

CORRESPONDENCE.

Exhibition Items. The advantages of an unsystematic inspection. Indignation of Exhibitors on account of delays in Awards. Sympathetic corsets and aesthetic soap. Sharp practice of an exhibitor. The Ribbon and Cross of the Legion of Honor brought to ignoble uses.

PARIS, Sept 18th, 1878.

Happy the scribe—and I am he, who is not called upon to describe the Exposition Universelle in a systematic manner, and who has nothing whatever to do with the wrongs of the exhibitors, and the high-handed doings of M. Krantz, Commissary General, and *Grande Bete Noire* of the Trocadero and the Camp de Mars. "The ferocious engineer" is the mildest qualification which the majority of the Paris newspapers can find for the energetic Commissary General; and at least twice a week a flaming leading article appears in some organ of public opinion, demanding the instant dismissal from office of a functionary whose most grievous offence appears to be that he cannot please everybody. A similar incapacity, it will be remembered was the misfortune of a certain old gentleman in remote antiquity who had a donkey. At this present moment an avalanche of abuse is descending on the devoted head of the Commissary General, because the distribution of prizes is to be delayed until the 21st of October, ten days before the close of the Exhibition itself, and because M. Krantz obstinately refuses to publish before hand a complete list of the medals and diplomas to be awarded by the juries. There are, it is said, 10,000 awards, and some 2,000 persons—jurymen, officials, copyists, and so forth—are necessarily in the secret of who is to have anything and who nothing; but on the other hand, there are 52,000 exhibitors, who angrily deprecate the leaking out of partial revelations, and call for the publication of a full, true and particular list of the recompenses which are to be given. All that M. Krantz has hitherto condescended to do is to hang up, in the Vestibule d'Honneur, a very handsome drawing on tinted paper, in sepia, heightened with Chinese white, which drawing is the model of the diploma to be conferred on meritorious exhibitors. It is a beautiful work of art; but as yet it is not more highly appreciated by the expositors than a bridal cake in a confectioner's shop window would be, when you knew that somebody was going to be married, but when you were totally unaware whether there was any intention of asking you to the wedding supper. The rage of the exhibitors at the postponement of the *tableau* of rewards has at least one highly diverting aspect. The following is in substance their plea: "You deprive us," they say, to M. Krantz, "of the means of selling our goods. You are spoiling our market. If we got gold medals, there will be an immediate and extensive demand for our wares; and orders will flow in proportionately if we receive silver or bronze medals, or even honorable mentions; whereas, if we have to wait until the 21st of October for our deserts to be recognized, the commercial travellers of the great foreign firms will have left Paris. We shall have lost a whole six weeks' prestige among wealthy visitors, willing to buy, but preferring to wait until they can make their purchases from medalists—or 'laureates,' as these ambitious tradesfolk term themselves—and after the 21st we shall have little more to do than to pack up, with the deplorable consciousness that our medals of 1878 are, in a business sense of no more use to us than our analogous decorations of 1855, of 1862, of 1867, and of 1873." I have heard that one ingenious fabricant, say of Aesthetic soap or sympathetic corsets, exasperated at the official delay which is keeping his exalted merits in the shade, placed in his case of exhibits a placard bearing the inscription in illiputian and brobdingian characters, respectively "Expecting to obtain the Gold Medal," "Gold Medal" was in portentous capitals; "Expecting to Obtain" in microscopic letters. But one of Mr. Krantz's alquazils was very soon "down" on the inventive fabricant, and he was sternly admonished to remove this obnoxious sign and nourish his

hopes in secret. He declares, however, that justice shall eventually be done to the Aesthetic soap or the sympathetic corset, and that following the example of Piron, the satirist, who desired that there should be graven on his tombstone the epitaph:

Ci-ge-Piron, que ne fut rien,
Pas meme Academicien.

He will style himself, should the unintelligent jury of his class dare pass him over, "X", not the medalist of the Exposition of 1878.

I repeat that this outburst of indignation among the Paris tradespeople is, from a certain point of view, diverting, because it is a candid admission on their part that they look on the Exhibition simply and solely as a shop, and on a medal or a diploma as an advertisement of their goods. Was this the Prince Consort's notion of an exhibition of the industry of all nations, I wonder? Several manufacturers have been permitted to exhibit in their *vitruines* all the honorific distinctions which they have gained at exhibitions in different parts of the world during the last five and twenty years. In one glass case I noticed the ribbon and cross of the Legion of Honor. Did Napoleon the Great ever dream, I wonder, that the renowned order of chivalry which he founded, would be the means of puffing the makers of chocolate and stay busts and false teeth?

But the exhibitors and M. Krantz may be left to fight out their difficulties among themselves as best they may. I am one of the public. I have nothing to exhibit. I buy my ticket at a *debit de tabac*; and I am bound to acknowledge that the show in the Camp de Mars is a capital franc's worth. You should not take too much of it at a time, because the multiplicity of things to see is apt to superinduce the headache, but "doing" your exhibition gently and tranquilly, and mildly but firmly declining to be systematic, will become eventually a pleasure instead of a pain, a pastime instead of a burden.

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