

From Chambers' Journal.

## THE EXHIBITION IN PARIS.

FOR part of the present summer Paris has been a scene of more than ordinary bustle. Strangers have flocked to it not only from all parts of France, but from England, Germany and other foreign countries. Hotels and lodging houses were for two months crammed with temporary residents; and such was the demand for accommodation, that the price of house-room rose to double and triple the usual amount. The cause of this excitement was an exhibition of articles produced by the arts and manufactures of France, which takes place once in five years, under the encouragement and patronage of royalty, and in which, as might be expected, something like a national interest is felt. Not to be behind in the general scramble of travellers from London, I got over to Paris about the middle of June, and had the pleasure of paying my respects to the exhibition some dozen times previous to its close. Exhibitions usually make but dull work in description; but this one, as a French exhibition presented to the consideration of Englishmen, and as an indication of the progress made by a rival nation in some of our own lines of exertion, may possess more than ordinary interest.

The weather, to begin with, was excessively hot. The sun beat down in his greatest fervor; in crossing the Place de la Concorde, I almost felt as if exposed to the heat of a furnace, and gladly hastened to seek refuge in the cool shade of the Champs Elysées. Many having followed the same impulse, I found streams of people pursuing their way beneath the trees towards the open glade in which the building for the exhibition has been erected. Emerging on the scene, we observe a large edifice, covering probably a hundred yards square, and rising to a height of sixty or seventy feet, with its glass-covered roof, therefore, nearly on a level with the tops of the tallest trees. Soldiers guard the various entrances, and over the principal, which faces the roadway to the Arc de l'Etoile, is conspicuously inscribed—"EXPOSITION DES PRODUITS DE L'INDUSTRIE NATIONALE."

Well may it be called national. The thing is on a gigantic scale, so as at once to impress us as something worthy of a great and aspiring people. England perhaps requires to give no such proof of its advance in the useful arts. The shop-windows of London are in themselves an Exposition; and the tokens of England's greatness in this line are scattered over the globe. The case is different with France, which, being a comparatively new country as regards the arts of peace, stands in need of some such means of collecting and exhibiting examples of its manufactures, and of showing by comparison what progress is from time to time made. A glance at the present vast assemblage of articles cannot fail to give a conviction that the French are not more eminent for their inventive faculties than their powers of imitation. Peace, and the gradual accumulation of capital, have latterly permitted them to make the most gratifying advances in the useful arts. That the policy of Louis Philippe has contributed to this result, no one will deny. Friendly to social advancement, and acquainted with the principles of mechanism and manufacture, as well as with the humanizing influence of commerce, he has had the advantage of living in an age when the human mind, disgusted with the empty results of a struggle for military glory, was disposed to something more

honorable and useful than war and its accompaniments. At the close of the last Exposition, in 1839, when the king assembled the exhibitors for the purpose of distributing honorary rewards, he said, "Accept my thanks; by your labors you protect and aid humanity; your talents, your success, tend to the melioration of all classes; and you thus fulfil the dearest wishes of my heart. Our progress, great as it is, will not stop here. To what extent it will go I know not. We will continue to respect the independence of our neighbors, as our independence is respected by them. No man can predict or estimate the impulse which our national genius will give to the conquests of industry—conquests which contribute to public wealth, which despoil no man, violate no rights, and which cause no tears to flow." Sentiments like these will be responded to by every friend of humanity.

Having made these general remarks, we may now enter the body of the building, and take a view of its contents. The difficulty, however, is to know which hand to turn to. The large square area is divided into long arcades or walks, parallel to and crossing each other at right angles, the whole interspersed with rows of pillars supporting the roof. The general aspect is that of an extensive and miscellaneous bazaar. Piled on counters along the sides of the arcades, the various classes of goods are arranged in regular order, those of every individual exhibitor being under the charge of a keeper—generally a young woman, who sits reading a book or newspaper within the velvet-covered railing which separates her stall from the broad thoroughfare in front. The ground throughout is floored, neat, and kept as cool as possible by constant watering. According to the catalogue, the number of kinds of articles exhibited is 3969, and the whole, if spread out in an even line, would extend over two or three miles. Within the vestibule stands a large railed-in table, on which are divers clocks and automatic objects, that fix a constant crowd of admirers. Beyond this is the great central arcade, devoted to the exposition of iron and brass ware, engines, machines, and apparatus of different sorts. Taking this line of walk in preference to the others, the first objects that engage our scrutiny are those of miscellaneous hardware, such as pots, pans, knives, locks, scythes, iron castings, &c. In all these the French have made considerable advances, but it is evident they are still behind the English. At present there is a heavy duty on the importation of iron articles from England, which acts as a prohibition; and there being thus no competition, not to speak of the want of good examples to copy, the manufacturers are not forced to do their best. The door-locks and bolts of home manufacture remain a disgrace to France; and no Frenchman will use a native razor, and no Frenchwoman a native needle, who can get an English one. The specimens of iron castings in which ornament is a conspicuous element, strike us with a different feeling. Here we are decidedly excelled. M. André exhibits some articles of great elegance; among which I may mention his statues and candelabras, the latter highly tasteful. At the termination of the first walk, we arrive at a corner in which there is an extensive exhibition of apparatus for light-houses, executed by Lepante, Rue St. Honore. A tall apparatus of brass wheel-work, surmounted by lenses revolving round central lights, rivets the attention of the visitor. I believe the French are

