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THE HÔTEL DROUOT.

BY THEODORE CHILD.

I.

THE name of the Hôtel Drouot must be so familiar to all who are interested in the fluctuations and caprices of the modern art and curiosity market that it is hardly necessary to explain that such is the title of the great Parisian auction mart, so called from the Rue Drouot, the street in which it is situated. The complete official appellation of the establishment is Hôtel des Commissaires Priseurs; that is to say, of the commissioners licensed by government to appraise and sell by public auction all kinds of movables. Materially the Hôtel Drouot is an ugly square block, whose exterior aspect is as heavy as its interior arrangement is inconvenient. Indeed, the principal ornament of the monument consists in bills of all colors which paper the walls of the ground-floor with announcements of goods for sale, pictures, wines, medals, lace, animals, and

“Alle manere of chaffare,
Apes and japes, and marmosettes taylede,
Nifles, trifles, that littelle have availedé,”

poverty's “honest, mean habiliments,” the “household furniture and jewelry of Mlle. Pirouette, who is retiring from the profession,” or a curious collection of Cashmere and Indian stuffs, the “property of the late Maharajah of Mysore,” consigned directly from Manchester. In the cellars, the attics, and the eighteen sale-rooms of the hôtel, from year's end to year's end, there reigns an incessant carrying in and carrying out of every object which human industry has created, and a perpetual din of buying and selling, above which prevail the click of the auctioneer's hammer and the strident voice of the crier.

Let us enter the hôtel by the Rue Drouot, through the narrow and dirty swinging doors which bang harshly and pettishly all the afternoon, Sundays and week-days

alike, during the sale and exhibition hours, from one to six o'clock. Passing through the dingy vestibule, we mount a few steps, and find ourselves at the foot of a broad staircase on the right, while in front of us is a long dismal gallery, lighted on one side by windows looking on to a courtyard. This gallery, and the rooms to which it gives access are known to the habitués by the name of “Mazas”; it is a horrible pandemonium, haunted by marine-store dealers, old-clothes men (*marchands à la toilette*), low brokers, and commercial scavengers of all degrees, wreckers who gather up the flotsam and jetsam of misfortune, misconduct, satiety, sudden death, and suicide. In these rooms and in the adjoining court-yard are sold bankrupt stock; old clothes, furniture, and household goods seized for debt; the machines of unappreciated inventors; the forlorn accessories of by-gone happiness or of present misery. And in this region of the hôtel, the characteristic odor of which reminds us at once of a night refuge, a hospital, and an unventilated omnibus on a very wet day, lurk sharks and harpies on the watch for prey, Philistines, Hebrews, Auvernats, verminous, garlic-eating, inelegant, unpolished, unfragrant folk, uncomely in raiment, and with elbows rigid and pungent, and nails that are as the claws of unclean birds. Let us not stay in these foul dens, but ascend the grand staircase, without entering that little box-like room, half-way up, known as the “Salle des Colonies,” where you buy Rembrandts at three dollars a pair, frames included, and the whole for exportation. Upstairs is the real Hôtel Drouot, the rendezvous of the great amateurs and of the great dealers of the world, who make the latest quotations in *la haute curiosité*, the free school of taste where the critics and historians of our generation have begun and pursued their stud-

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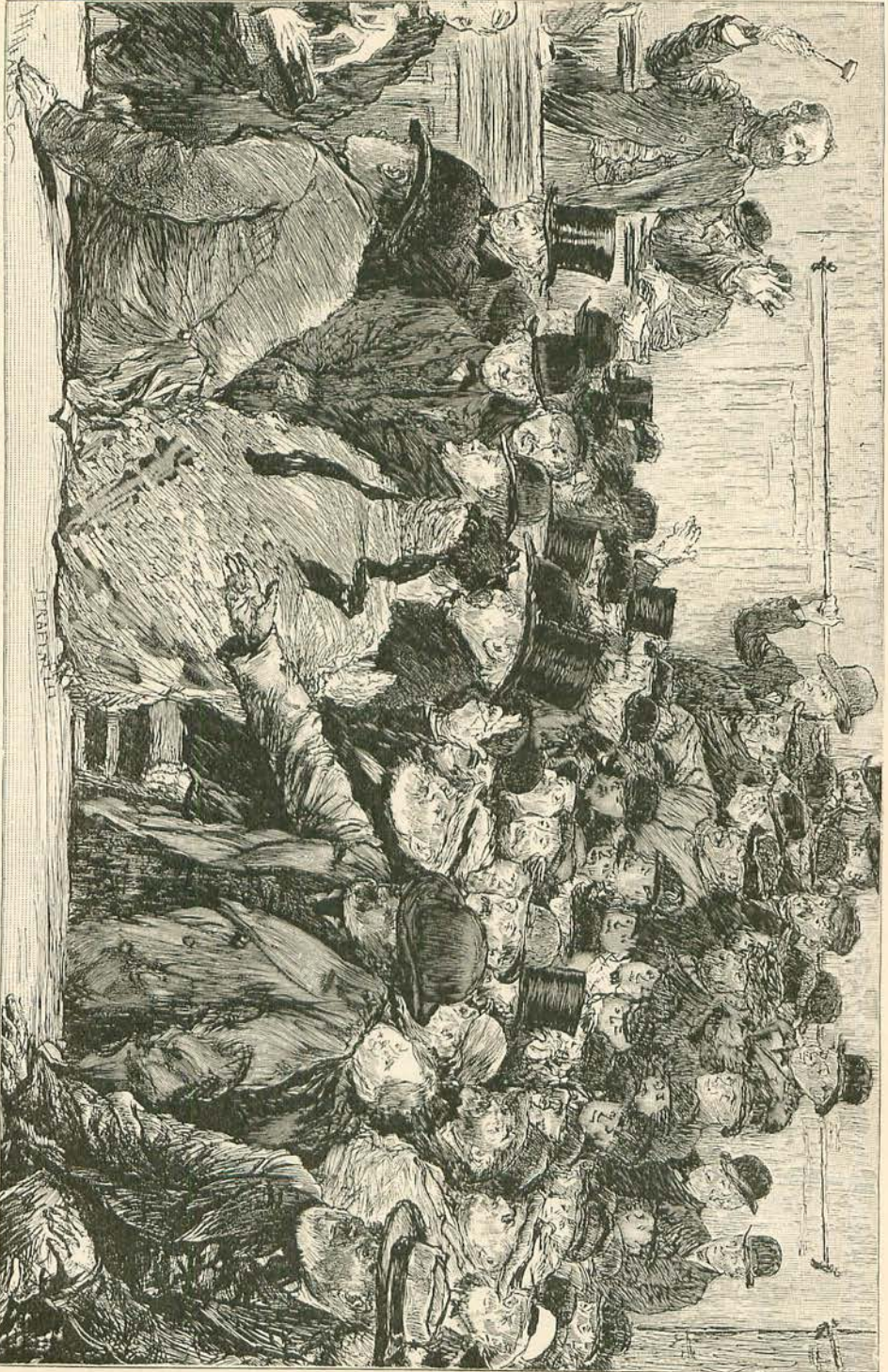
THE COMMISSIONAIRE.

