

OUR PARIS LETTER.

Not the least accentuated of the French characteristics was portrayed in that cry of old: "*Le roi est mort, vive le roi!*" Liszt has left Paris for a few weeks; he no longer plays; it is the signal for a general shriek from all journalistic hawks. Time was, when we were to pardon him much because he was much loved; now this would appear but one more plea against mercy. Indeed, some secret rivalry in by-gone days might be imagined, so warmly do several distinguished critics condemn the late little bursts of enthusiasm for the virtuoso of the past.

En revanche, the papers are filled with the praises of Rubinstein, who is giving here a series of enchanting concerts. To this great artist a very generous idea has occurred. From the 94,639 roubles realized by some fourteen recitals recently given in Russia, the sum of 25,000 roubles is to be put aside that the interest, amounting to 10,000 francs every five years, may be divided between the successful pianist and composer in an international *concour*.

It is the season for horse-racing and picture galleries, to which, needless to say, the "tout Paris" flocks in greatest numbers. The *sportswoman*, as they call her here, is becoming a more and more common figure. For the last fortnight belle marquise and duchess have gone day after day with never-changing ardour and ever-changing toilette to the Palais de l'Industrie, where took place the *Concours Hippique*—most interesting races, where the horses were mounted usually by the officers of the different regiments.

The Luxembourg has re-opened. The paintings and sculpture have been removed from the palace, and placed in the new galleries built for them in the palace gardens. A charming little exhibition is being held in Gustave Doré's old house, 3 Rue Bayard; Meissonnier, Bonnat, Delaroche, Ary Schæffer, Greuze, and Ruvis de Chavannes are well represented.

The failure of "*A Midsummer Night's Dream*" (*Le songe d'une nuit d'été*) at the Odéon is another proof of the utter incapacity of the French to appreciate Shakespeare, just as the cry for the handkerchief in "*Othello*" evoked unbounded hilarity at the Theatre Français long ago, so the role of "*Bottom*," though most artistically interpreted by St. Germain, is considered rather a good joke!

ORIGINAL ideas for umbrella handles are not wanting. Imagine an ebony death's-head with diamond eyes, and a spray of perfume issuing from its ghastly jaws! Another is a silver ball with this inscription:

Guard you, princess, from these twain:
Public opinion and the rain.

In Emile Zola's latest book, *L'Œuvre*, a touching tribute has been paid to the memory of that unfortunate artist Manet, whom the world had such difficulty in classing as a man of genius or an idiot.

L. L.

Paris, April 20.

SOCIETY SLANG.

EVERYBODY who reads the London society journals, or who has dipped into London society himself within the last few years, must have noticed that the word "smart" has lately acquired a new meaning in England. It is the fashion to use it in a sense very like that which the now outlawed term "genteel" was employed to convey a generation ago. When *Vanity Fair*, or *The World*, or *The Morning Post*, or *Truth*, notes that there were "a number of smart people" at this or that entertainment, the phrase implies, not that any clever men or women, but that persons of assured social position—persons who move freely and easily in the most exclusive circles, were present at the "function."

The word "function," too, is now commonly subjected to a fashionable misuse. It is applied to any parade or show or formal social gathering. In fact it is used in somewhat the same sense, and with the same looseness, as the word "affair." Archery meetings, coaching parades, Sunday-school picnics, garden parties, fancy balls, are all "functions" now-a-days.

Society slang would naturally change more often than the *argot* of trades or neighbourhoods. All dialects alike alter from caprice or accident, but "society" sometimes has a special object in adopting new terms, a desire to avoid some idiom of the "mobocracy." It is the fate of most words and phrases expressive of social shades or types,—such words as "nobs," "bucks," "swells," "beaux," "stylish," "good" or "bad form," "genteel," "vulgar," "smart," "*beau monde*," "*crème de la crème*," "inner circle," "upper crust," "upper ten," "*haute gomme*"—to be introduced in one of the upper strata of society, and then to be adopted successively by each lower stratum, until, done to death by fashion reporters, barbers, and "gentlemen's gentlemen," they are given up in disgust by their originators.

