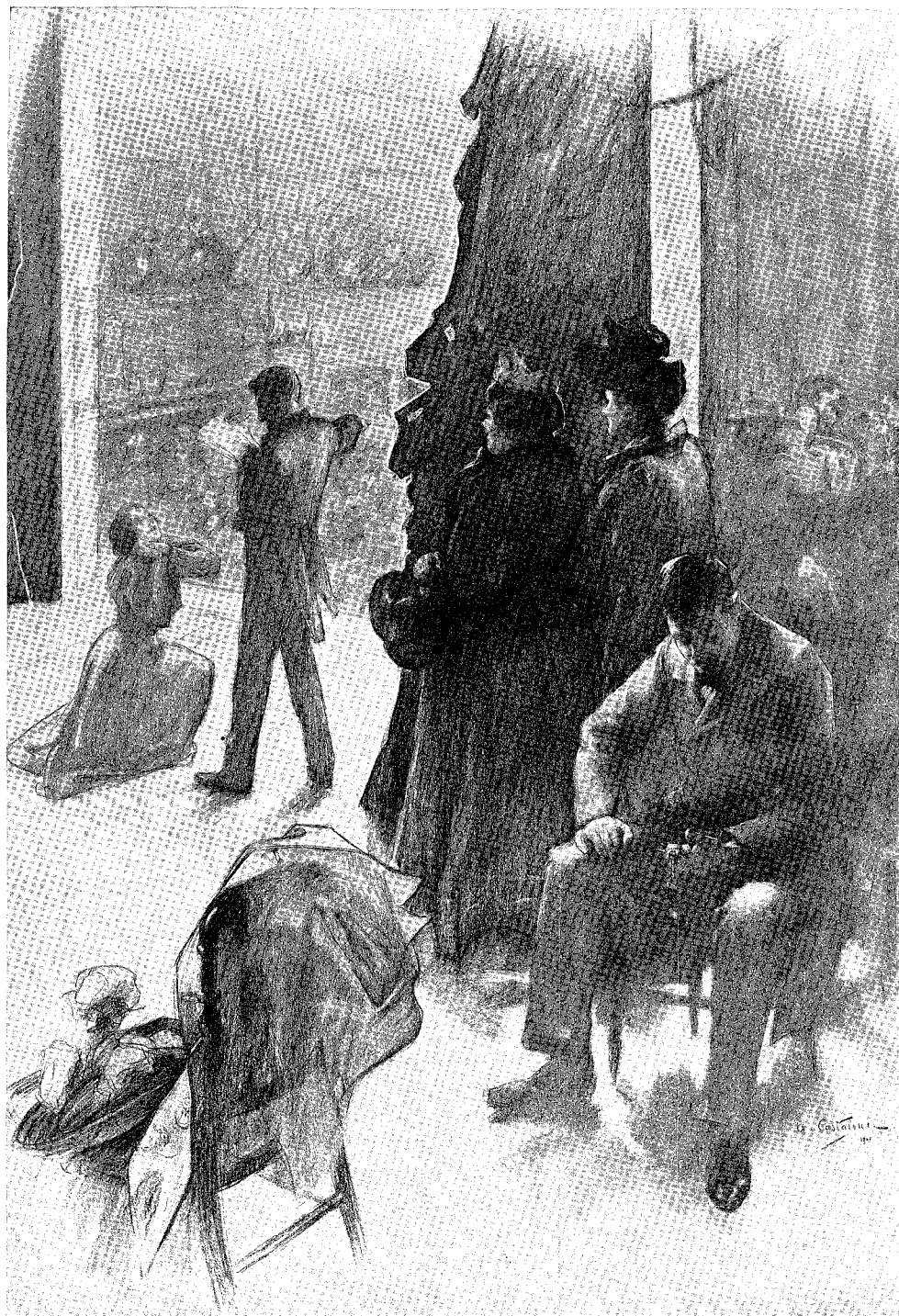
The new state of things has its attendant evils. If you bring the actor into the great world, he naturally wishes to live according to its laws, and that costs money. A fine house, a dainty picture-gallery,—Coquelin has one of the choicest in this line,—and stylish entertainments are essentially things of price. So, of late years, there has been a tendency among leading actors to break away from the Français, or to introduce the starring system, for their own benefit, into the House of Molière. The old system—happily, it ought rather to be called the still existing one—was altogether against that practice. The company was a community, and, though there were some differences in the pay according to talent and standing, all full members shared profits in due proportion. They were theoretically equal, and sometimes the most distinguished of them gave practical proof of it by taking the humblest parts. Once in the brotherhood, you were never to be out of it, except by your own default of conduct or desire. You could look forward to a pension and a handsome lump sum on retirement, and the bonus made a substantial addition to your salary.

