ENGLAND AND THE BOERS.

GROWTH OF A SENTIMENT THAT WAR SHOULD BE AVOIDED.

The Britons Are Unanimous in Demanding Transvaal Reforms—Tales of a Traveller in Abyssinia—Men Not Wearing Dress Coats Excluded from a Swell Hotel in London—Notes of the Art World.

LONDON, Aug. 11.—Would reticence better serve the purpose of England, in her present problem, than "speaking out," as Mr. Joseph Chamberlain has called the cardinal element in his new diplomacy? Every discussion among responsible Englishmen on the Transvaal crisis ends with that question. People here are as unanimous on the necessity for President Krüger's altering his franchise laws, his monopoly concessions, and his police control as they were a year ago on the necessity of the French evacuating Fashoda. But there are many who think that more satisfaction would be got with much less oratory and published despatches by responsible Ministers. The word "war" has been bandied about in a reckless fashion over the whole business. A Unionist who knows public opinion well outside of London, which is Jingo all the time, says that not even the bogey of Home Rule will keep the Government in office if it forces war on the Transvaal over the present dispute. The country at large was surprised and somewhat suspicious to hear that vast indignation meetings in the colonies had passed resolutions denouncing the Boers and offering volunteers to shoot them. It was known that paid Rhodesian lecturers were on the stump in the colonies, but they were not expected here to be taken so seriously. Apparently they really were not, and the cabled resolutions and fulminations were mostly wind. The two chief papers in Australia take the stand that was to be looked for. The *Melbourne Argus* points out that, so far from the attitude of the Boers being a standing menace to the peace and prosperity of South Africa, "the real peril is in the nondescript horde of cosmopolitan adventurers who compose Johannesburg," and adds:

"These latter have been encouraged by powerful and interested combinations to believe that by continuous agitations England might be worked up to combat pitch, although she has no right whatever to interfere in the domestic affairs of the Transvaal. Chief among the instigators of this policy is the Rhodesian group. The main hope to which the shareholders of the Chartered Company desperately cling is that the Imperial Government will some day pay a substantial sum for the vast territory administered by the lieutenants of Cecil Rhodes."

The *Sydney Daily Telegraph*, speaking of the Australians who have volunteered to help in any shooting operations that may eventuate in South Africa, advises them to stay at home and find something better to do.

"The Uitlanders," it says, "have gone to the Boers' country of their own free will, and if the laws do not suit them they need not stay. Suppose a swarm of Dutch mining boomsters were to come to Australia and float companies in Amsterdam, and on the strength of that to claim the right to politically boss the place, we simply would not stand it. We would tell them that the laws of Australia were good enough for us, and if they were not good enough for them they were at liberty to clear out."

With that quotation British sentiment is certainly not at one; but the attitude of both journals destroys the fiction of colonial solidarity with the Rhodesian policy. In this country something similar is observable. Everybody is firm for reasonable reform; but the impatient menacing is so incessant as to compel one to believe that Chamberlain's diplomacy, even though he may not mean it, will end in collision. He will have a free hand this autumn. Lord Salisbury, besides being in accord with Chamberlain on the necessity for reform, has deep domestic anxieties that will prevent him from curbing his aggressive colleague. The latter's ambition may have free play, with the prospect of a public triumph at the end. What many of his supporters, and certainly the majority of his own Liberal-Unionist party, ask is, whether his inborn candor and outspokenness at every stage of the difficult dealings, is not a great handicap to their success.

