



KRISHNA IN HIS PALANQUIN.

to a poor musician who had no wife at all. "Court any one you please," said the merry god. So Nareda went wooing from house to house, but in every house he found Krishna perfectly domesticated, the ever-attentive husband, and the lady quite sure that she had him all to herself. Nareda continued his quest until he had visited precisely sixteen thousand and eight houses, in each and all of which, at one and the same time, Krishna was the established lord. Then he gave it up. One of the pictures which illustrate the endless biography of this entertaining deity represents him going through the ceremony of marriage with a bear, both squatting upon a carpet in the prescribed attitude, the

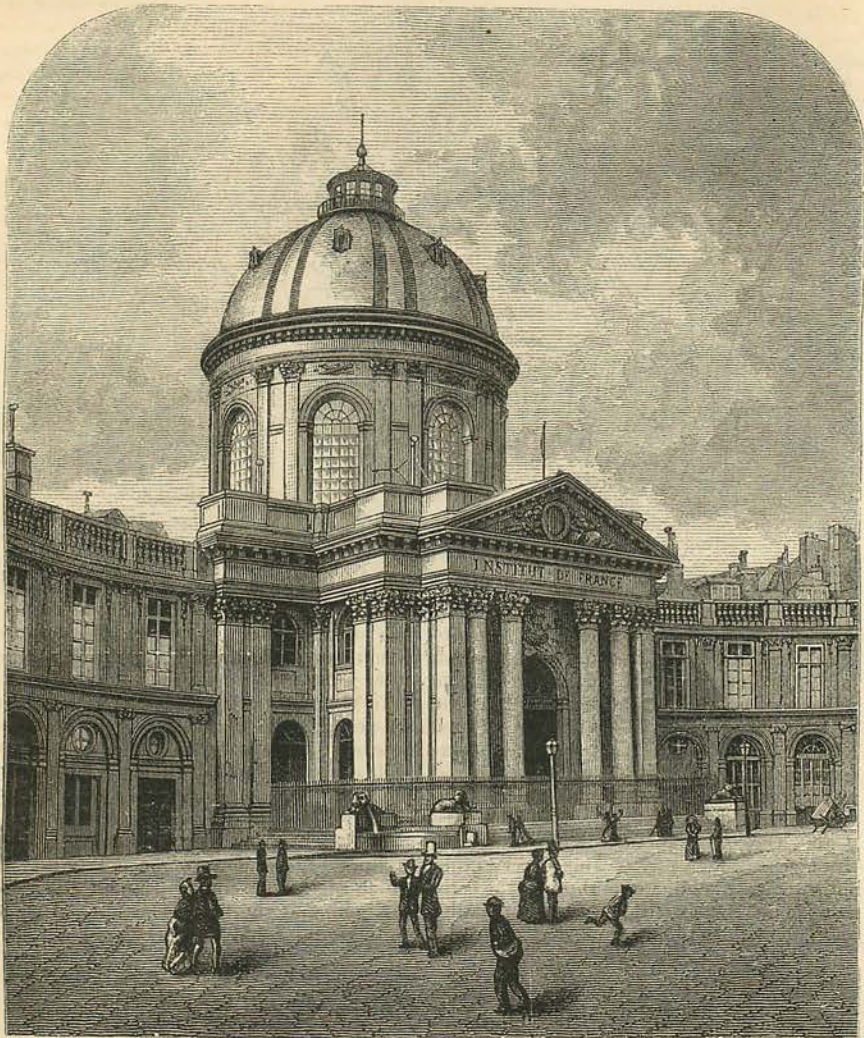
bear grinning satisfaction, two bears in attendance standing on their hind-feet, and two priests blessing the union. This picture is more spirited, is more like art, than any other yet copied from Hindu originals.

To this day, as the missionaries report, the people of India are excessively addicted to every kind of jesting which is within their capacity, and delight especially in all the monstrous comicalities of their mythology. No matter how serious an impression a speaker may have made upon a village group, let him but use a word in a manner which suggests a ludicrous image or ridiculous pun, and the assembly at once breaks up in laughter, not to be gathered again.

THE FRENCH INSTITUTE AND ACADEMIES.

