

[Written for the Canadian Illustrated News.]

### THE FRENCH ACADEMY.

BY JOHN READE.

(Conclusion.)

The odes, crowned by the Academy, were seldom received with favour by the public.

"At the age of eighteen years," relates Voltaire, "I wrote an ode for the prize of the French Academy: the Abbé du Jarri, it is true, carried off the prize. I do not believe that my ode was remarkably good; but the public did not ratify the judgment of the Academy. I recollect that among the rather singular faults of which the little poem which was crowned was full, there was this verse:

"Et des pôles brûlants jusqu'aux pôles glacés."

The late M. de la Mothe, a very amiable and clever man, but who did not pride himself on science, had, by his influence, caused the prize to be awarded to the Abbé du Jarri; and, when he was reproached with this judgment, and especially the verse about the "icy poles and the burning poles," he replied that "it was a matter of physical science, which belonged to the Academy of Science and not to the French Academy. Besides he was not sure that there were not burning poles, and, in fine, the Abbé du Jarri was his friend."

In 1717 the Academy "crowned" an ode composed by one Gacon, which was so detestable that the President was ashamed to present the prize in public and sent it secretly to the author.

The subjects proposed for odes by the Academy were frequently chosen with wretched taste. One theme, which it is surprising that rational men could ever have conceived, so disgusted King Louis XIV., whom it was meant to flatter, that his Majesty, ferd as he was of praise, forbade its publication. It was this: "Which of the King's virtues deserves the preference?" It would have furnished a capital legend for Hogarth's "Distressed Poet." Only think of the glorious galaxy of the Regent's days in England engaged on such a subject. It would have made a fine butt for the wit of Peter Pindar.

The sessions of the Academy, which might have been of high interest and great usefulness, were simply wearisome. The subjects discussed were on a par with those proposed to the verse-writers. For instance, a M. Gombault delivered a discourse in 1635 on *Je ne sais quoi*. A member of the Academy, Furetière, has borne witness that, in these debates, the man who declaimed the loudest carried off the suffrages of the Assembly. Some times three or four tried to be heard at once.

La Condamine, at a supper which he gave to the members of the Academy on the day of his admission, made the following impromptu:

"La Condamine est aujourd'hui  
Reçu dans la troupe immortelle;  
Il est bien sourd, tant mieux pour lui;  
Mais non muet, tant pis pour elle."

It may be asked, very naturally, what was the use of the Academy at all. What was the result of its labours? What evidence has it left of its long existence? The same question was once asked of Voltaire by an English man of letters. The French wit replied that the Academy had produced and had printed from sixty to eighty volumes of compliments. The Englishman, having glanced through a few of the printed memoirs, said that all he could learn from those fine speeches was that the recipient of a vacant chair, having assured his audience that his predecessor was a great man, that Cardinal Richelieu was a great man, and the Chancellor Seguier a great man; the president answered him the very same thing, adding that the recipient himself might also be a kind of great man, and that, for his own part, he thought he was also a great man, or words to that effect.

And yet the Academy did produce something—a dictionary. It was in 1633 that the society began to be seriously engaged in this great undertaking. Vaugelas was appointed editor-in-chief. For this duty Richelieu gave him a salary of 2,000 livres. The work went on slowly. The age was epigrammatic and the Dictionary did not escape fire. The following is from the pen of Bois-Robert:

"Depuis six mois sur l'F on travaille,  
Et le destin m'aurait fort obligé  
S'il m'avait dit: Tu vivras jusqu'au G."

The first edition did not appear till 1694. A second edition was published in 1718; a third, in 1749; a fourth, in 1762; a fifth, in 1813; and a sixth, in 1833.

In the Dictionary of the Academy many words, still employed in poetry, and abundantly used by old authors, were proscribed. Some of these words have had their claims presented in a satire written by Menage, entitled: "Requête des Dictionnaires à Messieurs de l'Académie Française." Among them are—"moult," "ains," "jaçoit," "a-tant," "si-que," "maint," "trop-plus," "blandice," "icelle," "pièce," "tollir," "illec," "piteux," and many others.