Nobody here has been much impressed by the nebulous concessions and intangible commercial facilities which so far represent the sum total of British diplomacy's success at Pekin. Discontent at the existing position is only less outspoken now than it was at the beginning of the year because people see how difficult is Lord Salisbury's task. They know that Russia is behind all China's dilatory duplicity, and that France is actively abetting her. Germany is willing to see England struggle for what "open door" benefits she can get and to be the first to profit by them. But she is not to range herself with England and against Russia for so inadequate a motive. Neither do Englishmen expect the United States, so long as her interests are not directly assailed, to take their side in a struggle which, though it at first aimed merely at enforcing equal commercial opportunities for all, would in its earliest stages become an Anglo-Russian struggle involving all the many points at issue between these nations. It comes to this, then, that unless China is urged on to some particularly wanton slight to British interests, the Foreign Office in London will keep to its policy of patient, persistent pressure and the advertisement to the public of what "concessions" it wrings from the Chinese creatures of the Russian Minister at Pekin as substantial success for British diplomacy. The correspondent of the *Times* at Shanghai sends a long despatch to his paper this week, which makes the most considerable of these successes seem unsubstantial. He deals with the opening of the new Chinese ports to foreign trade, which was provided for by the treaty of Shimonoseki. By that act four ports were added to the treaty list, Chungking, Shashi, Hang-chau, and Su-chau. The West River Convention added Wu-chau and Sam-shui, and since then the Chinese Government has declared its intention of throwing open the ports of Yo-chau, Nan-ning-fu, Wu-sung, Ch'in Wang-tao, Fu-ning and Nanking voluntarily in certain cases, and under pressure in others. A new attitude on the part of the provincial authorities in regard to the question of open ports began to manifest itself at the time of the conclusion of the Shimonoseki negotiations; since that date, instead of the reluctance hitherto shown, there appears to have sprung up a tendency to open up new ports on the slightest pretext.

The correspondent gives flagrant instances of the practice of the Chinese officials to levy all manner of exactions on the very threshold of the foreign settlements. At Shanghai, for instance, *likin* has for many years been levied, in spite of every effort to prevent it, within the settlement itself; at Hang-chau, hungry runners, noting with an eye to plunder every bale of merchandise that enters and leaves the custom house, live within the foreign residence limits; while at such ports as Canton, Su-chau, Han-kau or Tien-tsin, the settlement area has become simply a depot, or temporary refuge, from which no goods can go forth without satisfying those rapacities and necessities of the native official, which are euphemistically described in the Inland Navigation Rules as "local usage."

Having thus dealt with the question of *likin* in a manner which they are fully justified in regarding as satisfactory, the provincial authorities began to realize at the close of the Japanese war, when the opening of certain new ports was foreshadowed by that event, that the hated foreigner's aggression in this direction might be turned to profitable account, and that every breach in the wall of China's exclusiveness might be made to become a source of immediate pecuniary profit to themselves. The correspondent was present at the negotiations (1895-96) which took place successively at Su-chau and Hang-chau between the Japanese and Chinese officials appointed to discuss the conditions under which these two provincial capitals should be thrown open to trade, and wherein, after weary parleyings prolonged by the Chinese over many weeks (during which they were actively engaged in completing their own schemes), the first foundations of the new treaty port system were laid. Upon the arrival of the Japanese consul at Su-chau the local officials proceeded to offer him as the site of the settlement a paddy-field situated some seven miles from the city, and in reply to his vigorous protests they gravely referred him to the Viceroy at Nanking or the Tsung-li-Yamên. The consul's position was a difficult one, recourse to a threatening attitude being impossible in view of the political situation at Peking, and of this fact the Chinese were only too well aware; he therefore based his claims on the text of the Shimonoseki Treaty and claimed thereunder—for three weeks—the right of Japanese merchants to trade and reside within the city itself. Subsequently, however, he expressed his readiness to forego this right on grounds of general and local expediency, and to accept a settlement in the immediate vicinity outside the walls. That this would be the eventual solution the Chinese had long foreseen, and since suitable sites were few in number, they had devoted their energies in the meantime to securing, in the name of a purely imaginary "commercial company," all available land in the best positions near the city. This was effected by the simple expedient of dispossessing the native owners with nominal compensation in the name of the Government, but as the operation, together with the demarcation of the commercial company's new properties, occupied considerable time, it was necessary to prolong the Japanese negotiations by the introduction of many absurd conditions. Eventually, after six weeks' work, during which time the Japanese consul was frequently taken by the officials to visit certain interesting fields in the neighborhood of the site first offered to him, the Chinese professed their willingness to allow the settlement to be established close to the city walls. The consul then discovered that the only suitable site had been clearly defined and surrounded by the imposing boundary stones of the commercial company aforesaid, while the land included in the area of the proposed settlement had been converted into Chinese Government property and was offered for sale at prices considerably higher than those which would otherwise have prevailed "among the people." The original native owners were thus deprived of their just rights in their property (a fact not calculated to raise the foreigner in their esteem), and the treaty rights of the foreign merchant were adroitly circumvented. A precisely similar procedure was followed at Hang-chau, where the native owners were dispossessed of their lands by the local officials at purely nominal prices and the foreign settlement, cut and dried, was offered for sale in lots by the same officials at rates which produced a substantial profit.