HAVING occasion, not long since, to see M. Ernest Renan, the author of the famous *Life of Jesus*, the writer of this article repaired to the Palace of the Institute, of which learned body M. Renan is, perhaps, the chief living ornament. The building has a tranquil and reposeful look, quite in keeping with its present use. Its long and singular dome, resting upon Corinthian pillars, and its concave semicircular form, with projecting pavilions at either end, fronting directly on the sidewalk, give it an architectural aspect in striking contrast with those monuments of Paris which stand in its neighborhood—the Louvre, Saint-Germain l'Auxerrois, the Palais Bourbon, and the great hôtels, or rather palaces, which here line the lower bank of the Seine. Passing beneath the arch which conducts, just under the dome, to the quadrangles, you find the first of these to be octagonal, and to contain two

Corinthian pavilions. The pavilion on the right is devoted to the Mazarin Library, with its 40,000 volumes, and its busts of Mazarin and Racine. This library pavilion stands, it is said, on the very site of that "Tour de Nesle" which formed the scene of Dumas's tragedy. The other, western, pavilion is occupied by the Institute. Entering the door, you reach a broad winding staircase, at the top of which a broad corridor, or antechamber, with pillars and seats at intervals between them, conducts to the grand hall of the Institute, where its public sessions are held, and which is used by the members for writing, reading, conferring with each other, and receiving their visitors. This hall is provided with a single semicircle of benches and desks, much like the Senate-chambers of some of our State capitols, the desks of the president and secretaries being at the upper end, and seats for spectators being



INSTITUTE OF FRANCE.

ranged along the walls. The hall is a plain and somewhat austere one, its chief adornments being handsome statues of Descartes, Fénelon, Sully, and Bossuet. The second quadrangle contains the offices of the secretaries, the hall for the regular private sessions of the academies, and the library of the Institute. The hall of private sessions is a more imposing apartment than that to which the public is admitted. It has statues of Racine, Corneille, Molière, La Fontaine, busts of Gros, Cuvier, and La Place, and portraits of Montesquieu, Voltaire, Lavoisier, Fénelon, Boileau, Turgot, Rousseau, and others only less illustrious; while in the vestibule leading to it is Pigalle's imposing statue of Voltaire. The Palace of the Institute was built in accordance with a bequest of Cardinal Mazarin, joint regent with Anne of Aus-

tria during the minority of Louis XIV., and was originally devoted to the "College of Four Nations," to which natives of Alsace, Flanders, Roussillon, and Pignerol alone were admitted. Louis XIV. gave it over to the use of the old French Academy, and when the Institute was founded, its name was changed from "Palais Mazarin" to "Palais de l'Institut," and the Directory transferred it to the possession of that body.

M. Ernest Renan says of the French Institute, that in it all the efforts of the human mind are bound together as in a *faisceau*, wherein the poet and the philosopher, the historian and the philologist, the critic and the mathematician, the economist and the juriconsult, the sculptor, the painter, and the musician, can call each other colleagues. He remarks that the object of the

Institute, which is one of the noblest products of the Revolution, is the progress of science, general usefulness, and the glory of the Republic. But it is not so much the purpose of the Institute to teach as to judge. Sainte-Beuve, in speaking of the elder and most august of the sister academies which, confederated together, form the Institute—the French Academy—says that it is not a school, but the most literary of saloons; its proper function is to combine and compare tradition with innovation: it must know the past and observe the present.

The Institute is, indeed, the most famous of literary fraternities, and yet few even in France know how it is composed, what its exercises are, or even what influence it exerts upon the intellectual activity of the age. In one sense it is a literary republic, in another the most exclusive of literary aristocracies. Its form resembles the political structure of the United States, for it is a group of bodies, self-renewing in local government, owing a general allegiance to the central power, which is composed of these bodies acting in concert. The component parts of the Institute are five academies—the French Academy, the Academy of Inscriptions and Belles-Lettres, the Academy of Sciences, the Academy of Fine Arts, and the Academy of Moral and Political Sciences. Of these the French Academy and the Academy of Sciences existed before the Revolution, and consequently before the foundation of the Institute. They had become extinct with the Monarchy, and their revival as "classes" of the literary commonwealth was rather a new birth than a reawakening from dormant life.