ies, with the very objects of their researches brought gradually before their eyes by the hazard of successive sales. What one sees at the Hôtel Drouot can be seen nowhere else in the world, and this is the reason why men come there to see from London and from New York, from Vienna and from Amsterdam, from St. Petersburg and from Tokio. At the Hôtel Drouot were sold such splendors of the Summer Palace as escaped the flames, the library of the Emperor of China, his rare mantles of blue fox skin, his sceptre of jade, and his ceremonial robes embroidered with writhing dragons. In these rooms that open right and left on the broad lobby you may see almost any day during the season, and you may study, handle, smell, feel, and otherwise examine, better than you can in any museum or in the gallery of the most affable amateur, etchings, lithographs, line engravings, Japanese albums, manuscripts, drawings by all masters and of all schools,

arms of all nations and epochs, medals of the extremest rarity, marbles dug up in the soil of Greece or Italy, terra-cottas from Tanagra, prehistoric jewelry from excavations in Asia Minor, glass-ware from Murano, Hispano-Moresque dishes, salad bowls of old Nevers, tazzas from Urbino, Rouen plates, Sèvres soft paste, Flanders stone-ware, Venetian silk, Smyrna carpets, lacquer cabinets, all the products of all the industrial arts of all epochs, and all that the masters of Italy or of Flanders, of France or of Spain, have painted during centuries for princes and for convents, for grand seigneurs and for honorable corporations. The Hôtel Drouot is a museum and a library whose cases and shelves are being continually filled and emptied; a repository of erudition and of curiosity, where the thirsty student is never tantalized by the sight of sealed fountains of knowledge, and where a hundred lessons are to be learned daily, without fee, without constraint, and without text-books or professor.

In order to explain to the reader the mechanism of the Hôtel Drouot, we will give the history of a sale. I speak, of course, of a sale of a nature to interest the world of art and curiosity. As for the ordinary sales, the formalities are very simple. You call at the office of the Hôtel Drouot and make your declaration; the next morning vans come and carry away your things, and in the afternoon they are sold, at any price they will fetch, in one of the rooms in the "Mazas" region. If you have had the misfortune to be sold up by order of justice, your things will be sold still more brutally in the court-yard, amidst the confusion of removing vans coming in and out, and amidst the vulgar pleasantries of the *brocanteurs* of the lowest category; for the law orders that such sales shall take place *sur la place publique*, and in the open air. But for great sales all kinds of precautions are necessary, and the enumeration of these measures will give us an opportunity of studying briefly the population of the Hôtel Drouot.

First of all you must secure the services of a good auctioneer and a good expert. The auctioneers are eighty in number, and form a close corporation, created by a decree dated 27 Ventôse in the year IX. of the Republic, and definitively regulated by a law passed in 1843. The French auctioneers come under the category of



A SALE IN THE 'MAZAS' AT THE HOTEL DROUOT.



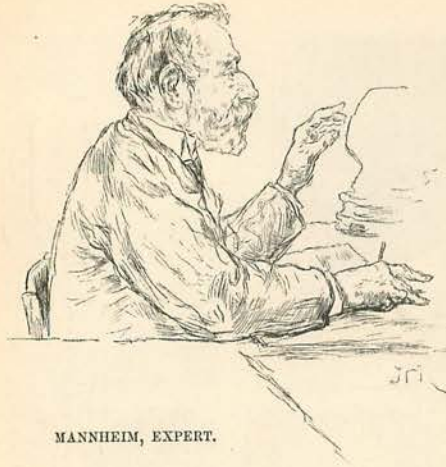
M. CHEVALIER, THE VIRTUOSE OF THE HAMMER.

"officiers ministériels," like notaries, recorders, sheriffs, etc., and those of Paris form a sort of syndical chamber, and have also the privilege of constituting themselves into a chamber of discipline, and of pronouncing censure or suspension against offenders. Furthermore, they have a right to sell their "charge" or the good-will of their business, and to recommend their successors, who, after approval by the Guard of the Seals, are nominated finally by the head of the state. The only requirements for becoming an auctioneer are French citizenship, having reached the age of twenty-five years, being generally considered competent, and of course having some means, for the public Treasury exacts caution-money to the amount of 20,000 francs from each auctioneer, and the good-will of a very ordinary and inglorious Parisian auctioneer's business is valued at 200,000 francs, while the famous "charges" cost five times that amount. Thus M. Charles Pillet paid his predecessor, M. Bonnefonds de Lavalie, more than a million francs for his good-will, and when M. Pillet sold out recently to M. Chevalier, who is at present the great *virtuose* of the hammer, more than a million francs changed hands once again. Now the leading members of the corporation of auctioneers have each one more or less a specialty, one selling fine furniture, another faïences or arms, an-