A party of young Englishmen organized by Mr. Well-Blundell and Lord Lovat started last November on a sporting and scientific expedition across Somaliland, through southern Abyssinia, or Shoa, and the country to the west hitherto quite unknown, thence to the Blue Nile and back by way of Khartoum. One of its members, Dr. Köttlitz, has returned with an interesting account of Emperor Menelik's dominions. He says:

"There is a telephone running between Menelik's capital and Harar, a distance of about three hundred miles. This line, which is the only sign of civilization in that portion of the country, is kept in very bad repair. It was constructed by a Franco-Russian company in which Menelik is a shareholder. The stations, which are about two days' march apart, are mere thatched huts surrounded by strong, high stockades. The dirty eastern hut with its Abyssinian attendant affords a striking contrast with the telephone and the instructions to 'Ring up Addis Abeba.' At one of these stations, when about half-way to the capital, we heard that Menelik had left there with his army to receive the submission of Ras Mangascia. We then tried to telephone through to Capt. Harrington, the British Resident at Addis Abeba. A Frenchman at the other end of the line tried his best to prevent this, and it was only through hearing one of the British interpreters talking on the line that we succeeded in getting through. During the month's journey between Harar and the capital we were constantly passing ivory caravans going to Harar. We also met parties in charge of Russians and Frenchmen connected with political missions and a few French missionaries. It was very hot work crossing the Hawash plain and most of our travelling had to be done late in the day and into night. Afterward the ascent of the central plateau made the conditions more pleasant.

"The Abyssinian capital is about five miles square, and is simply an agglomeration of round, thatched huts, made of bamboo and grass, without windows or chimneys. There are no roads of any description. The better-class houses are surrounded by stockades. Menelik's so-called palace is merely a collection of somewhat larger houses of the same type. He is now having a few stone houses constructed by Indian workmen. For the past two seasons Capt. Harrington, who formerly resided at Zeila, has lived in the capital. The British Residency consists merely of a couple of large tents with a number of smaller ones all enclosed in a turf-walled compound. Beside Capt. Harrington, the only British subject living there is a man named M'Kelvy, who has had an extraordinary career. Formerly an officer's servant, he was one of the original prisoners of Magdala, and was tortured among the rest. He elected to remain in Abyssinia, and for thirty-seven years he has lived as an Abyssinian. He has adopted their dress and customs, and when Capt. Harrington first went to Addis Abeba he had actually forgotten his own language. This, however, soon came back, and he is now employed as an interpreter at the Residency. He lives in the capital with his Abyssinian wife, and has lost all semblance of his own nationality."

Dr. Köttlitz gives an interesting account of Zouquala, the famous sacred mountain, a sort of African Lourdes, of which he says:

"Mount Zouquala, the mysterious sacred mountain of the Abyssinians, is forty miles from the capital. It is 10,000 feet high, and in the form of a truncated cone. At its summit and in the crater is a remarkable lake three-quarters of a mile long, which is a veritable Abyssinian Lourdes or Pool of Siloam. It is the belief of the natives that bathing in its waters will cure all diseases. Close by are some springs dedicated to the Virgin Mary. According to the popular idea, barren women need only drink of these fountains to lose their sterility. The waters are regarded with the greatest worship, and must on no account be employed for cooking or any other useful purpose. I saw quite a number of diseased creatures round the lake shore crawling about or being carried on litters. One poor man was actually dying of consumption. The whole mountain, both sides and the crater, is densely wooded. The place is studded everywhere with hermits' huts, each of which is inhabited by holy men, who live separate lives of extreme austerity. Also hidden away in the forests is a large number of churches. I got into the good graces of the hermits by somewhat curious means. I was being shown over one of the churches, which are plentifully adorned with cheap colored Biblical pictures 'made in Germany,' when a priest with great awe drew my attention to a gaudy representation of St. George and the Dragon. I endeavored to explain that St. George was the British as well as the Abyssinian Patron Saint, but the good man was very dubious until I hit on the idea of producing a sovereign. This at once convinced him of the truth of my statement, and proved to his complete satisfaction that I was a Christian of a very high order. The whole mountain is curious in the extreme. I was shown one tree with three trunks united at the base, which is regarded as an emblem of the Trinity and is hung with human hair and all sorts of trinkets. There are, too, curious crannies between the perpendicular rocks through which it is an act of devotion to squeeze oneself."