The successors of the Terror—known in history as the Directory—in their work of reconstructing France, with a true Gallic fondness for ideas, and that inevitable tendency of the Latin races, which M. Taine points out, to reproduce Greek symmetry and order in every department of thought and art, conceived the project of a lofty literary court, which should hold toward men of letters a somewhat similar relation to that which the government did to the people at large. It was to be a new Plato's porch, with many Platos and Socrateses instead of one; a literary Olympus, with its "immortals," its Jove-like fulminations of august approval or disapproval, its undisputed authority in the world of thought, and its potent guardianship of French language, science, and art. Carnot, Lakanal, and Daunou were the founders of the Institute. A law which passed the Convention on the 25th of October, 1795, established it, and divided it into three "classes," which classes were themselves subdivided into sections. The traditions of the French Academy, founded by Richelieu, although at first the Directory shrank from reviving the Academy itself,

formed the basis for the organization of the new body. The fame of the old Academy savored too much of kingcraft and aristocracy; besides, the "forty immortals" under the Bourbons had sunk into some contempt from their complaisance to the court, and their admissions of literary men of mediocre ability and learning. Voltaire had won his place among them rather by assiduous flattery paid to Madame De Pompadour than by the splendor of his fame; and one of the smartest epigrams in French literature—"Here lies Piron, who was nothing, not even an Academician"—sufficiently illustrates the ridicule which assailed the Academy on account of its selections from the third or fourth instead of the foremost literary rank. It was the aim of Carnot and his confrères to attain the ideal at which the Academy aimed by the Institute. The first division of the Institute was into three "classes;" one of "Sciences," with sections having to do with each special science, one of Moral and Political Sciences, and the third of Literature and the Fine Arts, the departments of the latter being now divided among three academies—the French Academy, the Academy of Fine Arts, and the Academy of Inscriptions. The sections of this third class were respectively those of grammar, ancient languages, poetry, antiquities and monuments, painting, sculpture, architecture, music, and eloquence. The members of the Institute were at first chosen one-third by the executive, and the other two-thirds by the first third, and it began its operations with one hundred and forty-four members. The mode of election was that the sections nominated for vacancies to the classes, and these referred the nomination to the Institute in aggregate, which made the final choice.

Napoleon I. carried the exercise of his power into every institution, whether political, religious, or literary, which he found existing in France when he assumed the consular dignity. Not satisfied with the composition of the Institute, one of his first acts was to reform it. He ordained that in all future elections the choice of the Institute must be confirmed by the First Consul. He was not going to have his enemies preaching sedition under literary guise in the Palais Mazarin. The whole constitution of the classes was changed by increasing their number to four, abolishing that of Moral and Political Sciences (which sciences the chief of the state was able to manage without the inconvenient intervention of Academicians), and dividing the third class into three—of French Language and Literature, Ancient History and Literature, and Fine Arts. He revived the name "French Academy," and restored to it its limit of forty members, in this respect following out the policy which has recently been attributed to him,

with considerable show of reason, by a very able writer, of restoring the traditions and government of the old Monarchy in all things but in name. To Napoleon's reform of the Institute is also to be referred the creation of the office of "permanent secretary." In the *soi-disant* Republican days of the Directory such an office would have savored too much of aristocratic distinction. Napoleon never hesitated from such a scruple. That the position of perpetual secretary is one of high authority and honor may be judged from Sainte-Beuve's interesting sketch of that official. "The history of the Academy," he says, "may be written in chapters whose titles are the names of its perpetual secretaries. Whether he 'reigns' or 'governs,' the perpetual secretary has the control of the Academy. He is perpetual, and endures. Presidents and directors succeed each other, but he remains; he is sub-director for life—rather, a director with a modest title. If he has not great influence with the company, it is because he does not wish it. He is present at every sitting, while the Academicians are irregular, come and go as they will, are absent in summer, arrive after the sitting has begun, and leave before it closes. He follows the questions, has possession of them beforehand, prepares them, propounds them, and, if he is able, most often suggests, by the manner in which he presents them, their solution and the vote that is to be given upon them. He has, without seeming to have, the first and last word in the discussions. He alone is learned in the traditions of the Academy, and may recall them at a fitting moment, or forget them, if that is convenient. He draws up the reports, and may make them long or brief, as the mood takes him; he may make them dry or rich, a simple record or an ornate and elegant essay. At the public sittings he is the official organ of the Academy; he executes its decisions, which he has had the largest share in determining; he exercises hospitality, and his *salons* are those of the company; and in the freedom of social intercourse, if the secretary has tact, knowledge of men, and suavity of manner, he may insensibly impress his own preferences on all this polite circle."