other pictures, another prints or books, while some drive their trade otherwheres than at the hôtel; as at Bercy, where they sell wines, or at Tattersall's, in the Rue Beaujon, where horses and carriages are brought under the hammer. The specialist auctioneer has his special public, knows the amateurs of objects of his specialty, has their addresses, is familiar with their faces and ways, and can altogether manage his sale of coins and medals, we will say, better than an auctioneer who is in the habit of selling pictures. A good expert is also useful. But who is a good expert? By what criterion shall he be judged? In fact, what is an expert? Very often the expert is simply a man who brings business to an auctioneer, who in return allows him to take a percentage on the proceeds. The expert is the hunter, the man who organizes sales, the purveyor of material on which the auctioneer can operate; but his existence is not recognized by law, and his percentage is regulated only by usage. Unlike the auctioneers, who have bought their position, who belong to an accredited association, and who are responsible before a committee of their peers jealous of the honor of the company, the experts are not formed into a corporation, they hold no diploma, nor are they bound to give proof of knowledge or special study. Any man can have "expert" in pictures, coins, or what not printed on his visiting card and on his letter-paper, and forthwith he may begin to operate, seeing below the surface of all sorts of things, and into their origin and history and intrinsic market value, drawing up catalogues, distinguishing between the first, second, and third manners of the masters, and pronouncing such a touch to be of the epoch and such another to be of recent date. Evidently the reputation of an expert is in his own hands; it cannot be improvised in a day, and when once achieved it can only be maintained by constant vigilance and untiring wariness; for nowadays every one who has to do with pictures or objects of art and curiosity must expect pitfalls at every step, and even the most perspicacious are never sure of escaping clever snares. The annals of the hôtel abound in stories of queer mistakes made by so-called experts: how one mistook the title of a picture, "Salvator Mundi," for the name of a "Venetian painter, rival of Salvator Rosa"; how another attributed to



SALE IN THE COURTYARD.



MANNHEIM, EXPERT.

Velasquez, who died in 1660, a portrait of Louis XV., who was born in 1710; how another offered a picture of a woman washing dishes as a "Portrait of Rubens's Wife, by himself," and volunteered the explanation that, "as everybody knew, Rubens married his cook." The men who are at the head of their profession are incapable of such gross ignorance as this; nevertheless, even experts of the highest grade are fallible. Thus quite recently an eminent Parisian dealer offered without hesitation 30,000 francs for an antique Persian mosque lamp, fabricated a few years ago at Vaugirard by the famous Brocart; and still more recently the most eminent expert in Paris asked in a sale the modest sum of 100 francs for a Hawthorn pot which, to his astonishment, sold for 4600 francs, and afterward went to England, where it was resold to a New York collector for \$2000. Hence it will be understood that the auctioneer, in order to avoid being compromised, often reserves the choice of an expert for himself. For objects of art in general, Mannheim, second of the dynasty, is the leading Parisian and European expert; Hoffmann and Feuardent are the great authorities on medals and coins; Porquet is infallible on books; Lacroix on engravings; and as for the experts in pictures, whether ancient or modern, they are so numerous

and so astute that I know not to which to give the palm or by which one to swear, so complex and difficult are the questions involved in expertizing.

Having your auctioneer and your expert, you proceed to get out your catalogue, which should, if possible, be preceded by a preface from the pen of some known art critic, and accompanied by illustrations, either etchings or photographs, of such valuable objects as are destined to be fought over by the amateurs. The catalogue costs dear, but it is necessary. Above all, it must be honest, practical, and readable, exact in nomenclature, and absolutely sincere in the descriptions of the objects. The sales where the highest prices are obtained are those of celebrated amateurs, either during their lifetime or after their decease. A picture fresh from a known collection will always sell dearer than a picture which a dealer has offered to fifty amateurs. Then, the catalogue being ready, you must choose a favorable time for your sale. The height of the season at the Hôtel Drouot is from March to the end of May, and the best day to begin your sale is Monday, because that day enables you to have a private view by card on the Saturday, and a public view open to all on the Sunday.

It is at these private and public views that the Parisians and the Parisiennes pick up their knowledge of bibelots, and that the *metteurs en scène* of the Hôtel Drouot display their skill and taste in arranging the objects in an effective manner, placing the statues on pedestals, hang-



HOFFMANN, EXPERT.

ing up the pictures, tapestries, and draperies, distributing the furniture around the walls, and displaying the precious bibelots in glass cases—improvising, in short, in the space of a few hours, an exhibition which shall enchant the eye of the public

back staircase to the front seats. Gradually the room fills, and the crowd penetrates into the "magasin," and rises row above row, perched on chairs, even behind the auctioneer's desk—a democratic crowd where rich and poor, bankers and princes,



A PRIVATE VIEW.

and appeal keenly to its purse. On the morning of the sale this exhibition is unmade, the objects are piled away at one end of the room or in the store-rooms, benches are brought in, and the elevated desk of the auctioneer is put in position behind a row of tables placed across the room so as to form at the same time a counter and a barrier between the buyers and the officials who conduct the sale.

It is two o'clock; the big double doors are opened, and the public rushes in, to find to its disgust that some privileged persons have already been admitted by a

great dealers and small mercanti, are all equal before the hammer. The auctioneer arrives and takes his place at his lofty desk, with on his right one or two clerks, who record the order of the "goings" and make out duplicate bulletins, one of which is stuck on to the object sold, by a dab of hybrid waxy paste peculiar in its composition to the hôtel, while the other is handed to the purchaser. To the right of the auctioneer's desk the expert takes his place at a table, and the open space between the auctioneer's desk and the range of tables which forms a counter and a



THE MASTER CRIER, DAIRE.

barrier is the stage of the crier, and of the commissionnaire who receives the objects for sale from the hands of the expert, hands them around, and holds them up in brawny arms for all to see.