A rule imposed at the most recently opened hotel in London—the Carlton—making evening dress compulsory at dinner has raised some important protests and may lead to litigation. Mr. Gilbert Elliott, a retired member of the Indian Civil Service, writes this letter to the papers concerning his experience:

"Last week after dinner I walked over from the Athenæum Club to the Carlton restaurant. The door was wide open, and I went in till I was stopped, after I had passed through the hall, by a foreigner, apparently a Count, certainly a person in authority, who asked me why I had come there. I said that I wanted refreshment; but I was told to go away, and I went because I cannot fight nor even run away.

"Since then I have heard from some young friends who were refreshing at the seaside that they had been ordered out of a hostelry at Sandown because they were not clad in evening dress. But they refused to go, and as they were four athletes, who had just distinguished themselves by rowing round the Isle of Wight, the proprietor so far conceded as to allow a waiter to supply some whisky.

"Now, sir, in both these cases, I for one want the publicity which may restrain hotel-keepers who aim at such a selection as is intended to preserve their premises solely for the use of the *nouveau riche* and other pretenders who dress for dinner when out for a holiday, and would, if they could, make everybody else do so everywhere. This tyranny imported into hotels aims at the hallowed custom by which the innkeeper's guest is entitled to his ease at his inn. The intention is part and parcel of the vicious habits of the day. Are we all of us bound to pretend to be something which we are not? I and many others dine at our club in ordinary afternoon costume. Why should we be compelled to change dress after dinner when we want to go to the restaurant over the way?"

Another gentleman, Mr. Whitaker, of Westwood, in Kent, has had a similar experience.

He writes: "I attempted to dine there (at the Carlton Hotel) last week. I had come from the country, and had not had time to dress. I am an entirely harmless, quiet, middle-aged individual, with, I am told, decent manners and presentable appearance. I was met by a foreign waiter or major domo or menial of sorts who, none too politely, told me I could not dine. I am not in the habit of arguing with servants, so I dined at the club. It is, however, my intention, together with some friends, to test the legality of the matter thoroughly. I have plenty of time on my hands, and it strikes me that it may prove amusing. I intend to subpœna some of the directors who are personal friends of mine. Of course, I shall be met with a request, possibly polite, to dine in some obscure room apart from the more desirable guests. This I shall decline to do; I shall endeavor to prove the rights of a well-behaved member of the public to oblige an innkeeper to comply fully with the act under which he is licensed."

Strange as it may seem, few Englishmen seem to know the sense of an innkeeper's license, which, of course, governs all hotels. Even a magistrate admitted this week that he did not know it. A man who announced he was a beerhouse-keeper wanted the magistrate to grant a summons against a "public nuisance" for assault. He said he would not have the man in his house at any price.

"The Magistrate—I don't think you have any right to refuse to serve him.

"The Applicant—Oh, yes, I have. Mine is not an inkkeeper's license. An inkkeeper must serve everybody, if they are sober and quiet, but if you hold a publichouse or beerhouse license, you can serve whom you like and refuse whom you like.

"The Magistrate—Is that so? I was not aware of it.

"The Clerk, Mr. Coates)—Yes, an inkkeeper's is a special license, and he is under an obligation to supply food and drink to all comers, if they are orderly, but I can't say that a publican is bound to serve any one."

If the clerk of the court is right the Carlton Hotel will not be able to compel its male guests to dine in evening dress. For, of course, Mr. Elliott's and Mr. Whitaker's cases have no relation to Lady Harberton's memorable suit when she failed to compel the innkeeper to serve her in the coffee room while she was wearing bloomers.

With August comes not only the closing of the major exhibitions such as the Academy, the New Gallery and the show of the International Society, but also the disappearance of those minor shows at the various private galleries in Bond Street and Piccadilly, which have throughout the season kept alive the interest, not only of the picture lover, but of the picture maker. Still of late years the summer has not been totally destitute of artistic import to those who are able to take their holiday abroad. Last year we had the great Rembrandt exhibition at Amsterdam. This year Antwerp is going to attract the artists and connoisseurs of Europe to its special exhibition of the works of Van Dyck. It is interesting to note that a large proportion of the finest works there to be seen have been lent by English owners. Great painter as Van Dyck was, he yet does not hold that pinnacle in the world's esteem that is vouchsafed to Rembrandt, and so it is not likely that the pilgrimage to Antwerp will be as numerically important as that to Amsterdam last year. However, the lesser painter is very much in evidence just now in the talk of artists and those interested in art, and two important books bearing on Van Dyck have been published here.