The real and useful work of the Institute in its several departments dates from the creation of perpetual secretaries, who formed a nucleus and centre, and gave unity and method to its studies. During Napoleon's reign, however, the work of the Institute, owing to the restrictions which he imposed upon it, revolved in a somewhat narrow groove, the principal studies undertaken being that of the history and the compilation of diplomatic events by the class of Inscriptions, the continuation of the *Literary History of France*, which had been commenced by the Benedictines, by the French

class corresponding to the present Academy, and some examinations into the sciences as illustrated by the great French philosophers, under the auspices of the class of Sciences. There had come a singular and ominous lull in the more popular and generally attractive sciences of politics and morals, which had so deeply stirred France in the eighteenth century. Rousseau and Voltaire had no outspoken champions or antagonists in the Institute under the Empire, which confined it in this department of human thought to a consideration of historical incidents. The example of Napoleon in meddling with the literary commonwealth, and in imposing upon it as well as the state a "Code Napoléon," was too tempting to be neglected by the statesmen of the Restoration. Louis XVIII. had not been on the throne a year before an arbitrary decree leveled at the Institute was issued from the Tuileries. At first the restored Bourbon considered whether he should not abolish it altogether as a somewhat unruly child of the hated Revolution, and restore in its place the old Academies, which had been outgrowths of the purest legitimacy. The wisdom of his advisers persuaded him that this would be a dangerous expedient, and pointed out to him that he had accepted the throne as much a successor of the Revolution as of Louis XVI. Instead of pursuing his first purpose, therefore, the king contented himself with giving to the academies their old and honored appellations and dignities, and reconstructed the Institute by the exercise of an arbitrary authority over it. He proposed to make it the obedient servant and supple instrument of the court, to create in its place a literary senate which should be as dependent upon royal favor as the political senate of Napoleon had been upon the imperial will. He once more divided the Institute into a new classification of academies, and seized the occasion which this afforded to deprive twenty-two members, hostile to his régime, of their seats as members. Among these were Sieyès (Carlyle's "constitution-architect"), David, Carnot, Gregoire, and Lakanal, two of these having been founders of the body. They were replaced by the equally unprecedented appointment, by royal commission, of seventeen new members, who were nobles and courtiers, but not distinguished as *littérateurs* or savants. The reign of Louis XVIII. was notable for a remarkable revival in intellectual activity in France, and there was already at Paris a coterie of great thinkers and writers who might well claim a place among the judges of French letters. But none of these were found in the list which the king dictated to the Institute. The Comte de Vau blanc became an Academician, while Châteaubriand remained a literary layman outside its precincts. The cardinal principle

of the election by the academies of their own members was thus violated, and continued to be violated, by the king's usurpation of this right. This was fatal to the high rank the Institute had assumed in the eyes both of the literary guild throughout Europe and of the French people, even under the repressions of the Empire, for Napoleon never dictated who should be its members. The princes and principal nobles competed for the power of naming new members to the king, and, as M. Renan describes it, "the interest of serious studies was the least care of Academicians who were simply men of the world, and who valued their promotion chiefly for the privilege it conferred of carrying a sword and wearing an embroidered coat."

Better times were coming, however, for the Institute. A dynasty almost as literary as political, almost as free as monarchical, replaced the régime of the Restoration, which fell in consequence of political acts bearing a near resemblance to those which had so degraded the literary body. The Bourbons detested the pen, and fell by the retribution of the pen. The Revolution brought into power with the Citizen King a host of literary celebrities, of *doctrinaires*, of pamphleteers, and brilliant editors. All departments of science, art, and letters sprang into vigorous activity very early in the Orleansist reign. Charles X. had left the Institute full of legitimist courtiers, obsequious journalists, and second or third rate writers. Louis Philippe, or advisers of his so enlightened as Guizot, Thiers, and Périer, refused to follow the pernicious example of the restored Bourbon, by expelling these royally created Academicians from the Palais Mazarin. They bided the time when, by patience and regular processes, the Institute might be restored to its former dignity and authority. A course of conciliation toward the existing members had in time its effect. Meanwhile Guizot, who had his eye upon a *fauteuil* of the Academy for himself, set about reforming the Institute without interfering with its personal composition. A fifth academy, to whose deliberations was confided the department of Moral and Political Sciences, which had been virtually suppressed by Napoleon, was constituted by a new grouping of the members of the Institute. The subjects committed to it were philosophy (which M. Renan describes as not a science by itself, but the general spirit of all the sciences), morals, legislation, political economy, and statistics. This academy, or rather revival of a class created with the Institute itself, and endowed with a new name, was composed of the ten original members of it who still survived, of two later members of the class, and of eighteen new Academicians chosen by the nucleus thus formed, thus making the number of Acade-



