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WHOLE NO. 1016.

The CASH System

ADOPTED BY

N. G. & J. McKechnie.

We beg to inform our Customers and the Public generally that we have adopted the Cash System, which means Cash or its equivalent, and that our

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Durham, Aug. 9th, '96.

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Durham, June 15th 1897.

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PARISIAN SIGHTS

THE GOBELIN TAPESTRY.

Frogs and Snails on the Market.—French hatred of England.—The Guide is Touchy.—Reflections on National Contrasts.—Shopping in Paris.

LONDON, Aug. 9, 1897.

MY DEAR RAMAGE,
Last time I think I left off with the bicycle and its riders of Paris. A

few more things in the French capital which were new to me may also be of interest to you. The way things are made has always been of utmost interest to me, be the thing a man of war or a Jew's harp. I do not know that others are equally interested in the production of things, I do know, however, that many seem to be more interested in the manufactured article in its finished state.

There is one article you and I have read much about, especially in early English history, concerning which I, for one, had very vague and indistinct ideas. That article is tapestry. To read about tapestry and to see it woven are two different things. One of the sights of Paris to one of my mind is a visit to the Gobelins' Carpet or Tapestry manufactory when the workmen are at work. First let me say this is a state industry employing I believe only about 150 hands the prior to the fire of 1871 much larger. The productions of the Gobelins are not for sale. They are "reserved for the use of the royal family for the time being, or presented to foreign courts, ambassadors or persons of distinction." They are large pieces sometimes 50 or 75 feet long and 10 or 20 feet wide, of cloth resembling somewhat "tapestry carpet" but woven by hand of silk and the finest wool, with colors so vivid and natural that at 10 feet distance no one would distinguish them from the best oil paintings. The figures in them are usually scenes in the life of some king or court in which all the actors are life size, and the expression of feature and action whether joyful or painful of each is given with a naturalness which defies description. The looms in which these choice productions are woven are not so complicated as one would suppose. The warp, is I think of cotton, and is vertically stretched between rollers in front of the operators. The patterns are placed behind the workman and when he wishes to see it places a small hand mirror through the numberless cotton strings that are stretched in front of him and by this means sees the pattern and his own work together. Exact color lines and shades are thus secured. No women are employed here. It is said they are not patient enough. This of course, I do not believe, but so it is believed in this city. When I state however that a man must serve fifteen years' apprenticeship before he is allowed to take any piece in charge without supervision, and that the utmost work one of these skilled laborers can perform is one square inch per day, it will be readily understood what the thing means. This is however a fact. Each piece of the Gobelins' Tapestry costs in actual labor and material from \$5,000 to \$20,000 and the largest of them very much more. This too, while the skilled laborer gets only 10 francs (\$2) a day. He cannot make a fortune at that. What would Canadians think of such wages after serving 15 years' apprenticeship? I think a "strike" would be the order of the day. There is one mitigating circumstance in this case and it is, that after 20 years' service—that is 35 years altogether—at the work the workmen retire on a comfortable pension which secures for them freedom from labor for the rest of their lives. When you visit Paris do not fail to call here.

Another industry which I was anxious to visit was the celebrated Sevres Porcelain manufactory. This also is a state institution and the production is not for sale. But unfortunately it was not open to visitors hence in this I am where I was.

Several of the markets of the capital were visited—both outdoor and indoor ones—the indoor markets are much the same as in all great cities. Here are offered for sale everything edible dead or alive one would think in the

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wide world. Frogs and snails are only a specimen. The snails are held to be a very great delicacy by the Frenchmen. Our guide when asked what they were like told us how they were cooked—a long process—and he wound up by saying that when properly prepared they resemble a piece of India rubber one had been chewing for a long time. Again we did not envy French taste. A Frenchman hates frogs and always asks who eats them. Foreigners of course, mostly Americans and Englishmen. I suppose that is the reason the French hate the English so much.