Sarah Bernhardt was the first to tire of this. She listened to the tempter who invited her to star for her own benefit in the four quarters of the globe, and she broke loose from the great house by the simple process of breaking her engagement. The administration sued her; she was cast in heavy damages; she never paid them, and she never came back. Coquelin, tempted in the same way, quarreled with his mates because they denied him long vacations, which it was notorious he meant to use by starring on his own account.

It is to be hoped that the present reconstruction of the Français may include some better provision for the security of the historic treasures. They symbolize the history of the French stage in their paintings, engravings, drawings, marbles, each a memory of a rich and glorious past. The mere historical properties are worthy of a state museum. The walking-sticks have been actual playthings of generations of dandies who have lived for "the nice conduct of a clouded cane." The bell that sounds the death-knell in "Marion Delorme" is fabled as the very bell that gave the signal for the massacre of St. Bartholomew. The arm-chair in which Molière had his fatal seizure while playing

in his own piece is still used in "Le Malade Imaginaire." The company of such a house is bound to take itself seriously, and this one does so. At a rehearsal of "Ruy Blas," I once saw them dispute by the hour as to the particular way in which a handkerchief should be dropped and a handkerchief picked up again. When Mounet-Sully was disposed to be a little too noisy in an invocation to a departed spirit, he was reminded that it was hopeless to attempt to call the hero from his grave. They still play the "Malade" on an almost absolutely bare stage, just as they did when it was written, but in many of the modern pieces they now condescend to fine scenery. The late M. Sarcey was forever worrying the administration on this point, and at last they met him half-way, but still only half. The decorations are always kept in a certain classic subordination to the text and the playing. The "fashionable night," when the best seats are let to persons who are known by their names rather than by their works, is another concession to the spirit of the age. In the old days every night was a night of really noteworthy people who had dropped in, not to be seen, but only to see the play. The first night is still what it has ever been, one of the most wonderful scenes of civilized life.

The other state theater in Paris, the Odéon, occupies a lower rank. It is sometimes used as a sort of half-way house between the Français and the outer world, where plays or authors on which the greater institution has its eye may be tried without a compromise of dignity. With this view, M. Antoine, the actor-manager of the Théâtre Libre, was once made director of the Odéon. He represented much that the Français hated, but the public were beginning to take to him, and it was thought prudent to give him a trial. He had an idea of a totally new kind of drama,—realistic, naturalistic, or what not,—in which the stage was to be little more than an enlarged photograph of actual life, with humdrum verities just as they pass. This was a reaction against the highly wrought constructive drama of Sardou, and the still more highly wrought philosophical drama of Dumas, wherein everything is arranged to a given end. The Français itself, I remember, toyed with the innovation by mounting a piece of Henri Becque called "Les Corbeaux," which was all but sterile of incident, and as tailless as a Manx cat. There was no end to speak of, and no plot, except that a rascally lawyer, who had ruined a family, took a fancy to one



PUBLIC COMPETITION AT THE CONSERVATOIRE.

of the daughters, and won her, though she despised him with all her heart. She married just to save the others, and the exasperating curtain fell without any reward of virtue or punishment of vice. The author's theory was that so things happened in real life. He was equally faithful to reality in the dialogue, which seldom rose above utter commonplace.

The artist who has ceased to be curious has entered upon his decline.

Music is cared for in much the same way. The French Opéra is not merely for performances. It is an Academy of Music, and that is its full title. It is subventioned by the state as one of the great teaching institutions—a sort of school of application for the Conservatoire. The house is something of



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It did not answer. But Antoine, who was of Becque's school, had better fortune, owing to the startling novelty of his histrionic method. He held that character should be represented, not in its many-sidedness, but in its dominant note, and that this insistent *Leitmotiv* should be kept remorselessly before the audience in every detail of the performance. Since then there have been all sorts of other experiments—in dramatic symbolism, dramatic mysticism, and anything else you please. Such things may be right or wrong, but they are the life of art, as laboratory work is the life of science.

a white elephant, for its keep is dear. It has sometimes ruined directors who have held under the state on the system of a public grant in aid for expenses, supplemented by their own private investments. The state makes too many conditions. The Opéra has too many privileges. The building itself entails enormous expense, and its palatial splendors are by no means confined to the front of the house. The greenroom of the dance is a marvel of painting, carving, and all the allied arts. The ballets themselves are an essential part of the performance, for the Opéra is a school of dancing as

well as a school of music. They are great illustrative dramas in pantomime, resuming a whole history or a whole epoch of manners.