J. Thiers

micians in the class of Moral and Political Sciences thirty. The minister refrained from either naming or influencing the choice of a single member. The growth of the Institute during the Orleans dynasty was rapid and substantial. Within the eighteen years between the revolution of July and the revolution of February the names added to the roll of the "forty immortals" of the French Academy comprised De Ségur, Viennet, Thiers, Guizot, Mignet, Flourens (father of the hot young Communist who was killed by the guns of Issy), Victor Hugo, Saint-Marc Girardin, Sainte-Beuve, Mérimée, and Remusat. The accession of the astronomer Arago to the Academy of Sciences gave to it an impulse which has not yet ceased to be felt, and one of its members claims that this Academy has been for thirty years "the scientific centre of Europe." Certainly in the results of its labors may be observed a very evident progress in the appreciation, definition, and classification of the sciences, and in confronting the works of the older French philosophers with the more modern product of scientific research. The Academy of Inscriptions, the name of which is derived from the fact that it originated in a commission of the old French Academy, appointed to make inscriptions for the medals of Louis XIV., but whose proper department comprises ancient literature and history and belles-lettres, felt the impulse given by the "régime littéraire," and counted among its new colleagues Le Clerc, Burnouf, Thierry, and Letronne.



DUC D'AUMALE.

By the time the revolution of 1848 was ripe, the Institute, besides having approached more nearly the ideal of its founders than ever before, and become a real power in the domain of human thought, had also got to be a very Orleanist body. Its confederated academies were full of statesmen, orators, and deputies, of political astronomers, poets, and historians, of journalists and publicists, of men active in public affairs as well as learned in the various branches of knowledge which the Institute cultivated and exemplified. This tinge of Orleanism it retains to this day, its two illustrious chiefs, Guizot and Thiers, having been the alternate pillars of that dynasty, and having continued ever since partial to the Orleanist traditions, despite the circumstance that the latter has been raised to the Presidency of the Republic. During the Second Empire the Institute may be said to have been the head-quarters of the Orleans constitutionalists, although this political bias was always kept religiously in the background, and the Academicians shrank, above all, from making it an arena for party dissensions, or an instrument of political intrigue. The political bias was, indeed, rather a philosophical leaning to monarchical constitutionalism than adherence to a name and a person. No sooner, however, had France become tranquil after the Communist defeat in 1871 than the French Academy, proceeding to fill two of its vacant *fauteuils*, chose not only M. Duvergier de Hauranne, a life-long and ardent Orleanist, whose chief distinction is the authorship of a history of the Restoration, in ten volumes, but also—and almost unanimously—the Duc d'Aumale, a son of King Louis Philippe, and, it must be added, a writer of very marked ability. During the republic of 1848-51 the Institute was necessarily agitated by many unusual questions, among which those which related to Fourierism and Socialism were imposed upon it by the times.

Within its fold were to be found many of the leading spirits of the Republic itself, and of the active opposition. Lamartine, Arago, Thiers, Hugo, Mérimée, De Remusat, were among its members—and Louis Blanc should have been. The *coup d'état*, the revival of personal government, and the repression of free and active political controversy which succeeded the establishment of the Second Empire, relegated the Institute to its peaceful philosophic, scientific, and literary labors. From first to last the "immortals" preserved a silent dislike and negative opposition to the régime of Napoleon III. During his whole reign, which continued for eighteen years, but a single imperialist was admitted a member of the Institute—M. Émile Ollivier—and his imperialism was of a quality too feeble to give his election the aspect of a dynastic triumph. There are those in France who think that the Emperor himself coveted the honor of an election to the French Academy, and that he hoped that this might be one of the rewards which he should receive for writing the *History of Julius Caesar*. Certain it is that his name was never seriously discussed by the Academicians themselves, and it is not less doubtful that if it had been proposed, it would have been rejected by a large majority.

According to M. Renan's view, the Institute is one of three intellectual estates in France, whence results "a sort of equilibrium," the other two being the government and the public. Neither should reign absolutely in the domain of thought. "These three great Mæcenases," he says, "are not always in harmony, and it is precisely their



M. ÉMILE OLLIVIER.



JULES FAVRE.

diversity which forms the guarantee of the liberty of thinkers, writers, and investigators. The academies, forming an irresponsible senate, often display narrowness, egotism, and passion; the government, having at its disposition superior means of action, at need corrects their unjust exclusions; while the public, with that crown of reward in its hands—success—amply consoles the excluded.”