This hatred was evident on all hands tho' the traditional external politeness of the Frenchman keeps him from showing it, at least while the English man is spending money freely. But rub him crosswise and his antipathy flows to the surface at once. An illustration of this was seen several times in our imperturbable guide. One will suffice. In Versailles Palace there is one long gallery devoted to a representation of the history of France on canvas, from the earliest times to the present. The victories (not the defeats) of French armies by sea and land are here graphically and very strikingly portrayed by the very best and greatest of the French artists. After having passed round the gallery, one of our party said to the guide that there was one piece missing from the collection—a piece we would like to see. "What was that?" said he urbanely. "The Battle of Waterloo," said our friend. The guide drew himself together, looked innocent and said dryly. "That is a name I don't know." But you English people forget that Waterloo is a German Victory not an English one." Before we got through with him he was somewhat "riled" and we found that if the good will of our guide would continue with us we must leave British Victories over France several alone. That was however an easy task as there was nothing here to remind us of that side of the question—it was all on the other side and as French victories over British armies are rather scarce we enjoyed the continued even flow of our guide's good nature.

Put to return to the Markets. One other feature of the outdoor market may be mentioned. It is that about the important crossings of the great Boulevards and streets are portable folding stands roofed over with leather or rubber-cloth or mostly canvas under which during the day vegetables fruit and flowers are exposed for sale. I say during the day, for if anything remains unsold at 8 p. m. it is seized by the police and sold by auction for the benefit of the city hospitals. That is surely drastic enough but all vendors know the law and generally contrive to have the stands clean and empty by the required hour. This is another evidence of the pleasure loving proclivity of the citizens. This is the beginning of the fête and nothing so gross as buying and selling must be allowed to interfere with the noisy quiet of the café festivity.

I must not omit a few words about the military and police of Paris before winding up what is already too long.

Everywhere all over Paris you see uniformed soldiers standing on guard or lounging carelessly about between the hours of duty. The impression upon a stranger, especially the British stranger is that the law is not strong enough to keep the peace without the continued threat of the military. I think though that is hardly the case. The French are peaceful enough until goaded to madness by wrong political or otherwise, then no law can control them but cold lead and steel. The memory of the commune which so often devastated the city still lingers with the Authorities and they keep everything in readiness for any possible outbreak. It is so different in London. There you see nothing to make you suppose a soldier is in the world. The foundations of society are securely laid and need not the constant appearance of guard. Policemen too are in Paris seen everywhere, but in London what a miserable looking lot of men they are. In size they are smaller by far than the English or Canadian policeman; Their bearing even on duty is not so dignified. There is not the consciousness of authority in their bearing we see at home. Their uniform may suit the climate but certainly they are neither artistic nor pretty. Give me the British or Canadian policeman every time, uniform and all even if he carry only a small wooden baton as a symbol of the majesty of the law behind him while the French policeman always carries his sword sheathed in its scabbard at his left belt. There is the difference—a difference I am told the French marvel at—they cannot understand how a British policeman can enforce peace and quiet with only a bit of wood to show his authority. They forget that law is more powerful there than military or police. There lies the

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glory of British institutions all the world over. Men are taught to respect law and by self-government rise to a higher conception of citizenship and its manifold duties.

The three great retail business houses in Paris are, I understand, Worth, the Louvre and the Bon Marche. Each of these is worth (no pun) a visit and of course for the honor of Canada we "went shopping in Paris." In all important shops there are many interpreters through whom you can soon make your wants known. We rather enjoyed the experience of speaking to people who did not understand our speech and whose speech we could make little of. If you would be able to do business here, brush up your French before you come else you may have to pay dear for every article you buy. In very many places, the shop-keeper and employers will accept about half the price they ask for an article, if you can tell them in French what you think of them. There is great satisfaction in it too. It is annoying when you know you are being deceived not to be able to tell the deceiver and he is such, except by looking it, and that does not go far—it is simply lost on the hardened Parisian or Parisienne. In the three places above mentioned however there is one price only and it is plainly marked on every article so no more money arises. If the price does not suit, why get an article at the price you can afford I suppose in all the best class of houses this is the rule hence shopping in Paris, in even English, is not so bad after all.

We left Paris Saturday about 4 p. m. and got to London between 11 and 12. No one who has never been abroad in a foreign country can appreciate our feelings when we again set foot on British soil where we could hear our own language spoken and could be understood when we spoke ourselves. The week was on the whole a pleasant one for us and added much to our knowledge of men and things.

N. W. C.

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