

BOSTAND 'AS AN ORATOR.

Reception of the Author of "Cyrano" Into the French Academy.

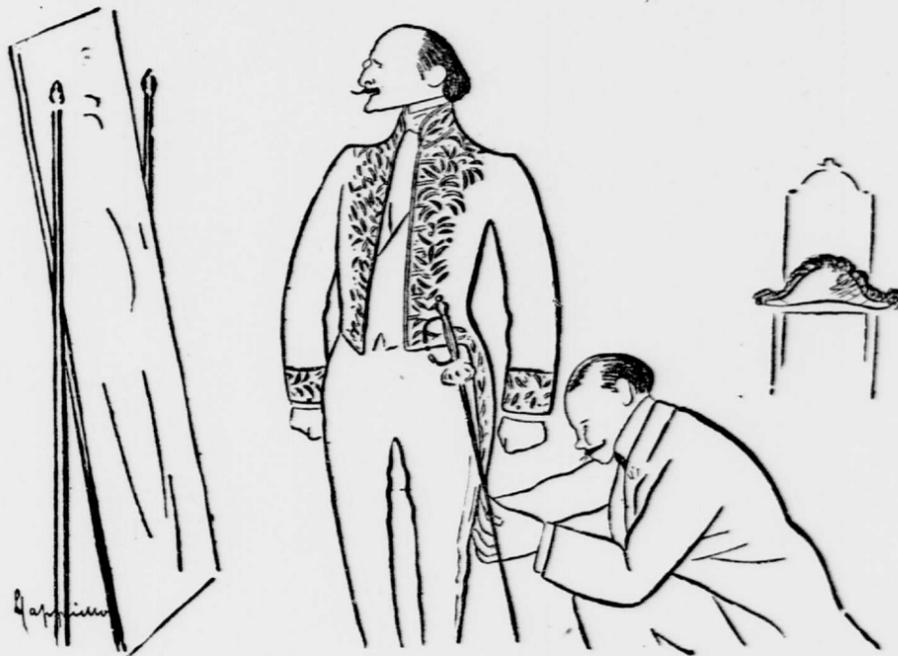
Paris, June 9.

The reception into the Society of the Immortals of a new member of the French Academy is always a most impressive spectacle, but that of Edmond Rostand on Thursday was, in the opinion of veteran Academicians, more brilliant than that of Victor Hugo, Alfred de Musset, Victorien Sardou, Dumas fils or Paul Bourget. The author of "Cyrano" and "L'Aiglon," who attained his thirty-fifth year on April 1, is a very lucky man. He is not only the youngest member of the Academy, but none of the great poets or men of letters of the last century entered the illustrious society at so early an age. Lamartine became an Academician at forty, Victor Hugo at thirty-nine, Alfred de Vigny at forty-nine, Alfred de Musset at forty-two and Leconte de Lisle at sixty-six. Gaston Boissier, perpetual secretary of the Academy, declares that within living memory no reception at the Palace of the Institute has called together so eminent an assembly or aroused such popular enthusiasm as that of the young poet. Never before has there been such a demand for invitations. The reception room of the Institute is capable of holding only fifteen hundred persons. Over five thousand duly qualified applicants had to be refused. Academic salons and the Parisian world of letters had, indeed, for several weeks been wrought up to a pitch of excitement. The reception was the event of the season, and Edmond Rostand is the hero of the hour. Through the courtesy of M. Gaston Boissier the Tribune correspondent was able to secure an invitation to this literary solemnity. The scene was one long to be remembered.

