

OUR LONDON LETTER.

The International Exhibition—The Royal Academy, and Millais as a Landscape Painter—The Theatre Francais—An Anglo-American Club—Critical Position of the Gladstone Government—Matchmaking—The Licensing Bill—The Joint Commission—Lowell's Last Volume—Americans at Cambridge, Etc., Etc., Etc.

LONDON, May 2, 1871. The International Exhibition of Fine Arts, Selected Manufactures, and Music was opened by the Prince of Wales yesterday with a good deal of trumpet-blowing, cannon-firing, and so on, but the general public have so many more exciting things to occupy them nowadays that the event has attracted marvellously slight attention. The one humorous feature of the proceedings was the presentation of the provincial Mayors (who had all received invitations to attend) to the Prince. Many of these worthy gentlemen got into unseemly confusion with their robes of state on finding themselves in the presence of royalty, and one went so far as to measure his length on the floor at Mr. Disraeli's feet. But, after all, what is this international exhibition? you ask. Briefly, a show of some very good pictures—most of which have, however, been often shown before—some exquisite glass and porcelain, some silks and woollen stuffs, and some of the invariable machinery in motion, in some particularly ugly brick annexes tacked on to the monstrous Albert Hall. In the latter building there are to be provided concerts, illustrative of what Music can do, and at the other end of the galleries Messrs. Spiers & Pond, of world-wide fame, will set up an American bar, where I presume the mint-julep and sherry-cobbler of this nineteenth century will be exhibited in their highest state of development. Poor France had fully intended to take a leading place in the show, and at her own charges erected handsome courts for the display of her productions. Their utter emptiness records a sad protest against the numbing, paralyzing effects of war.

Yesterday, too, the Royal Academy opened its doors and displayed its annual stock of pictures. Wonders will never cease. Here is Millais exhibiting a landscape!—and such a landscape, too. "Chill October," a most captivating and thoughtful piece of rush-grown water scenery, has taken all the critics by storm, and all the dailies, from the ponderous Times down to the half-penny Echo, are enthusiastic in their praise of the versatile painter's work. Mr. Leighton is among us again this summer, and shows some of that marvellous coloring which is his forte. Truly, our Academy is, with all its shortcomings and possible eccentricities, an institution to be envied and cherished.

It has often been said that what's one man's poison is another's meat, and the proverb is now being verified for the benefit of our playgoers. For some years past the presence of a rather miscellaneous company of French players in one or other of the London theatres during the summer months has grown to be an expected element of "the season;" but this year, owing to the reign of the Commune in Paris, we have no less than three French companies among us, including the renowned artistes of the Theatre Francais. Yes, the Francais, which ever since 1680 has stayed at home, the acknowledged head of the acting world and arbiter of French pronunciation, has come in these last days to earn its bread in clumsy barbarian England. Let us take the gifts the gods provide, and thank even the Commune for giving us a glimpse of Bressant and Favart in the Strand. Tartuffe, Moliere's immortal Tartuffe, as played by them last night, their opening night, was a treat not to be forgotten.

It deserves mention, as one mark among many of the kindly feeling that is spreading every day amongst us, that one of our clubs, which happens to have a namesake in New York, has spontaneously passed a resolution offering the privileges of honorary membership to all and every the members of its namesake. Why should there not be an Anglo-American club on the reciprocity system, having (say) four houses, in London, Philadelphia, New York, and Boston, membership of any one of which should make one free of the other three?

It will be a considerable help towards better communication between our two countries if Mr. Seely carries the resolutions which he is to submit to the House of Commons this evening, to the effect that the postage between England and America be reduced from threepence to one penny. The House is passing through such exciting times, though, that it has hardly time to attend to quiet postal improvements. Mr. Lowe's budget, proposing to put a tax on matches, excited such general disapprobation that, after furnishing material for a hundred obvious witticisms, about the number of females engaged in match-making and the like, it had to be remodelled, and last night the conservatives formally gave battle to the substituted proposal of an additional twopenny of income tax. The occasion was really critical, for the so-called Independent Liberals have been so frequently grinding their own private axes lately by voting against the Government that it was feared a coalition of them and the opposition on this budget question might throw the Ministry into a minority, in which case we should perhaps have seen the strange anomaly of a Premier with nearly four-sixths of the House at his back resigning office in favor of the remaining two-sixths. Luckily the Independent Liberals found their senses at the last moment, and a majority of eighty-five affirmed the House's confidence in the Gladstone ministry.

But the Government, though they have weathered this storm, have many troubled waters to encounter yet before the session closes. Their new Licensing bill, a thoroughly honest and practical attempt to arrest and limit the evils of drunkenness, has, as might be anticipated, arrayed the whole of the vast brewers' and publicans' interest against them. The bill proposes to let existing

licenses alone for ten years, and after that time to leave the number of drinking-places in every district to the regulation of the local magistrates, and contains provisions for closing public houses not later than midnight, and for the detection and punishment of adulteration. And what do the publicans say? In every public-house window a placard stares the passer-by in the face, which, for dexterous perversion of fact, could hardly be surpassed. It adjures "Englishmen" to "protest against the odious and tyrannical measure intended to confiscate property, to prevent the sale of [not 'drink,' observe, but] public refreshments, and [note the appeal to the average artisan's feeling] generally to interfere with the cherished freedom of Englishmen." Of course, all this indignation on the publicans' part is quite unselfish, and arises from a disinterested solicitude for the public (not publican) interest.

The Times' correspondent at Philadelphia has stolen a march upon all his rivals in the earliness and accuracy of his telegrams respecting the results agreed upon by the Joint Commissioners. Public opinion here is decidedly in favor of the recommended mode of settlement, but very little is said about the matter till it is seen whether Congress will ratify the present propositions. After the disappointing collapse of the former scheme, our side of the water doesn't like to be too sanguine that the business is really going to be settled till your side has formally and unmistakably agreed to settle.

Lowell's last volume, "My Study Window," has met with such remarkable success in this country—a success, indeed, no greater than its many merits deserve—that Messrs. Sampson Low & Son have already brought out a cheap edition for the million, to be succeeded, I hope, by another and another still.

The list of Americans who have distinguished themselves at old Cambridge is swelling fast. Two of the present tutors at Harvard have been scholars of Trinity College, and they have a worthy successor there now, who, besides winning the honor of a scholarship, is pulling a good oar in one of his college's leading boats on the Cam.

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