The crier, or *crieur*, who corresponds in title and functions to the *præco* of the ancient Roman sales, the whole mechanism of which has been borrowed by the French, is the tenor of the little company of officials who conduct an auction. The master crier nowadays is Daire, who is looked upon in Paris as a model, because his voice never fails. At the age of twenty-two Daire entered the company of criers, and ever since he has been working, acting as crier in all the great sales of the last twenty years, beginning with the San Donato sale in 1870, where he made his début. "Do not sing; change the tone," was the famous Pillet's advice when he first secured Daire's services for his great art sales, and following this advice, Daire runs up and down the gamut from bid to bid with extraordinary ease, and with a clearness of enunciation and a force of voice truly wonderful. The warmer and the more excited the public, the more the lots bring; and knowing this, Daire reserves his voice for objects that are worth his while, and employs his whole force when he wishes to carry by storm and

rapid scaling the big bid of five or six figures, *la grosse enchère*. Perhaps of all the rôles in the comedy of the Hôtel Drouot that of the crier is the most fatiguing: on foot all the time from two to six while the sale lasts, the crier walks up and down in front of the auctioneer's desk, backward and forward, turning and turning like a squirrel in its cage; watching with eager eye dealers and amateurs behind him, before him, to the right, to the left; catching the imperceptible signs of those who are bidding and of those who cease to bid; repeating the price; encouraging; objurgating; following the lead of the auctioneer, and playing with him a feverish and bewildering game of vocal battledoor and shuttlecock; for the crier fills the first speaking rôle in the drama of a sale after the auctioneer, who is supported by him, and to whom he gives the antistrophe.

The commissionnaire is lower in the hierarchy of the hôtel than the expert



A GUARDIAN OF THE LOBBIES.

and the crier, and yet he is more official, for he belongs to a corporation, to enter which he must pay some 6000 francs as caution-money, and as his share in the horses and the moving-vans which are the property of the company; also he wears a uniform, a blue jacket faced with red and adorned with buttons of a fixed kind, and a cap withal after its kind, more than civil but less than military. His blouse also, which he wears over his uniform when doing rough work, has a special cut. These commissionnaires, who are generally Auvernats of

earn on an average twelve to fifteen francs a day, and many of them grow rich, retire to their native province, or set up in Paris in the bric-à-brac business. Finally, in this catalogue of the fixed and floating population of the hôtel, we must not forget the policeman, the old woman in a white nightcap whose business it is to mark prices on catalogues, the indulgent old pensioner who is charged with the guard of the lobbies, the idlers and spectacle-loving loafers, and those whose time is not money—seedy lilies and shabby wall-flowers who gaze and philosophize



“SEEDY LILIES AND SHABBY WALL-FLOWERS.”

very rustic and clumsy exterior, are men of great staying power, muscular force, and agility; and eagerly as the position is sought after, it is by no means a sinecure. From six in the morning till ten or eleven o'clock at night they have no rest except at meal-times, which are not long; the rest of the day they are carrying objects of all kinds; climbing up the walls of the exhibition-rooms; arranging and deranging, hanging and unhangng pictures, carpets, tapestries; transporting now an iron safe and now a set of Sèvres china, and never letting fall one or the other. And for all this hard work they

and fall asleep, neither toiling nor spinning, but limiting their efforts to seeking gratis warmth in dull winter days.

The sale begins with the usual announcement that purchasers will be required to pay a tax of five per cent. on their bids, and then the expert passes some object to the commissionnaire, indicating the catalogue number.

“We are selling No. 147.”

“Number 147 of the catalogue,” repeat the auctioneer and crier in clear tones.

“Landscape by De Croûte; we ask 200 francs,” says the expert.

“Two hundred francs, the landscape by

De Croûte," repeats the crier. "A price. Let us begin. How much?—190, 180, 150, 100 francs?"

And still the house gives no sign.

The expert's first announced figure is generally somewhere near what he, from his large experience, judges the object will really bring, all things being considered; and an expert prides himself on fixing that sum within very narrow limits. Indeed, if his demand is either very far from being attained or very much exceeded by the bidding, the fact tells against him, and indicates that he is not absolutely in touch with the market, or, in other words, that he is not thoroughly in the swim.

Finally, the gradation of tentatory falls is interrupted by an echo from the house, which cries, "20 francs," and the ascensional movement begins. "20 francs—il y a marchand," breaks forth briskly from the lips of crier and of auctioneer, who then go on repeating the bids: "20, 30, 35, 60, 70, 80, 85," up to 100, when there is a pause.

"Not to the right," insinuates the auctioneer.

"By me the bid of 100 francs," says the crier.

"En veut—on au-dessus de 100 francs?" asks the auctioneer, while the Argus eyes of both search the crowd and fish for bids with wordy bait and alluring glances.

"100 francs le paysage; c'est donné; c'est pour rien à 100 francs; suivons, messieurs... suivons... dépêchons nous... 110 francs. Nous sommes deux... 115 francs... on demande à voir, 115... c'est par moi, en face... on y renonce... non?... j'adjudge... personne ne dit mot... pressons nous... non?... c'est bien vu... c'est ici à ma droite 115 francs le paysage... c'est bien vu... il n'y a pas d'erreur... par de regrets... on ne dit rien? un, deux, trois... c'est bien vu... adjudgé 115 francs," and the ivory hammer strikes the desk with a dry, angry tac. Such is a type of Hôtel Drouot eloquence, and such the series of formulæ pronounced, with but slight verbal variations, over each object which is brought under the hammer.

Except in the case of prints, books, and medals, the experts do not follow the order of the catalogue, but reserve the best objects for the moment when bidding has grown warm and the public becomes excited. At the beginning of a sale the

expert puts up minor objects, by way of kindling-wood, as it were, and he, the crier, and the auctioneer get to work stoking and blowing until the house grows more and more combustible, and the atmosphere more and more unfragrant. And for three or four hours the expert goes on announcing the objects, while the auctioneer and the crier continue their strophe and antistrophe of identical phrases, the whole with sharper or more lazy intonations, and with infinite variety of emphasis and modulation.