The reception room is circular, with eight tiers of seats covered with faded green velvet, and there are half a dozen tribunes for favored spectators. At 1:30 o'clock the room was densely packed. All the seats were filled. A bevy of young ladies stood in the aisles. Mme. Bartet, of the Comédie Française, Mme. Le Bargy, Mme. Rejane, Mlle. Berthe Badi and many other eminent actresses and artists were obliged to content themselves with seats on the steps of the passageway. Mme. Loubet sat in the official box beside Vicomtesse Henri de Bornier, widow of the deceased Academician and former occupant of the thirteenth fauteuil, to which Edmond Rostand succeeds. In the tribunes were Mme. Paul Deschanel, Comtesse Henri Houssaye, Mme. Leconte de Lisle, Mme. Alexandre Dumas, Mme. Ludovic Halévy, Mme. Hypolyte Taine, Mme. Brunetière, Mme. Emile Olivier, Mme. Henri Rochefort, Mme. Bodley and Mme. Dieulafoy,—the last mentioned dressed, as usual, in man's attire, wearing in the button-hole of her smartly cut frock coat the red ribbon of the Legion of Honor. Near by were the two sisters of Edmond Rostand—Mme. de Margerie, wife of the councillor of the French Embassy at Washington, and Mme. Mante. The Comédie Française was represented by Mme. Bartet, Baroness Pierre de Bourgoing, formerly Mlle. Reichemberg; Mlle. Sorel, Mounet Sully, Coquelin cadet, Le Bargy and Baillet. Among the mundane celebrities were the Duchesse d'Uzes, Mme. René Brice, Comtesse de Mun, Comtesse Jean de Castellane, Comtesse d'Haussonville, Marquise de Beauvoir, Comtesse Potocka, Duchesse de Luynes, Vicomtesse de Vogüé, Countess Grefulhe and the Duchesse de la Rochefoucauld. Art was represented by Carolus-Duran, Besnard, Jules Lefebvre, Joseph Bail, Albert Roll, Edouard Détaillé and the sculptors Puench, Dubois and Saint-Marceaux. There was a rustle of silk and muslin, and Mme. Sarah Bernhardt floated into the room, wearing a delicious gown of white lace, a mantle of silver gray, with gold buttons, a boa of zibeline, and a superb hat of pale green, with long, waving feathers of varied but delicate tones of green. The actress, looking remarkably young, was in fine spirits and humor. She was accompanied by her son and by Clairin, the painter, and she chatted confidentially for a few moments with the Marquis de Galliffet, ex-Minister of War. A few moments later Mme. Edmond Rostand appeared with her two children, Maurice and Jean. The wife of the poet wore an exquisite dress of pearl white gauze, with old lace insertions and panels of hand painted flowers. The hat was of rice colored straw, trimmed with pink roses, which were admirably becoming to her blond hair and delicate roseate complexion. The circular reception room now contained fifteen hundred persons representing Parisian intellect, culture, fashion and refinement. More than half of the guests were women, and the perfect taste of their dresses and the delicate shades of their summer hats contrasted with the sombre black of the men's coats and with the green palms on the uniforms of the "Immortals."

At a quarter to two Edmond Rostand entered the room, preceded by a huissier with silver chain, and behind him were his two sponsors, Jules Clarétie and Paul Hervieu. M. Rostand is the best dressed Academician on record. His green embroidered coat fitted his lithe figure like a glove. His white waistcoat would have been envied by Brummel. His green trousers fell neatly about his dainty little varnished shoes, and his First Empire sword—gift of Paul Bourget—was a model of the goldsmith's art. The young Academician was greeted with murmurs of approbation. All the women leaned

forward to scan his features. He walked slowly and with Castilian dignity. He was very pale. His hand trembled as it rested on the golden hilt of his sword. His stately entrance was suggestive of a coronation. There was the solemnity of a cathedral in the room, and one seemed to search for the mantle of ermine and the imperial crown. Rostand sank into his seat very much as if it were a throne. "La Parole est à M. Edmond Rostand"—"M. Edmond Rostand has the floor!"—exclaimed M. Melchior de Vogüé, presiding officer of the academy. The poet arose and glanced about at the assembly. He smiled as he recognized his own little family group of wife, two children, father, mother and two sisters. He began his address, which according to invariable custom should recount the life and literary career of his immediate predecessor. In this instance the "lamented predecessor" was the late Vicomte Henri de Bornier, author of "La Fille de Roland," "Mahomet," and "Le Fils de l'Arétin." At first the poet's voice was scarcely audible. He was nervous and still deathly pale. In a few moments, however, he acquired self-possession and warmed to his work. His voice rang forth like a trumpet. It was a voice sonorous and clear, like that of Delaunay. A thrill of enthusiasm was evoked by his admirable delivery. Coquelin, who sat near Sarah Bernhardt, whispered: "What a splendid



M. ROSTAND PREPARING FOR HIS RECEPTION INTO THE ACADEMY.
(From a caricature by Cappelletto.)

lesson he is giving me! If he were to go on the stage he would be the finest actor in France!"