allowed to have carried the construction of lenses to a very high point, and in this respect have outstripped the English—not that we could not fabricate lenses as well and as cheaply as our neighbors, but to advances in this useful department of the arts a serious bar has been unwisely placed by the excise regulations, and I understand that it is now not unusual to procure the principal part of the apparatus of English lighthouses from Paris.

Next to this interesting group of objects we find a number of church-bells of different sizes; and passing them, in turning up another walk, we arrive at the machine department. Here there are many products of industry; iron turning-lathes, planing machines, cutting apparatus, steam-engines from one to a hundred horse-power, printing and paper-making machines, and spinning-frames for factories—all deeply interesting to Frenchmen as novelties in their country, but which are less or more familiar to the eye of an English visitor. An eminent machine maker from Yorkshire, conversing with us on the merits of this part of the exhibition, observed that every machine was a copy from England and on the whole inferior to the original. I cannot say I saw any new piece of apparatus; and it struck me that the workmanship was not particularly well executed. In the smoothest work, for example, I noticed portions of rough iron, as if the material were unsound. Yet, laying aside critical fastidiousness, it might be allowed that many of the machines, including a very handsome locomotive, were as well executed as need be, and suitable for every practical purpose. These, however, like other iron products, are dearer in France than in England. A long arcade adjoining the machines is devoted to the exhibition of cooking and heating apparatus. Amongst the articles is everything likely to be required, from the *cuisine* of a small family, to the *fourneau economique* of a large hotel or restaurant, with novel processes for warming houses and manufactories. Compactness of construction seems the principal peculiarity in these branches of domestic apparatus. Some of the room stoves are elegant but expensive. Near these articles are several specimens of iron bedsteads, handsome, but fifty per cent. dearer than they could be made for in England. In the weighing machines much ingenuity has been employed. At a short distance from them we arrive at a great variety of articles in coarse stoneware, such as vases, statues, and flower-pots for gardens and green-houses. If as imperishable as they seem, they must be considered a pleasing accession to the ornamental arts. Adjacent is a large machine for making bricks on an expeditious and cheap scale. We have near this some pretty specimens of artificial marble in different colors, formed, I believe, of baked plaster of paris and alum, and though not calculated to resist the action of the weather, deserving of encouragement for use in lobbies, passages, and other apartments. Whilst in the moist state, it is susceptible of receiving any engraved design, and the indentations being filled up with a colored paste of the same composition, the whole when dry forms a beautiful substance, at one tenth of the cost of real marble.

The most prominent articles in the row next in order are specimens of carriages and harness. Stimulated by the many English equipages brought to Paris, the French have lately made the most marked progress in this department. The specimens before us are extremely elegant, being done up with splendid silk lining, and richly ornamented

with brass and gilding; but, after all, I thought them deficient in finish compared with the produce of Long Acre. In leaving the machine-room we pass an apparatus, of English invention I believe, for composing types, and which a female in attendance explains and puts in operation. As a curiosity, the machine is worthy of examination, but there are many difficulties in the way of its becoming practically useful.