At one moment the bids cease; then, as the hammer is about to fall, they start again on a fresh steeple-chase; and in the midst of all these bidders, whose only care seems to be to conceal their desires, to make no gestures, and to utter no sound, the auctioneer and the crier watch for a grimace, a wink, a tilting of a hat and twitching of a lip, the opening or closing of a catalogue, the scratching of an ear, the pulling of a button, divining by an admirable instinct the bid before it has been formulated in the mind of the amateur, extracting it from his will by magnetic tyranny, by a caressing appeal, by a desperate supplication. "Le mot, messieurs?" repeat the auctioneer and the crier, sometimes humbly, sometimes imperiously, sometimes triumphantly; and by the *mot*, or "word," they mean the conversion of the last bid into round numbers. For a preceding bid of 19 francs "le mot" means 20 francs, and for a last bid of 99,000 francs "le mot, messieurs," means 100,000 francs; and whenever this figure is attained at the hôtel it is the custom of the assembly in the crowded and deoxygenated room to express their relief from tension by hand-clapping and great sub-diaphragmatic "ahs!" such as orators and actors count among the most grateful signs of triumph.

Now we come to the cost of a sale, and in the first place it may be remarked that the exorbitant tax of five per cent. referred to above does not diminish the expenses of the vender, as one might expect, and as would appear just. For instance, to take a typical case, at the sale of the gallery of Maréchal Soult in 1852, the French government had to pay for Murillo's "Conception," now in the Louvre, nearly 30,000 francs to cover the five per cent. tax over and above the price of 586,000 francs at which the picture was knocked down. On the other hand,

the heirs of Maréchal Soult paid to the corporation of Commissaires Priseurs a tax of ten per cent. on the sale price, which made 58,600 francs; so that the expenses of the sale of this one picture amounted to nearly 90,000 francs, which is evidently exorbitant. Nor is there any legal authority for exacting this tax. Like many other abuses at the Hôtel Drouot, its only authority is usage, for the law only allows the auctioneers to receive fixed emoluments, consisting in fees for each operation, and a tax of six per cent. on the total proceeds of the sale, half of which percentage is paid by them into the Common Purse. In practice a sale at the Hôtel Drouot may cost the seller from eight to twenty-five per cent., according to the object sold, to the nature of the catalogue, and to the amount of advertising resorted to; and in this figure are included the auctioneer's percentage, the room rent of 80 to 100 francs a day, the services of the crier, who is paid 10 francs a séance, and does not refuse "tips," the fee of the expert, which is usually three per cent. in sales of objects of art, and six or even more in sales of books and autographs, and finally certain minor expenses as sundry as they are mysterious. In reality, out of the eighty members of the Corporation of Commissaires Priseurs five or six have a reputation which enables them to monopolize all the great sales of pictures, curiosities, and objects of art; but their success is of advantage to the whole corporation, inasmuch as they pay three per cent. on the total of their sales into the Common Purse of the company. This Common Purse, or Bourse Commune, is divided into equal parts every two months, and distributed amongst the eighty members. Each part is generally equivalent, at the *lowest* average estimation, to 20,000 francs a year, which implies a total of business amounting to some sixty million francs' worth of objects sold to the highest bidder in the course of the twelve months, comprising 46,000 pictures, 30,000 drawings, 120,000 engravings, 30,000 autographs, and 150,000 objects of art and curiosities. This prodigious commercial movement brings to the Hôtel Drouot some 2500 Parisian dealers in objects of art, besides an indefinite number of dealers and merchants from the provinces, and from England, America, Italy, Spain, Germany, Holland, and the East, whose custom helps to



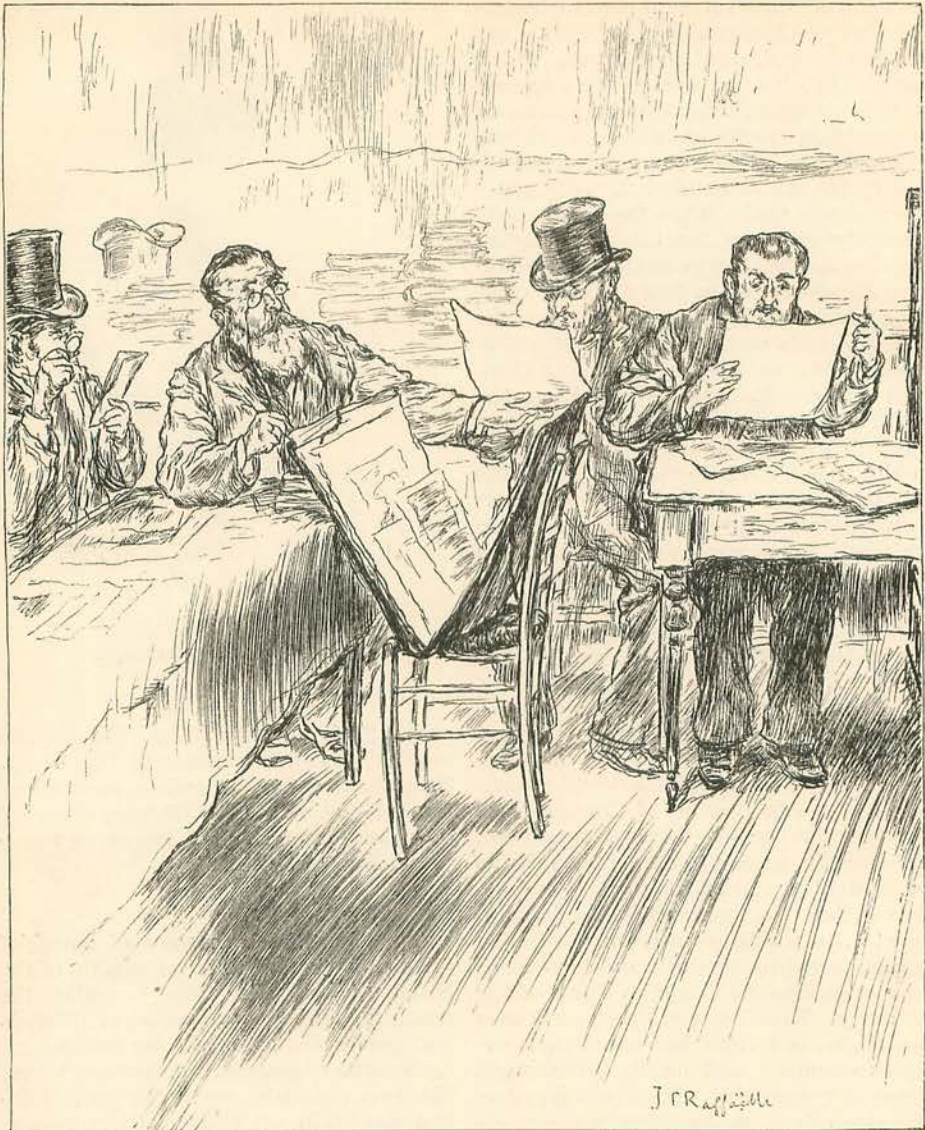
HABITUÉE OF THE SALES-ROOM.