The orator, carried away by his subject, burst into floods of anecdote, which he emphasized by appropriate gesture and by dramatic expression of countenance. He made allusions to a "certain Marquis de Rochefort, who charged the Russians side by side with the father of Henri de Bornier at the battle of Brienne, and whose son, Henri de Rochefort, still continues to charge." His definition of "la panache" as a "smile that serves as an excuse for being sublime," his poetical conception of the stage as a "grand mystery" wherein one feels the "beauty of moments when a painted canvas appears to be a heaven and a made-up powdered head a god"; his humorous description of how at the Sultan's request "Mahomet," the tragedy written by Henri de Bornier for the Théâtre Français, was "suppressed by the censorship like a simple Armenian"; his comparison of the inhabitants of Lunel, where Henri de Bornier was born, to "les pêcheurs de la lune" (fishermen who strive to catch the moon—in other words, poets), are instances of the unexpected and audacious sallies that enlivened this academic discourse. The author of "Cyrano" has appeared before his countrymen in a new character—that of an orator—and his voice and delivery were a surprise to all who heard him. Rostand is above all a theatrical poet. This was evident in every line of his discourse, which was not remarkable for earnestness of thought or for graceful language, qualities in which it was greatly inferior to speeches of his fellow "immortals," such as Count Albert de Mun or Vicomte Melchior de Vogüé. He has added to his quality of dramatic poet that of an accomplished comedian. It is a pity that he cannot be induced to go on the stage. He is capable of acting "L'Aiglon" more effectively than Sarah Bernhardt, and of playing "Cyrano" better than Coquelin. C. I. B.

KIND CONSIDERATION.

From Public Opinion.

A village clergyman has this ingenious bit among his records: One day he was summoned in haste by Mrs. Johnston, who had been taken suddenly ill. He went in some wonder, because she was not of his parish, and was known to be devoted to her own minister, the Rev. Mr. Hopkins. While he was waiting in the parlor, before seeking the sick woman, he beguiled the time by talking with her daughter. "I am very much pleased to know your mother thought of me in her illness," he said. "Is Mr. Hopkins away?"

The lady looked unfeignedly shocked. "No," she said, "Oh, no. But we're afraid it's something contagious, and we didn't like him to run any risks."

LITERARY NOTES.

The new novel which Mr. Eden Phillpotts will publish in the autumn is entitled "The American Prisoner." Mr. Max Pemberton's new story is called "Red Morn."

Mr. Watts-Dunton's romance, "Aylwin," has been translated into Norwegian. It has been put into other Continental languages. This is odd enough when one considers what a bore the book is in its original English form.

Another note on the Carlyle controversy: Froude once asked Sir George Grey, who knew Carlyle, if he approved the manner in which he had written about his friend. "My reply," said Grey, "was that I believed Carlyle would have wished to be presented just as he was; not a half picture, but complete, for that would ultimately make him appear all the greater."

There was recently sold at Sotheby's a series of twenty-nine autograph letters and other papers by John Keats, and the lot fetched \$5,350, a remarkable sum, even in these days of extravagant collectors. Mr. Quaritch paid it. The letters were addressed to John Taylor, of Taylor & Tessey. In one of them Keats says: "I equally dislike the favor of the public with the love of a woman; they are both a cloying treacle to the wings of independence." In another he says: "Shakespeare and the 'Paradise Lost' every day become greater wonders to me," and, again, "At Canterbury I hope the remembrance of Chaucer will set me forward like a billiard ball." In regard to one of his own works, he writes: "I will give you a few reasons why I should

tained for the last eight years of his life as his amanuensis M. Troubat, who admirably succeeded in counterfeiting the hand of the master."

In the new volume of poems which Mr. Kipling is to issue in the autumn under the title of "The Five Nations," there will be twenty-five compositions which have never before been published. The "Recessional," is, of course, to be included in the collection, appearing for the first time within the covers of a book.

The Bells have in preparation a new series, dealing with the great composers, to be uniform with their "Miniature Series of Painters." Volumes have already been arranged for, to deal with Handel, Mozart, Beethoven, Mendelssohn and Sullivan. There will be a portrait in each volume, and facsimiles of manuscript will be given.

The authorized memoir of the late Dean Farrar is being written by his eldest son, Dr. R. A. Farrar, and will be published within the next few months.