In some of the best English papers, writers now speak of a victory on

the turf as a "win"—"an unexpected win," "this popular win," etc. And one sometimes hears well-bred Englishmen talk of a horse "lepping." In fact, it seems that one of the vagaries of fashion is to use incorrect forms and expressions in sporting matters. It may be that in modern times these come into vogue through "swells" jocularly imitating the rusticities of their grooms and gamekeepers. Old anomalies in sporting language—such as our having no plural forms for *grouse*, *teal*, *trout*, *salmon*, *deer*, and other game animals were more likely due to the ignorance of noblemen and country squires themselves, who in the Middle Ages could seldom write their names and despised clerical education.

F. BLAKE CROFTON.

CAMPING IN THE MUSKOKA REGION.*

WE live so fast and so hard of late years in Canada that it is becoming more and more the custom to spend a period during the heats of summer in recreation and sweet indolence for the purpose of renewing our vexed souls and wearied bodies. Many people mistaking a mere change of worry for rest, flock to fashionable resorts at the seaside or elsewhere. But the prudent man flies from all artificial conditions and yields himself to the soothing influences of Nature on the shores of the lakes and rivers in the depths of our primeval forests. Or is our annual invasion of the backwoods merely the assertion of a persistent primal instinct—a partial reversion, as it were, to the life and habits of our tree-climbing ancestors? But, whatever may be the reason of this summer exodus from our cities, it is a delightful and refreshing fact to the fortunate ones to whom it is permitted to participate in it.

Those who have visited, or who intend visiting, our great provincial park in the Muskoka Region will find much interesting reading in Mr. Dickson's book. It will serve to revive many pleasant memories in the minds of old campers in this region. To those who have not enjoyed a vacation in the forest wilderness, it presents a fair and truthful picture of everyday life there with its little annoyances no less than its refreshing pleasures. But to the intending tourist it is particularly valuable. The author describes at length his canoe voyage up the Muskoka river to its sources among the crystal lakes of the height of land, and then down the tributaries of the Petewawa and the Madawaska to the waters of those fair rivers. In reading this book one is reminded somewhat of Philip Gilbert Hamerton's "*Unknown River*," though our Canadian writer has the advantage of a wilder and more picturesque stream. Details of direction and distance, and descriptions of the character of the route are given with such minuteness that it is probable that many amateur canoeists will be tempted by this narrative to try the same voyage.

Yet Mr. Dickson's work is not a guide-book merely. There are many descriptive passages of considerable graphic force and vigor. On the whole, however, the writer evidently makes no pretension to literary excellence of an artistic character, but rather seems to have intended that his book should belong to what De Quincy called the "literature of knowledge." He gives us in simple and unadorned language the benefit of his many years of experience in camping and travelling in this district. Valuable suggestions are made as to the outfit necessary for such trips, and the management and care of the canoe, tent, and other equipments. The best localities for hunting and fishing are pointed out and the homely processes of real out-in-the-woods cookery are described. Then, incidentally, we get interesting glimpses of the wild and lonely life of the trapper and lumberman, and the haunts and habits of the moose, deer, otter, and beaver. The character of the soil, timber, and vegetation of the different localities is described in passing. One receives, also, a very vivid impression of the great number and beauty of the rivers and lakes of this region as well as of the countless fairy islands with which they are studded.

It would perhaps have been more interesting to some readers if the author had given fuller particulars regarding the fauna and flora of this district, but one should not expect a botanist's or zoologist's report from a tourist surveyor. It seems to us a defect, however, that a work of this kind should not contain a line map of the region through which the reader is taken. In the event of a second edition of the book being called for, which is not at all unlikely, a map should be supplied. Moreover, the narrative also offers a fine field for illustration, and the attractiveness of the book would be much increased by the insertion of a number of superior wood-cuts. The publishers are to be complimented on the neatness and perfection displayed in the mechanical execution of the book. Although our city book-binders manage leather very well, it has hitherto seemed to be almost impossible to get a book well bound in cloth here. A recently published poetical work was a dire failure as a mechanical production;

* *Camping in the Muskoka Region*, by James Dickson, P.L.S. Toronto: C. Blackett Robinson, 1886.