make Paris and the Hôtel Drouot the greatest curiosity market in the world. There have been years when the total of the sales at the Hôtel Drouot exceeded one hundred millions of francs, or twenty millions of dollars.

II.

We have now seen some of the chief types amongst the fixed population of the Hôtel Drouot; but there remains the floating population of brokers of all kinds and grades, dealers of all degrees and all nationalities, amateurs, collectors, idlers, loungers, victims, dupes, and dupers. Limited space will not allow us to study each and all of these types. Let us therefore make our choice, and speak of the amateur, of collecting, and of the signification and utility of this singular form of human energy.

When the present Hôtel Drouot was opened in 1854 a series of famous sales had restored vigor to every department of curiosity and art products, both of this century and of the past. Pictures, prints, enamels, books, faiences, medals, porcelain, furniture, autographs, antiquity, the middle ages, the eighteenth century, and modern times, high-class curiosities, and minor curiosities arrive pell-mell and in-



SALE OF ENGRAVINGS.

undate the market. The torrent is irresistible, and carries along fashion and the public; sales engender amateurs, the amateurs engender sales; one gives rise to the other, and the dealer helping both, the commerce in curiosities and objects of art has come to assume during the past thirty years proportions previously unparalleled.

The chief characteristic which distinguishes the modern collectors from the collectors of the past is the limitation of their fields of activity and the develop-

ment of the commercial side of collecting. There is something dry and positive about the very word collector which the old word "curieux" or "amateur" did not suggest. "Collection" is convenient for catalogues and advertising, and nowadays the man who forms a collection, in France at least, invariably sells it sooner or later, unless he belongs to some financial dynasty, or unless he is rich enough or generous enough to bequeath his treasures to a museum.

However, whether a collection be made for the pure and simple joy and interest of possession, or whether there be a super-added intention to sell at some opportune moment, its general usefulness remains clear and unquestionable. Philosophers and moralists discovered centuries ago that a gallery of pictures or statues or a library full of fine books has not the virtue of making their possessor a grammarian, a sculptor, or a painter. Hence they have concluded that collecting objects of art is a matter of vanity or of speculation, when it is not a form of lunacy. And still, patient and tenacious, the race of collectors has survived and will survive eternally, because it has its roots in intelligence and in the human heart, because the collector is a classifier of documents for historians and archæologists, a guardian of the archives of art, a resuscitator of forgotten industries, a creator of a visible and tangible panorama in the contemplation of which artists, artisans, and appreciative laymen alike find pleasure and profit. Thus one man, we will say, collects clocks, but only clocks made before 1600; another collects ceramics, but only French ceramics, and only French ceramics of the sixteenth century; another buys and studies only objects of the fifteenth century, and not of the fifteenth century in France or Flanders or Spain or England, but of the fifteenth century in Italy. And so each one marks out a special field, which he tills thoroughly, and plants and trims and weeds out, and prepares for the critic who comes and reaps his harvest of deductions and generalities. The specialist collector is a perpetual sifter and classifier, a trainer of his own eye and of the eyes of others, an unconscious purveyor to the great national collectors, which are museums.

Whatever department we examine, the same phenomena present themselves. The amateur appreciates; his intelligence lying in his eye, the sense of vision becomes in him the *imperator* sense, and his eye, like the great eye of Osiris, is eternally scanning the domain of artistic industry in search of that which is beautiful, appropriate, and charming. And by his approval and admiration he creates a reputation for objects and styles, and by being subjected to criticism and comparison the finest objects acquire special renown, and after a more or less lengthy trial period, their good fame having with-



AMATEUR.

stood all attacks and tests, these objects are battled for by rich individuals, who would fain keep them for their own enjoyment, and prevent them being bought by museums for the joy of the nation. But in the end the nation triumphs; the works of the past become the collective property of the present; the glory of the artist and the monuments of his genius become the joy and pride of humanity. Gradually and inevitably the museums will absorb all the great and fine specimens of the art and curiosity of the past. Already, with few exceptions, the relics of antiquity are immobilized in museums, and the soil of Asia, of Greece, and of Rome now rarely yields up new treasures wherewith to replenish the market; already the monuments of Byzantine and mediæval art are lodged definitively in national treasure-houses, or in the hands of half a dozen individuals whose galleries are the vestibules of national museums; already the objects of the sixteenth century are so rare that it is a hopeless task to attempt any longer to form a completely representative collection of the arts of that period; every branch of ceramic ware, both European and Oriental, seems to have

been exhaustively studied, and in the museums of South Kensington, the Louvre, Dresden, Vienna, Limoges, Sèvres, the Museum of New York, and in the great private collections of America, which we hope may one day become national property, there are adequate and representative specimens of the best work of Eastern and Western potters. So it is with every department of the art of the past. In course of time the democratic museum will absorb all that is worth absorbing; and so long as there remain rich amateurs who desire to possess fine specimens of these arts for their own personal enjoyment, so long will the prices continue to increase whenever by rarer and rarer chance there appears in the market an object which has yet escaped absorption.