The common funds of the Institute are administered by a general Finance Committee, composed of two from each of the five academies, this committee being presided over by the Minister of Public Instruction. As has already been said, new members, having been chosen by ballot in the academies, must be confirmed by the chief of the state. This fact gave rise to considerable conjecture when, two years before the Prussian war, the French Academy elected Jules Favre to fill one of its vacant *fauteuils*. The enmity of this great orator and tribune toward the Emperor had been for years irreconcilable, and had partaken of a personal bitterness. Would Napoleon confirm so great an honor to so obstinate a foe? He did so, and upon Favre's induction into the Academy, formally received him at the Tuileries, as it is customary upon similar occasions. The members of one academy are eligible to the others, and as a matter of fact several—such as M. Thiers and M. Renan—are now members of several of them. Each Academician receives a salary of fifteen hundred francs a year; and it is a custom to distribute silver counters to those members who are present, a fine being imposed for non-attendance, and, for persistent absence,

expulsion. It may be added that the Institute is composed of two hundred and twenty-three members, seven secretaries, thirty-five “Free Academicians,” thirty-one Associates, and two hundred and twenty-five Correspondents. The Free Academicians are honorary members of the academies, receiving no salary, and not being entitled to a vote, and all men of high rank, who, while possessing a taste for lore, have not time or inclination to pursue minutely the studies required of the regular members.

An account of this commonwealth of letters would be incomplete without some description of the character and operations of the principal of its confederated states—the French Academy. This has the greatest renown, and by an election to its membership confers the supreme honor to be obtained in the Institute. It was founded by Cardinal De Richelieu, in 1635, and is composed of forty colleagues. Its especial function in its modern form is to compile the dictionary of the French language, and all matters relating to the structure, extension, and purification of that language are intrusted to it. Among its recent or living members are to be found the names of Lamartine, Thiers, Guizot, Victor Hugo, Sainte-Beuve, Littré, Montalembert, Berryer, Jules Favre, Jules Simon, Jules Janin, Dupanloup, the De Broglies, Dufaure, Prevost-Paradol, Cuvillier-Fleury, Augier, Octave Feuillet, Chevalier, and Pelletan. Some lights of French letters are conspicuous for their absence from this list; Michelet, George Sand, Dumas *père* and Dumas *fils*, Edmond About, Renan, Edgar Quinet, Henri Taine, and Théophile Gautier still remain without the circle of the “immortals,” antagonisms of one sort or another having hitherto excluded



ANTOINE PIERRE BERRYER.



THE LATE COMTE DE MONTALEMBERT.

them. An instance of the vitality of the Academy under difficulties is the fact that it continued to meet regularly in Paris through the Communist insurrection, while the shells were falling on the city, and only adjourned when the Palais Mazarin seemed on the point of being burned to the ground. The functions of the Academy, besides that of purifying and fixing the language, are described to be "discussions on grammar, rhetoric, and poetry; critical observations on the beauties and faults of French writers, and the preparation of editions of classical French authors." The dictionary of the Academy is not yet completed, and perhaps never will be. Its regulations ordain that every member shall refrain from pledging his vote, when a vacancy is to be filled, until the ballot actually takes place. The aspirants for membership must make formal application for it, and, although the rules forbid them from electioneering, it is customary for them to pay a round of visits to the Academicians to solicit their suffrages. More than once Théophile Gautier has made this round of visits, hitherto, however, in vain. At the election of a new member the

secretary reads the list of candidates who have presented themselves, these only being eligible; he then reads the rules prescribing the mode of election, after which the president asks of each member if he has pledged his vote; if any one has done so he is excluded from the right of balloting. The voting then takes place, and a majority elects.

The Academy, like all aristocracies, has always been conservative, and has more than once shown an inclination to cling to old methods, and to look with distrust upon what is new. This was exhibited strikingly when the new "romantic" school, of which Lamartine and Victor Hugo were the high-priests, arose in France some forty years ago. This school took the French reading world by storm, and its departure from classical models

created the same furor in French literary circles that the revolt of Coleridge, Byron, and Shelley from the traditions of Pope and Dryden did in those of England. The perpetual secretary of the Academy declared it to be a "grave literary schism," and called upon the "immortals" to visit it with their Olympian displeasure. He pronounced the new poetry "barbarous," and said that it violated every literary canon. The new school, however, grew too strong to be ignored; and the election of Lamartine to a *fauteuil* in 1829 made a breach in the citadel, and was a triumph which led the way to the admission of the other principal romantic writers.