The Dictionary of the Academy had a rival in that of M. Furetière, who was also an Academician. Furetière's work, which is said to have been very valuable, was suppressed by the jealousy of the Academy, which also expelled the daring author from its ranks. Furetière's dictionary was published in 1690, two years after his death. It was pillaged without the least acknowledgment by the compilers of the *Dictionnaire de Trevoux*.

The Dictionary was the only work of any value which the Academy ever produced. Nor is it free from grave errors of taste, of judgment and of fact.

But if the French Academy thus failed to exercise an influence for good on the literature, it must not be supposed that all its members were to blame for its apathy and uselessness. There never were wanting, indeed, from its first inauguration, earnest men who had at heart the objects to promote which it was founded, and who deeply deplored the use which was made of its advantages. Fenelon, the great and good, thus wrote, in a memoir which he published on the operations of the Academy: "I say that, above all, we ought to think seriously of establishing in the society that strict discipline which is so necessary, and which has never yet prevailed since its formation. Without such a discipline our fairest projects and our firmest resolutions will only end in smoke, and will have no other effect than that of drawing upon us the railery of the public. We must remedy this disorder which will undoubtedly bring ruin on the Academy. And then he entreats them to petition the King to allow them to amend their statutes or to create new ones, which would ensure their independency and allow them to engage freely and without embarrassment in their proper literary labours.

"What a service," said Voltaire "would the French Academy render to literature, to our language, to the nation, if, instead of having compliments printed annually, they published the best works of the age of Louis XIV., purified from all the faults of diction which have slipped into them. Those which could not be corrected would at least be marked. Europe, which reads these authors, would from them learn our language with security. Its purity would be settled for ever. Good French books, printed at the expense of the King, would be one of the most glorious monuments of the nation."

Towards the close of the last century the Academy, like all the institutions of the old régime, was suppressed. It was replaced by, or rather merged in, the National Institute. In 1866 it resumed its ancient name, and never, since its foundation, has it contained a more illustrious company than in the period which has elapsed between its restoration and the present. Cuvier, Guizot, Chateaubriand, Victor Hugo, Thiers, Tocqueville, Molé, Delavigne, Girardin, Cousin, Lamartine, and some others of scarcely inferior renown, are among the academicians of the last half century. Their names tell us at least that the age of empty compliments is past and that we live in times when merit is sometimes recognized.

### CURIOUS CURATIVES.

Every man is an obtusely perverse creature, or the inventors of heal-alls a set of very impudent imposters; else doctors would long since have found their vocation gone. Panacea after panacea has been propounded for the benefit of a world in which, as Mr. Disraeli puts it, health would seem to be a state of unnatural existence; each new nostrum enjoying a brief term of popular favour, and then passing quickly out of memory. In our own days, cold water, innocent of tar, has been extolled far and wide as the one thing needful to wash disease away—a doctrine Burke, for one, would have scouted, for he held that hot water was the finest stimulant, and the most powerful restorative at man's command. Whenever he felt himself unwell, on went his kettle, and he thought nothing of drinking four or five quarts of boiling water in a morning; pouring a pint or so into a basin, and taking it like soup, with a spoon. Indeed, the great Irishman put such strong trust in his simple panacea that he would have had no hesitation in taking it, as a certain quack said his peculiar nostrum ought to be taken, externally, internally, and eternally. Suvaroff swore hunger was the best cure for all disease, and warned doctors from his camp, for if hunger failed to work a cure, were there not herbs, roots, and pismires to be got? The fierce Russian's prescription would have been endorsed by Rully, the Quaker physician, who records in his diary:—"1755, 3rd month, 29th day—A blessed repast of bread and water, a sovereign cure for indigestion, and no danger of a debauch."