Gradually the number of amateurs has become sufficient to enable men to gain their livelihood by dealing exclusively in these relics of the past, and the critics and historians aiding, a great commerce has grown up around them, and finally the industrial as well as the fine arts have come to be recognized as being matters of national importance: hence the creation of museums. The progress is from the individual to the community; from the private collector to the nation considered as a collector in its museums; from the isolated artist to the dealer who sells the products of many artists; from the isolated dealers to a huge impersonal distributor, the Hôtel Drouot, which, thanks to the hazards of commercial locality, and thanks especially to the intelligence and capacity of French experts, critics, and organizers, has gradually grown to be the acknowledged centre of the commerce in fine and industrial art products, so far as Europe is concerned. The Hôtel Drouot acts at once as a distributor and as a filter or test which separates the good from the bad, centralizes the judgments of competent persons, and enables them to impose their decisions upon the public of amateurs, and finally upon civilized humanity in general. Often this filtering process goes on for years, and the test is applied slowly in order to be the more sure. Nor is it complete until the reaction has followed the action, and the mean and equitable opinion been established, neither above nor below that which is just. As regards paintings of the old masters, we may consider the filtering process to be now complete,

and we are not surprised to read in the prose of some learned observer that the trade in pictures by the ancient masters has now reached the last phase of senility. Why is this? Because the mean and definitive opinion of Western humanity has been formed, because the national museums have absorbed nearly all the fine works of the past, and because the terrible inquisitiveness of modern criticism has rendered it difficult for pictures without genuine good birth and spotless credentials to usurp titles and pedigrees to which they have no right. Consequently unsophisticated and properly accredited old masters are rarely met with in public sales. Hence it is that the Hôtel Drouot has become the great mart of modern pictures, many of which are already being drafted in their turn into the national museums as rapidly as the greed of wealthy individuals will allow, and as rapidly as the testing process is completed and ratified by the high price accompanying acknowledged excellence.

It is interesting, perhaps, to note that this very characteristic commerce in modern pictures is peculiar to the present century, and dates only from about 1825. During the First Empire, as in the eighteenth century and previously, the French amateurs bought from contemporary artists directly either in their studios or at the annual Salons. Then when Géricault, Bonington, Delacroix, Ary Scheffer, and Decamps opened up a new path, the stationers and color dealers, like Giroux and Susse, bought from the artists water-colors, studies, and pictures, which they sold with a small profit, or "hired out to provincial art students." But special shops for the exclusive sale of modern pictures, now so numerous in Paris, did not exist before about 1848,* and the present high quotations in modern pictures, as well as in all kinds of objects of art and curiosity, have been produced and ratified by operations at the Art Exchange of the Hôtel Drouot within the past thirty years. The history of these prices would be the history of modern taste in art matters and

* High prices for modern French pictures date from 1849. The Universal Exhibition of 1855, showing for the first time the ensemble and power of the French school, was the signal for a fresh rise in prices, which continued until 1870. In 1873 and 1878 further marked rises were obtained; and of late years American collectors especially have paid absolutely unparalleled prices for modern French painting.

the history of the Hôtel Drouot, of all the great collectors and collections of the past fifty years, and also of the most eminent experts and auctioneers, whose influence has directed the money of collectors and amateurs into certain channels. Such was Francis Petit, the dealer and expert through whose hands passed most of the work of the modern French school, headed by Troyon, Daubigny, Rousseau, Diaz, Meissonier, Millet; and such the famous auctioneer Charles Pillet, who during the twenty-six years of his career contributed largely to pushing up the prices of fine curiosities and old pictures, and directed almost every great sale that happened in France after he came into office in 1855, while in every sale he succeeded in obtaining a typical or epoch-making price for certain objects. Thus at the sale of the Duchesse de Berry in 1864 he sold a small manuscript Hour-Book, measuring 4 by 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches, which had belonged to Henri II. and Catherine de Medicis, for the then unparalleled sum of 60,000 francs. In 1865, at the sale of the Prince de Beauvau, he knocked down a Louis XVI. lady's bureau, 32 by 18 inches, enriched with bronzes of Gouthière, given by Marie Antoinette to Madame de Senone, one of her ladies of honor, for 60,000 francs. At the Morny sale in 1864 Rembrandt's "Doreur," now in America, was knocked down for 155,000 francs. In 1865, at the Poutalès sale, which first set modern French amateurs seriously in search of fine antiques, the small portrait, 14 $\frac{1}{2}$ by 10 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches, by Antonelle da Messina, was knocked down by Pillet to the Louvre Museum for 113,500 francs, and the Giustiniani head of Apollo for 50,000 francs to the British Museum. Under Pillet's direction the Demidoff sales in 1863, 1868, 1869, 1870, and 1880 produced a total of fifteen millions of francs. In the 1868 sale an antique cameo engraved on Oriental onyx, paid 25,000 francs at the Allègre sale, fetched 170,000 francs; a Cuypp, 140,000 francs; Hobbema, 110,000 francs; Terburgh's "Congress of Munster," 182,000 francs. At the 1869 sale Tenier's "Fish-Market" fetched 159,000 francs. At the Demidoff sale in 1870, "Broken Eggs," by Greuze, was knocked down to the Baron Adolphe de Rothschild for 126,000 francs; and a soft-paste Sèvres service of 172 pieces, turquoise blue ground, was bought by Lord Dudley for 255,000 francs, the highest bid on which Pillet's hammer ever fell.

Nowadays the prices obtained for *pâte tendre* are fabulous, and the limit has not yet been reached, for the fine pieces are immobilized in the collections like those of Queen Victoria, of Sir Richard Wallace, and of the London and Paris Rothschilds; and such specimens of fine quality as still occasionally come into the market are literally priceless. There is no longer any quotation given for *pâte tendre*, and the progression of fancy prices is constant. For instance, at the Lord Pembroke sale in 1851 three ovoid vases, *bleu de roi*, decorated with medallions of seaports, were knocked down at 28,000 francs. At the San Donato sale in 1870 an enamelled apple green vase with a profile of Louis



A BIBLIOPHILE.