Notwithstanding such struggles, the Academy contrasts favorably with other French public bodies in the calmness, courtesy, and moderation of its discussions and differences. Sainte-Beuve said that the Academicians lived together as *confrères*, and that they never passed the limits of politeness. "Perhaps you are told," he says, "in the papers that such and such Academicians are at swords' points, and you are amazed, if by chance you happen to pass the quadran-

gle of the Institute on a Thursday at half past four, to see these same men come out together arm in arm, and talking as familiarly as possible." Still the debates are vigorously sustained, there are memorable points of rhetoric, and exhibitions of emulative eloquence and learning. The interminable dictionary affords a perpetual topic of agreeable discussions and conversations, in which the members are often prone to digress, wandering without order over the broad field of French letters, losing the original topic, and widening into affable general criticisms. "The Academy," says, once more, Sainte-Beuve, "is still the place where they talk the best about literature, and where one tastes most fully all the amenities of literary life." Repeated endowments, whose proceeds are to be devoted to prizes awarded by the Academy, have given into its hands a large and fruitful fund. The government accords annually the sum of 85,500 francs to be thus disposed of. Four thousand francs are awarded each year as prizes for eloquence and poetry; those for eloquence are competed for by eulogies, addresses, and critical essays on celebrated writers; those for poetry do not call out the highest efforts of the votaries of this art, for, as an Academician has well said, "Poetry seems to shrink from this sort of competition, from addressing itself to subjects dictated to its inspiration." A prize founded by the philanthropist Montyon is devoted to an annual reward to virtue, and is given to "that poor Frenchman who, during the year, has done the most virtuous action;" this prize amounts to 20,000 francs, and is usually divided among several "laureates." Another prize, founded by the same munificent personage, is intended to reward "the Frenchman who composes and publishes the most useful work on manners and customs," and is also 20,000 francs. De Tocqueville's great book on American democracy secured him the award of this prize. The Academy does not, however, confine itself strictly to the letter of the bequest, but selects for the award good translations, dramatic pieces, and books illustrative or explanatory of the French classics, having decreed it at different times to lexicons on Molière, Corneille, and Madame De Sévigné. Baron Gobert in 1833 instituted a prize of 10,000 francs, to be given for "the most eloquent work pertaining to French history;" the Academy usually divides this into two prizes, and has at different times awarded it to Augustin Thierry and Henri Martin. The Bordin prize, established in 1835, and amounting to 3000 francs, is devoted to works of "high class literature." This designation is broad enough to admit a wide range of works to competition, and the first award was to Ozanam's *Civilization of the Fifth Century*.



M. LITTRÉ.

Other prizes are given to a young writer "not favored by fortune, and who merits interest by his talent"—(this was awarded to M. Pommier, the poet, the first to receive it); to unfortunate men of letters, and widows and daughters of artists and writers; to "those men of letters, or the widows of such, whom it will be just to mark with some token of the public estimation;" to that work which the Academy shall judge the most remarkable as a literary or historical production, or most worthy as promoting morals; to the author of the best prose or poetical comedy which shall have been performed at the Théâtre Français in the course of the year; and to the author of the best poetical or prose translation from the Greek, Latin, or living languages. The Emperor Napoleon III., not to be behindhand as a patron of arts and letters—a distinction which he always affected, and in which he wished to seem to follow in the footsteps of Francis I. and Louis XIV.—established in 1860 a biennial prize of 20,000 francs from his privy purse, to be presented by the academies in turn "to the work or the discovery the most worthy to honor or to serve the country which shall be produced during the ten preceding years in the special order of labors which each of the five academies of the Institute of France represents." It fell to the lot of the French Academy to make the first award of this prize, and after long and warm discussion the Gallic vanity prevailed, and it was voted to M. Adolphe Thiers for his *History of the Consulate and Empire*. The veteran historian at once turned over the amount of the prize to the Academy again, with the stipulation that it should form the foundation of a triennial prize of three thousand francs to be given to "the author of a historical work the subject of which shall have been proposed by the Academy, and which shall seem to merit the award."