James I., wise as he esteemed himself, believed in the power of a certain elixir to render him ailment proof. A Duke of Burgundy was fool enough to pay ten thousand florins for the receipt of a balsam warranted to make his memory transcendently good. Albertus of Saxony was not so easily gulled. A learned Jew tried hard to persuade him that wounds might be readily cured by means of pieces of parchment inscribed with Hebrew words and letters, selected from the Psalms. As he was arguing the matter one day, the duke suddenly drew his sword, wounded the unhappy cure-monger in several parts of his body, and then coldly told him to try conclusions upon himself. Of course Albertus was never more troubled that way. The Saxon duke certainly would never have wasted a penny upon the magical powder advertised in the *Kingdom's Intelligence*, in January, 1661, in the following terms:—"Sir Kenelm Digby's Sympathetical Powder, prepared by Prometheus fire, curing all green wounds that come within the compass of a remedy, as also the toothache infallibly, is to be had at Mr. Samuel Speed's, at the Printing Press, in St. Paul's Churchyard." Sir Kenelm was as proud of his sympathetical powder as he was of his beautiful wife, and had, or professed to have, as much faith in it. According to his own account, he once took a bandage that had been worn by a gentleman who received a wound in the hand while parting a couple of friends intent upon settling a dispute with their swords, and put into it a solution of the powder, whereupon all pain departed from the injured member. A few hours afterwards, Sir Kenelm took the bandage out of his bath, and placed it before the fire, causing the patient's servant to run in, exclaiming that his master's hand felt as hot as if it were between two fiery coals. The garter was replaced in the liquid, and left so for five or six days, by which time the wound had thoroughly healed. The formula for the preparation of this wonderful powder runs thus: Take Roman vitriol six ounces, beat it very small in a mortar, sift it through a fine sieve when the sun enters Leo, keep it in the heat of the sun by day, and in a dry place by night. Digby said he was indebted to a Carmelite friar for the secret, picked up by the friar when travelling in Persia or Armenia.

The weapon-salve made by Paracelsus for the Emperor Maximilian was compounded of human fat and blood, mummy, oil of roses, oil of linseed, and moss from the skull of a healthy man who had come to a violent end. This delectable stuff had only to be applied to the weapon with which a wound was inflicted, and a cure was sure to follow; though how, when the wound was given by an enemy, the sufferer was to get hold of the weapon, we are not told. The hero of an old comedy, finding his weapon-salve fail him in his need, attributes the failure to some defect in his blood, not to any want of virtue in the ointment, having been assured by the apothecary that thirty men blown up by a gunpowder explosion had been saved from death by merely dressing the smoke of the powder with the miraculous unguent! Honest John Hales, seeking to account for the cures placed to the credit of the salve, says shrewdly:—"A man is wounded; the weapon taken, and wound working salves applied to it; in the meanwhile the wounded man is commanded to use abstinence as much as may be, and to keep the wound clean. Whilst he doth this the wound heals, and the weapon-salve bears away the bell?" On a similar principle Morley, a once noted quack, used to cure scrofulous folks by hanging round the patient's neck a yard of white satin, with a vervain root at the end of it—taking care to supplement the action of the charm with mercury, antimony, ointments, cataplasms, plasters, poultices, and lotions. A doctor of our acquaintance took the trouble to analyze a popular patent remedy for rheumatism, and found the lotion to be salt and water; and yet it undoubtedly afforded great relief in some cases, because it was necessary to mix it with boiling water, into which flannels were then dipped and bound round the affected parts. The hot flannels

caused the pain, and the lotion got the reputation of it. The weapon-salve does not stand alone as a proxy cure. Ruptured children used to be passed through a young wych-tree, split for the purpose, and afterwards bound up; the cure depended upon the tree growing together again. Scarlet fever was served with notice to quit by cutting a lock of hair from the sufferer's head, and forcing a donkey to swallow it; and in Greenland, children were sometimes buried alive as an infallible method of ridding their parents of any unwholesome complaint.—*Chambers' Journal*.

### FIELD AND FLOOD.

The Hamilton Races came off on Monday week.

The Annual Provincial Rifle Match commenced at the ranges at Point St. Charles on Tuesday.

The Red Stockings, of Boston, beat the Shoo Flies, of Worcester, at Listowell, on the 14th, by some 41 to 18.

A Rifle Association has been organized at Fort Garry, with a large membership. Major Irvin is President, and Captain Kennedy Secretary.

The base ball match on Friday last between the "Dauntless" club of Toronto and the "Red Stockings" of Boston, resulted in favour of the latter by 58 to 60.

The annual rifle match of the Ottawa Brigade of Garrison Artillery took place on Friday and Saturday of last week. Over \$600 in prizes was offered for competition.

The yacht race at Providence, R. I., for the challenge cup between the "Madgie" and "Tidal Wave" was sailed on the 20th, and won by the "Tidal Wave" in 5h. 20m.