XV. in relief, a broken and restored piece, fetched 40,000 francs; at the San Donato sale in 1880 an urn-shaped vase, design of Morin, 31,000 francs; three jardinières, commode shape, designs by Morin, 44,500 francs; a larger and similar set of three jardinières, designs by Dodin, 94,500 francs. In 1881, at the Double sale, two vases decorated with medallions of the battle of Fontenoy, 17 inches high by 23 inches in diameter, the largest soft-paste vases known, originally purchased by M. Double for 50,000 francs, were bought in by the family at 170,000 francs. The so-called Buffon service, decorated with birds, 107 pieces, fetched 95,000 francs. A single plate of a service made at Sèvres in 1778 for Cath-

erine of Russia, 6400 francs; a single plate with the monogram of Madame du Barry, 2150 francs. In 1884, at the sale of the Marquis d'Osmond, a fan-shaped jardinière, dated 1757, Pompadour rose, decorated with flowers and palm leaves, fetched 59,100 francs; a pair of Louis XV. vases, compositions by Boucher, 86,100 francs; and a pair of Louis XVI. vases decorated with roses, 65,000 francs.

Certain other rarities in ceramics are likewise priceless—for instance, the so-called Oiron or Henri II. ware, a specimen of which in the Hamilton sale in 1882 brought more than £1200. Palissy ware also, though rarely possessing great artistic merit, brings enormous prices, owing to its rarity; for instance, at the Lafaulotte sale in 1886 a round Palissy dish with eight medallions in relief on the rim, allegories of the Arts and Sciences, and with figures and cartouches in the centre, was knocked down at 25,700 francs. The pedigree of this dish illustrates the progress

of prices in this specialty very eloquently. In the first place it must be remembered that when Sauvageot first began to collect Palissy ware at the beginning of the century he made a point of never paying more than 100 francs a piece, and few of the specimens now in the Louvre were bought at a higher price. The round dish in question was originally bought by Malinet, the dealer of the Quai Voltaire, from an amateur of Nevers, for 500 francs; Malinet sold it to Prince Soltykoff for 5000 francs; and at the Soltykoff sale in 1861 Pillet sold it to M. Lafaulotte for a bid of 10,000 francs.

Italian faience is likewise a great craze with a number of European collectors, of whom the first were Rattier and Eugène Piot, the prophets and pioneers of this specialty. At the Fau sale in 1884 a Gubbio plate by Maestro Giorgio, dated 1530, restored, fetched 4500 francs; an Urbino plate, 7050 francs; a Caffagiuolo, white upon white, or *bianco sopra bianco*, as



BROKERS IN THE "MAZAS."

the initiated say, fetched 5150 francs; and a large round plate, with metallic reflections, and in the centre the bust of a woman, fetched 16,200 francs. At the Soltykoff sale in 1861 this same plate was sold for 1500 francs. At the Château de Langeais sale in 1887 a Caffagiuolo plate decorated with a figure of St. Geneviève brought 9300 francs.

In Chinese and Oriental porcelain the Drouot Exchange cannot compare in big prices with the exchanges of New York and London; nevertheless it is French collectors like Sechan, De Goncourt, Marquis, Du Sartel, Barbet de Jouy, Grandidier, and experts like Sichel, Bing, and Jacquemart, who have contributed more

than any others toward the classification, lucid description, and reasoned appreciation of the ceramic ware of the far East, studying qualities of paste and artistic perfection in decoration, and carefully avoiding the absurd crazes which have been provoked in other countries by the discovery of such designations as "mustard yellow," "crushed strawberry," and "peach-blow." Nor have the Parisians ever been in touch with the Londoners, whom the painter Whistler started in desperate chase after blue and white, and after hawthorn pots with or without their lids, for a pair of which English collectors, when the craze was at its height, some ten years ago, paid as much as £1000.

DAKOTA.

BY P. F. McCLURE.

ABOUT half-way between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, on the northern boundary of the republic, is situated a Territory greater in area than either the kingdoms of Norway, Great Britain, or Italy, and more extensive than the combined surfaces of Maine, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Vermont, Rhode Island, New York, Maryland, two Massachusetts, three Delawares, three Connecticuts, and a half-dozen Districts of Columbia, all united in one. This is Dakota, whose Indian name, signifying leagued, aptly describes her population, drawn from every State of the Union, from all nationalities of the globe, and banded together with the one purpose of founding a home and enjoying the comforts and independence that word implies.

Attempts at settlement for agricultural purposes date from 1856, but the handful of pioneers, confined to the most southerly counties, were constantly harassed and frequently driven from their homes by hostile Indians, so that the increase of population was not noticeable until after the close of the civil war.

Congress created the Territory of Dakota in 1861, and President Lincoln, in the same year, appointed Hon. William Jayne, of Illinois, the first Governor. Eleven years after this date the building of two lines of railway across the eastern boundary—one coming from Minnesota and the other from Iowa, and the discovery of gold in the Black Hills by the expedition under General Custer in 1874,

led to a decided activity in the settlement of the Red River Valley, in the north, the counties of the extreme southeast, and the rich mineral district of the west—a growth which, spreading with each succeeding year, marks one of the most marvellous epochs in the history of the population of the West.

The national census of 1860 gave Dakota a population of less than 5000; that of 1870, 14,000; of 1880, 135,000; and five years later this number had increased, as shown by a federal census, to 415,610. Governor Church, in his annual report to the Secretary of the Interior (June 30, 1888), says that the present population of the Territory is 640,823.

Illinois, Kansas, or Minnesota may boast of prairie-land, but nowhere else in America is there a plain so even, broad, and gently undulating as the vast surface of Dakota, an expanse equivalent in length to the distance separating New York city and Cleveland, Ohio, and as far across in breadth as from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, to Raleigh, North Carolina. An occasional mound or collection of buttes, the low hills of the Plateau du Coteau du Missouri, and the broken borders of the larger streams and lakes, give a slight and pleasing irregularity to such an ocean of level land. The Black Hills, covering nearly four counties, in the southwest, are the only considerable elevations within the Territory. Harney's Peak is 8200 feet high. The surface in general is free from rocky