A statistician studying the question of the use of wood pulp in the manufacture of paper has lately estimated the amount of material used in the production of nine popular novels. Of these books 1,500,000 copies were sold. In the making of them 2,000,000 pounds of paper were employed, and as one spruce tree yields about 500 pounds of paper these nine novels are stated to have caused the destruction of 4,000 trees.

Mrs. Hugh Fraser, author of "Palladia," "The Splendid Forsenna," and of various books treating of Japan, has written a new romance on the older days of that country. It is called "The Stolen Emperor."

Mrs. W. K. Clifford, the well known novelist, has a daughter, Miss Ethel Clifford, who writes poetry. She will publish a volume before long, entitled "Song of Dreams," dedicating it to her mother—"I bring them to my best beloved, to you." Miss Clifford is said to have been portrayed by the late Sir Edward Burne-Jones in one of his most famous pictures. John Lane will publish her book.

There is an Omar Khayyam Club in London, there is a Johnson Club in the same city, and now Mr. H. B. Wheatley, editor of the definitive edition of the most fascinating of all diaries, has persuaded a number of his friends to join him in organizing a Pepys Club.

Longmans, Green & Co. will not publish Mr. Rider Haggard's new novel, "Stella Fregelius," until the autumn.

The late Dr. Hugh MacMillan finished, just before his death, a book entitled "The Life Work of George Frederick Watts." He had studied the paintings of this famous artist all his life, he knew Mr. Watts well, and his volume is expected to contain a great deal of interesting matter. We hope it will not be too much the work of the enthusiastic friend. Watts is one of the most remarkable painters of his time, but while possessed of great imaginative powers, and always devoted to a high ideal, he has never fully mastered the technique of art, and his work needs to be studied with the utmost discrimination.

Mr. Bernhard Berenson's two folios on the drawings of the Florentine painters, classifying and criticising them as documents in the history of Tuscan art, are at last to issue from the press. They will contain 150 facsimile reproductions.

In the biography of Miss Marie Corelli, which has just been printed, a letter written to her by her publisher, Mr. George Bentley, in 1892, is quoted. It contains this piece of advice: "Laugh at the review," said he, "and don't notice it to any of your friends. You will be the first to laugh this day six months for having been temporarily disquieted. As to law—oh, lor! Wouldn't your enemies, if you have any, rejoice to see you at loggerheads with the press? No, no; that won't do."

Many modern men of letters are interested in athletics. Long ago, it is recalled, Mr. George Meredith used to insist upon the necessity for physical exercise, but the cause of one of his breakdowns in health is supposed to have been a too earnest devotion to Indian clubs.

M. Catulle Mendès has written a book about French poetry from 1867 to 1900, in which he has been at great pains to avoid giving offence to living writers. In order to keep them in good humor he gives, in addition to his own opinions, a kind of critical bibliographical dictionary, appending to the name of each poet "certain contemporary appreciations."

Some personal recollections of the late J. H. Shorthouse have been printed in "Temple Bar." When he was asked how long "John Inglesant" had been in his mind, he replied, "I don't think I can remember the time when it was not." Though he had no technical knowledge of music he had a passion for the art. The "Messiah" and the "Elijah" are mentioned as the particular objects of his enthusiasm. He gave one day in the week to his writing. The recollections include this picture of him in his home:

"He was the most genial of hosts, and as ready to listen as he was to give out of the stores of his own mind. The terrible stammer, almost a convulsion, which must have tried sorely one so full of thoughts and so ready to give them to others, was, he used to say, a blessing in disguise, having led him to use the pen as his great instrument of expression; but there were times when the stammer almost ceased, and he could talk on uninterruptedly. One very striking and touching habit grew up out of the stammer. At 'family prayers' he and his wife read all the prayers together; because, if an attack of stammering came on, her gentle voice would carry on the thread till he recovered, and the knowledge of this prevented all nervousness on his part."

Here is another problem for those who love to speculate on the ethics of collecting. A dealer in secondhand books bought a sackful of them from a countryman for \$250. He sold two of the books to a customer for that sum. One of these was resold to a dealer for \$20, who sold it again for \$2,000, and the man who now owns it wants \$5,000 for it. What of the original countryman? The book, by the way, was the very scarce Latin Prayer Book of 1516.

Dr. Robertson Nicoll, writing about Max O'Rell, speaks of his most popular book, "John Bull and His Island," which achieved an extraordinary success, and says: "It is no secret that the book was rejected by several publishers, who wrung their hands afterward."