On entering the gallery on our left, a new order of objects bursts on the sight. The first table we come to is loaded with a variety of crystal wares, cut, tasteful in design, and of divers colors, the produce of the famous glass-works at Choisy-le-Roi. I was informed that the reputation acquired by this manufactory, as well as the low price at which it is enabled to sell its articles, is due to Mr. Jones, an Englishman, who has the management of the stained-glass department. As in the case of lenses, already noticed, there are no fiscal arrangements in France to prevent improvement in the fabrication of tinted and gilt glass; hence the great advance in this department of art. Much of the produce of Choisy-le-Roi is exported to England and other countries. The stoneware of a common kind, of which there are numerous specimens, is as far behind that of Staffordshire as the colored crystal is in advance. The French, it appears, have yet had no Wedgwood; and though the products of Sévres excel as works of art, they exert no perceptible influence in improving ordinary domestic wares. The next articles in order are artificial diamonds and gems, done up as necklaces, bracelets, and other bijouterie. The brilliance and beauty of these objects could not, I think, be greatly surpassed by stones from the hand of nature. The most remarkable articles which fill up the remainder of the gallery are specimens of plate, in the form of dinner, tea, and coffee-services. A dinner-service, by Durand, claims special notice. The articles are elegant in design, and chased in the Cellini style. There are likewise some handsome specimens of the workmanship of Odier, one of the first silversmiths in France. Lebrun, another of the same craft, exhibits some pretty silver articles, among which are four champagne vases, ordered by Baron de Rothschild, costing 5000 francs each. Next in order are specimens of plated articles, showing approaches to the English workman. The silver and plated spoons throughout are inferior. At a short distance from these specimens is an altar-piece, in good style, intended for a country church, and which is to cost 14,000 francs. The specimens of jewelry, both in solid gold and gilt, are, as might be expected, tasteful and beautiful, and so likewise are a number of articles in bronze. The candelabras of this material are elegant in pattern, but somewhat heavy. Of table-lamps there are many specimens, and in these great ingenuity has been displayed. Instead of burning oil, some are designed for self-generating gas from a mixture of turpentine and alcohol. They give, as I am told, a brilliant light, but are dangerous, and not economical. While on this subject, it is but fair to state, that for nearly all the improvements in lamps, from the time of Argand downwards, the English have been indebted to French inventiveness. At the present moment the English have still much to learn in this department. There are here lamps of an elegant description for the table, economical in their consumption, which are yet unknown in England.

We shall now take a turn down the arcade devoted to the exhibition of specimens of household furniture and musical instruments. In the furniture department we see nothing superior to the wares of a respectable London cabinet-maker, but much that is highly ornamental and elegant. A number of the articles, such as cabinets, secretaries, and small side-tables, are richly carved after old designs in the *renaissance*. A finely sculptured bookcase, calculated to hold 800 volumes, is charged 8000 francs. Two beautiful *buhl*-cabinets are offered at 9000 francs, and a highly ornamented table at 5000 francs. In looking through and admiring the numerous specimens of this class, I felt that there was a great deficiency in plain joinery—a department in which the French must still be pronounced a century behind the English. A clever door and window-maker would assuredly make a fortune in France. Near the articles of furniture are exhibited some specimens of stamped or embossed leather, resembling rich mountings for roofs, cornices of apartments, and other objects. In this department the English have lately made advances equally great with those of the French, as may be witnessed in the public exhibition of articles designed for the new houses of parliament in Westminster. In an analogous branch of art, the making of ornaments from peat, the French have, as I learn, made some remarkable discoveries well worth notice across the Channel. The peat, when taken from the bog, is reduced by beating to a fine pulp, and is then placed under a press, to force out all humidity except such as is necessary to keep it sufficiently moist to receive impressions in the mould in which it is placed. In this state it may be converted into ornaments of every kind, such as are made in embossed leather. Rendered firm by a solution of alum or other adhesive material, it forms flooring of a cheap and durable kind. Of billiard tables there are various specimens: one, rich and beautiful, is offered at 15,000 francs. There are some, however, at a fourth of the price; and we are informed that one of a cheap class was lately furnished by the same maker to Queen Pomare of Tahiti. A few of the slabs of these billiard tables purport to be of stone and iron—neither material an improvement on well-seasoned wood. From the billiard tables we turn to the pianos, of which there are numerous specimens by the most eminent makers of Paris—Erard, Pleyel, Pape, and Hertz. Several are in very finely carved cases, of handsome shapes. Of the tones, however, I can say nothing, and it would have been of no use trying them, for all delicate sounds would have been drowned in the loud blasts of a coarse-toned organ which some one was playing at a few feet distance. Still further on, amidst rows of trombones, clarionets, flutes, harps, and other instruments, we find a person playing vigorously on a large keyed harmonicon, or some such instrument. Occasionally, also, as if to master these hostile sounds, there is sent forth from a corner a burst of martial music, performed by an automatic combination of trumpets, kettle-drums, and other instruments. It is impossible to get a look of this noisy apparatus, as it has attracted around it a large and admiring crowd. Carried away by these competing performances, the visitor is apt to overlook some plain and neat violins, manufactured at Mirecourt in the Vosges, a mountainous district in the east of France. Made by a rustic people, with moderate desires, and whose time is of little value, some of the violins of the

Vosges are sold at as low a price as three francs each. It is pleasing to know that there are men in the very heart of rural simplicity who turn their attention to the production of instruments of harmony. The facility with which the peasants of some countries practise the mechanical arts connected with music is marvellous. In Switzerland, the peasant, whilst watching his flocks, manufactures musical boxes; the serfs of Russia, in the depths of their forests, make flutes and hautboys, inlaid with the bark of different trees; and in the Tyrol, many of the best musical instruments are made by the peasantry.