The French Academy is thus not only the supreme court of French belles-lettres, assigning a place and rank to the works which fall within its jurisdiction, and from whose decrees there is seldom a successful appeal to the *vox populi*, but also its patron and minister, dispensing rewards and crowning with honors. The literati who are not of "the forty" are fain to sneer at it, to call it antiquated and mediocre, a self-elected oligarchy, a coterie of divine-right legitimists in the world of letters; yet the fact remains that a chair in the Academy confers "the blue ribbon of French culture;" and hitherto no man of genius, when offered the distinction, has held himself too dear to accept it. Sainte-Beuve had too well poised a mind to permit himself extravagance of speech, even when speaking of the Academy, of which he was proud to be a member. He says that with all its faults, errors, and fluctuations, "the Academy remains an institution to be revered—which not only has a noble and interesting past, but which, well directed and advised, excited, re-awakened, renewed, may render great services in the midst of the universal literary diffuseness and dispersion."

Of the other four academies, which hold somewhat the same comparative rank to the French Academy that the heads of bureaus do to cabinet ministers, there is space to speak but briefly. The departments of learning over which the Academy of Inscriptions, which is composed of forty members, presides include languages, antiquities and monuments, translations, and archæology. This body, like its elder sister, awards various prizes, among them one for numismatics and one for works on French history. The Academy of Inscriptions issues certain publications, such as its "Memoirs," notices of manuscript memoirs on the antiquities of France, the literary history of France, collections of French histories, charts and documents relative thereto, letters of the French kings, and various catalogues. The Academy of Sciences, containing sixty-eight members, and divided into eleven sections, deliberates on topics of geometry, mechanics, astronomy, geography, navigation, general natural philosophy, chemistry, mineralogy, botany, rural economy, anatomy, zoology, medicine, and surgery. Many prizes are awarded by this academy, which also publishes regularly the reports of its meetings, the memoirs of its former transactions and researches, and, in general, such works of savants, not members, pertaining to its especial topics as it sees fit. The Academy of Fine Arts is composed of forty-one members, and is divided into five sections, whose respective subjects are painting, sculpture, architecture, engraving, and musical composition. The Academy of Moral and Political Sciences contains forty members, and its

sections are charged with considering philosophy, moral philosophy, legislation, public law, jurisprudence, political economy, statistics, history, and its philosophy. These academies have each weekly sessions, and on the occasion of the induction of a new Academician, whose inaugural essay is invariably a eulogy upon his predecessor, a favored portion of the public is admitted by tickets to the grand hall. The Parisians are as eager to attend one of these public sessions as to see a new play of Sardou or Dumas *filis*; for the audience is always select, the group of Academicians a distinguished one, and the addresses usually interesting. The tickets of admission are distributed on recommendation by the secretary of the Institute. At these public sessions, and at state ceremonies, the members of the Institute are dressed in black broadcloth suits embroidered with olive leaves in green silk.

Such, in brief, are the Institute of France and the academies which form its federal literary commonwealth. It was a conception worthy of a Greek imagination, and gives the first revolution one more title to the respect of posterity. The Institute has accomplished many valuable uses, not the least of which are the constant bringing together of scholars, occupied in widely different spheres of thought, in a familiar way, and the proffer of an honor, inciting young aspirants for the laurel to greater industry and mental effort, in order to attain a place among the "forty immortals;" its roll of names is illustrious, and includes all, or nearly all, the most famous French minds of the present century; and surviving as it does every political and religious convulsion, and flourishing as it does under whatever régime popular caprice imposes upon the nation, it seems destined to a long life and a fruitful career—and this can be predicted, unhappily, of but few French institutions.

WONDERS OF THE LOWLANDS.

JUST below Memphis, on the eastern shore of the Mississippi, there are two lofty mounds, one on the very verge of the elevated plateau on which the city stands, the other two hundred yards away. Of these the reader will find an accurate delineation in the great painting that adorns a broad space within the Rotunda of the Capitol at Washington. This work of art is designated "The Discovery of the Mississippi by De Soto." On the level plain at the base of the mound, one hundred feet above the river's surface, mail-clad warriors of Castile are gathered about the martial, towering figure of De Soto, while an Indian chieftain, surrounded by his warriors, does obeisance to the haughty Spaniard. One broad arm of the "inland sea" flows directly toward the setting sun, and another due