A cricket match was played on the 16th, between the Galt and Berlin cricket clubs, upon the ground of the former, which resulted in favour of the latter club by four runs.

A despatch from London says that the race for the Albert Cup was sailed on the 20th, by vessels belonging to the Royal Albert Yacht Club, and was won by the "Tiona." The "Iona" was second.

His Grace the Archbishop of Halifax, during a visit to Herring Cove, called on George Brown, champion oarsman, and after congratulating him on his victory at Digby, handed him a cheque for \$40.

An international game of Base Ball was played in Hion, N. Y., on the 17th, between the Clipper Club of that city and the Maple Leaf Club of Guelph, Canada, which was won by the latter, by a score of nineteen to eighteen.

A base-ball match played at London on the 21st, between the Red Stocking Club, of Boston, and the Athletics, of London, resulted in a victory for the Reds, by a score of 53 to 3. The Londoners were white-washed in 8 innings.

Arthur Stevenson, who started from Gloucester, Mass., to row to New York in a wherry, reached there safely last Thursday at 7 p. m. He had to be to four days on the passage, and in rounding Cape Cod rowed 36 hours consecutively.

A foot race for \$100 a-side took place at Ottawa on the 19th inst., between two fat men, named Lalonde and Latremouille, the former weighing 185 lbs., and the latter 212 lbs. The course was from Hull to Aylmer, a distance of nine miles. Latremouille won in 1:57, eleven minutes ahead of his opponent.

The Ottawa Free Press says that the challenge of the six Desert Indians, to row any six white men in the Dominion, for one hundred dollars, has been accepted by the Shamrock Canoe Club of Ottawa. The time for the race has not yet been decided, but it is expected to come off about the beginning of September.

A base ball match was played at Toronto on Saturday between the "Red Stockings" of Boston and the "Dauntless" club of Toronto, resulting in a complete victory for the former. Immediately after the match, the "Shamrock" and "Teutsch" lacrosse clubs played a match, which was well contested, and resulted in a victory for the latter by three straight games.

The fall meeting at Decker Park, Montreal, took place on 23rd, 24th, 25th and 27th inst., the racing having to be postponed one day on account of the rain. The first and third days were devoted to trotting; the other two days to hurdle and flat racing. Much greater interest was manifested in the running and hurdle races than in the trotting matches, and the crowd was proportionately large. The attendance was good throughout, and the meeting passed off very pleasantly and without accident; although there were three falls in the hurdle races, nobody was hurt. The principal winners of trotting races were "Belle Dean," 3 min. race for \$100; and 2:40 race for \$100; "Mary A. Whitney," 2:32 race for \$500; "Peerless" and "Snowflake," double team trot for \$800; "Jack the Barber" and "Jack on the Green," a hurdle race each; and "Morlaichi" the \$800 flat race.

HOW THE QUEENS OF THE TURF TRAVEL.—A new palace car has been constructed for the transportation of the famous trotters, "Goldsmith Maid" and "Lucy." In outside appearance the car is not unlike an ordinary passenger car, with the exception of the number of windows, of which there are six on either side, each with a wire screen upon the inside. Upon entering the car you step into a small outer apartment, in which is a luxurious lounge and other articles of furniture. Opening a door upon one side, you enter the main portion of the car, devoted to the horse and ordinary track appurtenances. Here are four stalls—two at either end—and running lengthwise of the car. The sides of each of these stalls are thickly padded with hair, covered with entangled cloth. The stall partitions are moveable, and can be taken out and placed across the rear end of the stall, thus forming, when desired, a roomy box-stall. Overhead are strapped, in separate pieces, the sulkies, all carefully guarded from being scratched or marred in transportation. The centre of the car is devoted to trunks, chests, hay, &c. At either end of the car, on the roof, is a tank, each capable of holding eighty gallons of water. Underneath the centre of the car is a spacious box with doors, in which is carried the platform upon which the mares pass in and out of the car. The car is furnished with the most improved passenger car trucks as adopted by the Pennsylvania Railroad, also with the Westinghouse air brake. The car is also provided with marble wash bowls, closets, and in fact everything necessary for the queens of the turf and their attendants. The entire length of the car is fifty feet, and of the usual width of passenger-cars. This car takes the mares to California.