The Conservatory of Music is managed in much the same way as the School of Fine Arts. The students get the best teaching in the world. They, too, have their *Prix de Rome*, or great traveling studentship, and they compete for it by an *entrée en loge*. They are shut up for some days in close custody for the composition of a cantata, and the winning piece is finally performed at the Institute. Some of the greatest musicians of the time take the classes, or sit in judgment on the work. It is sometimes a tedious task, as one and the same composition is rendered over and over again by successive students. Auber, it was said, used to sit up the whole night before the competition, just to sharpen his appetite for sleep for the following afternoon. It is not true, though that consideration, of course, has scarcely any place in the ethics of anecdote. Its defect lies in the falsity to character and circumstance. The note of the race is its devotion to art. Art is almost the only real priesthood left in France, and by that, or

nothing, Frenchmen hope to be saved. In its various forms it is regarded as a working substitute for religion. It probably is not, in the full measure in which they pin their faith to it; but that is nothing to the purpose. They think it is. It might become so, if they suffered it to recover its old alliance with moral ideals. But they have banished these from the partnership, forgetting that mere exercises in virtuosity can never suffice to the spirit of man. The point is that, in things which they regard as serious, the French are among the most serious and purposeful peoples in the world. Their position in literature, in painting, in music, in the sciences, is theirs by no accident. They work for it with their whole heart and soul, and adapt means to ends as patiently as the maker of a watch. They are a people founded in institutions; and whenever they come to grief, it is only because the institutions have got out of repair. The fate reserved for them in the providence of God is God's own secret. Whatever it may be, they may say with Dryden, in his noble paraphrase:

Not Heaven itself upon the past has power;
But what has been, has been, and I have had my hour.



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A "MONÔME" (PROCESSION OF STUDENTS).

THE ROMANCE OF THE INSTITUTE.

BY ARTHUR COLTON.

NOT quite two centuries of human life have gone quietly in Wimberton, and for the most part it has been on Main and Chester streets. Main street is a quarter of a mile long and four hundred feet wide, with double roads, and between them a clean lawn shaded by old elms. Chester street is narrow and crowded with shops, and runs from the middle of Main down-hill to the railway and the river. It is the business street for Wimberton and the countryside of fifteen miles about. Main street is surrounded by old houses of honorable frontage, two churches, and the Solley Institute, which used to be called "Solley's Folly" by frivolous aliens.

Mr. Solley, who owned the mines up the river and the foundries that have been empty and silent these many years, founded it in 1840. At the time I remember best the Institute had twenty-one trustees, lady patronesses, matrons, and nurses; and three beneficiaries, or representatives of the "aged, but not destitute, of Hamilton County." That seemed odd to the alien.

Mr. Solley need not have been so rigid about the equipment and requirements of admission, only that he had in mind an institution of dignity. It stood at the head of Main street, with wide piazzas like a hotel. The aristocracy of old Wimberton used to meet there and pass the summer afternoons. The young people gave balls in the great parlors, and the three beneficiaries looked on, and found nothing to complain of in the management. What matter if it were odd? True, Wimberton folk never called the Institute a folly, but only newcomers, before years of residence made them endurable and able to understand Wimberton. Failure is a lady of better manners than Success, who is forward, complacent, taking herself with unpleasant seriousness. Imagine the Institute swarming with people from all parts of the county, a staring success in beneficence!

Mr. Solley's idea was touched with delicacy. It was not a home for Hamilton County poor, but for those who, merely lingering somewhat on the slow descent, found it a lonely road. For there is a period in life, of varying length, when, one's purposes hav-

ing failed or been unfulfilled, the world seems quite occupied by other people who are busy with themselves. Life belongs at any one time to the generation which is making the most of it: a beneficiary was in a certain position of respectable humility. But I suppose it was not so much Mr. Solley's discrimination as that in 1840 his own house was empty of all but a few servants, and so out of his sense of loneliness grew his idea of a society of the superannuated. That was the Solley Institute.

It is not so difficult to recreate old Wimberton of seventy years back, for the same houses stood on Main street, and the familiar names were then heard—Solley, Gore, Cutting, Gilbert, Cass, Savage. The elms were smaller, with fewer lights under them at night, and gravel paths instead of asphalt.

One may even call up those who peopled the street, whom time has disguised or hidden away completely. Lucia Gore has dimples,—instead of those faded cheeks one remembers at the Institute,—and quick movements, and a bewildering prettiness, in spite of the skirts that made women look like decanters or tea-bells in 1830. She is coming down the gravel sidewalk with a swift step, a singular fire and eagerness of manner, more than one would suppose Miss Lucia to have once possessed.

And there is the elder Solley, already with that worn, wintry old face we know from his portrait at the Institute, and John Solley, the son, both with high-rolled collars, tall hats, and stiff cravats. Women said that John Solley was reckless, but one only notices that he is very tall.

"I'm glad to see you are in a hurry, too, my dear. We might hurry up the wedding among us all," says the elder Solley, with a grim smile and a bow. "Ha! Glad to see you in a hurry"; and he passes on, leaving the two together. Lucia flushes and seems to object.

Is not that Mrs. Andrew Cutting in the front window of the gabled house directly behind them? Then she is thinking how considerate it is, how respectful to Main street, that John and Lucia are to marry.