The gallery into which we next direct our steps contains a large show of paper, bookbinding, leather, soap, perfumery, shoes, and other small articles. Paper for writing has latterly undergone great improvements in France, from the introduction of machinery and capital into the manufacture. The article paper is also generally cheaper than in England, in consequence of rags not being allowed to be sent out of the country. Of course, while this practice serves the paper-maker, it is nothing short of a tyranny on those who have rags to dispose of. The specimens of the finer sorts of leather are creditable to the skill of the French curriers. In this branch, also, they are ahead of the English. In the making of shoes, particularly those for ladies, the French likewise excel; but, stimulated by the large importations of shoes into England, our makers are now striving to rival the French workmen—a natural result of such national competition. It is curious to observe, that in this part of the Exposition are several specimens of wooden shoes or *sabots*—an article even so humble as this boasting of some improvements in its construction. Those exhibited are lighter and more neatly cut than usual, without, as is said, losing strength. Wooden shoes are universally worn by the peasantry and poorer classes of France and the Netherlands, and though, from their unyielding quality, they are not very convenient in walking, they are of great value in keeping the bare feet from the damp earth or cold floors. They are worn by many even of the higher classes over leather shoes, when going a short way out of doors, or when sitting at home. Strange, therefore, as French wooden shoes may appear, they are by no means deserving of that contempt which the English wits have poured upon them. Before joining in the ridicule, let us consider how much injury is done to health, how many consumptions promoted, by damp feet. That the use of wooden shoes in some situations—in earthen-floored cottages, for example—would prevent many chronic complaints, can scarcely be a matter of doubt.

I must pass over a vast number of articles, to notice which in detail would require a volume. Lace of the most beautiful sorts made into robes, pellerines, and other articles; brocades of silk and gold; carpets and rugs; dye stuffs; drugs; raw cotton, silk, and wool, in all stages of manufacture, attract our attention, one after the other, and bring us to the galleries devoted exclusively to the general products of the loom. In cotton yarn the French are still far behind, but their woollen manufacture is in a highly advanced state. In plain silks they have been rivalled by the English ever since the tissues of Lyons were permitted to come to England; but in the figured sorts the French are still observably in advance. In cotton fabrics they have made very considerable improvements within the last quarter of a century. The first

impetus to the French cotton manufacture was given by a person of extraordinary energy of character, Richard Lenoir. This man, the son of a poor peasant of Normandy, began life as a washer of glasses in a coffee-house, and by dint of saving and enterprise, rose to be one of the greatest manufacturers in France. His fortune, however, rested on a hollow foundation—Bonaparte's exclusion of English goods from France—and when this was modified by a more enlightened policy at the restoration, he could no longer compete in the market, and was reduced almost to beggary. Seven or eight years ago, the ruined manufacturer owed the bread he ate to the private subscriptions of a few friends, who had remained faithful to him in his calamity. He is now no more; but the spirit which he infused into French industry has survived him, and many of the manufacturers who have specimens of their productions in the present exhibition, began to realize fortunes when the crisis which destroyed Richard Lenoir had passed away.

Having walked down the long alleys of cloth of different descriptions, we are brought to the terminus of this vast collection; and making our exit, gladly seat ourselves outside under the refreshing shade of the Champs Elysées, and meditate on the singular spectacle which has for two long hours been engaging our attention. To those who may peruse the present imperfect sketch, without having seen the establishment to which it refers, I would wish to convey the impression, that the Exposition generally is highly creditable to the present state of French industry and talent. While in numberless instances the articles exhibited are inferior, or at least dearer, than those of English manufacture, it is equally evident, that in point of elegance and beauty of design the French are still considerably in advance of us. They clearly beat us in ornament. Some of the patterns of their higher classed laces and other tissues are among the finest products of taste. The establishment of schools of design will doubtless tend to improve our artisans in this respect; but a more general love of the beautiful would also require to be inspired in the minds of the people at large; and to all appearance an improvement is happily setting in this very desirable direction. Meanwhile, let us do an act of simple justice to our neighbors, and give them credit for their great and meritorious advances in the useful arts, demonstrated by the present national Exposition.

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