The more notable of these as a piece of bookmaking, is a critical description by Mr. Ernest Law of "Van Dyck's Pictures at Windsor Castle," a folio volume illustrated with thirty plates in photogravure taken from pictures in the royal collection, twenty-five of these being at Windsor, one at Hampton Court and four at Buckingham Palace. Mr. Law has confined himself to collecting whatever information might throw light on the pictures and to discussing their authorship and authenticity. In addition, while not professing to give a life of each subject, he has in his own words "tried to give prominence to such personal characteristics and such incidents in their careers as may elucidate the particular portraiture of them reproduced in this book." The result is a most interesting volume, which to the student of Van Dyck, who may fairly claim to have founded the noble Eighteenth Century school of portrait painting is invaluable. The technical care and skill which Mr. Law has bestowed upon his work may be gauged by the fact that "each picture has been subjected to a careful scrutiny by magnifying glasses and dark lanterns and in full sunlight by the aid of mirrors, which has led to the discovery of many signatures of artists, of dates and of inscriptions hitherto unknown."

The productions themselves, though perhaps hardly possessing the subtle charm of Mr. Frederick Hollyer's well known photographic reproductions of Van Dyck's and other celebrated portraits, are marked by their absolute fidelity. By special permission to carry out the work of reproduction each picture was removed from its place, detached from its frame, and brought down to a studio erected for the purpose in the courtyard of Windsor Castle. The negatives were taken with wet plates under long exposures in full sunlight by means of a platform turning on a pivot to follow the sun. It took more than two months to complete the task. One interesting discovery Mr. Law has made is that the well-known portrait of Van Dyck attributed to his own brush, is simply the unfinished portrait of Van Dyck painted by his master, Rubens, which was sold at the auction of the latter's effects and afterward botched and patched up by some unknown journeyman artist.

The other book forms one of the series of "Monographs on Artists," edited and partly written by Mr. Knackfuss, who is responsible for this study of Van Dyck. Perhaps the most interesting part of this sympathetic biography deals with Van Dyck's methods of work, especially at that period when he had become a fashionable artist and was overwhelmed with commissions. Quoting from De Piles, Mr. Knackfuss says:

"He appointed a day and hour for the person whom he was to paint and did not work longer than one hour at a time on each portrait. Whether at the commencement or at the finish, as soon as his clock pointed to the hour he rose and made a reverence to his sitter, as much as to say that that was enough for the day, and then he made an appointment for another day and hour; thereupon his serving man would come to clean his brushes and prepare a fresh palette, while he received another person who had made an appointment for this hour. Thus he worked at several portraits a day, and worked, too, with astonishing rapidity. After he had just begun a portrait and grounded it, he made the sitter assume the pose which he had determined for himself beforehand, and made a sketch of the figure and costume on gray paper with black and white chalk, arranging the drapery in grand style and with the finest taste. He gave this drawing afterward to skilled assistants whom he kept employed, in order to transfer it to the picture, working from the actual clothes, which were sent to Van Dyck at his request for this purpose. When the pupils had carried out the drapery as far as they could from nature, he went over it lightly, and introduced into it by his skill in a very short time the art and truth which we admire. For the hands he employed hired models of both sexes."

CHILD LABOR TO BE STOPPED.

A Factory Inspector in Paterson Discovers Many Violations of Law.

PATERSON, N. J., Aug. 20.—Under orders from his chief, Deputy Factory Inspector John Hunter has been waging a campaign against the mill owners of this city who employ child labor. While it has been generally known that the law was violated in many mills, it has been difficult to secure evidence against offenders. When a factory inspector visited the mill, the children under age were hustled together and taken from the mill by a rear entrance, so that everything appeared correct when he made his rounds. Inspector Hunter determined to proceed on new lines, and for this purpose disguised himself as a laborer and went to the vicinity of the suspected mills at the noon hour, wheeling a barrow. He would stop to rest in front of a mill and talk to the many little children who emerged. Their employers passed him by without recognition, and he soon secured all the evidence he needed.

A raid on the Albion Silk Mill of the Bamford Brothers' Manufacturing Company resulted, and sixty-two children under the legal age were found working there. They were dismissed and the mill owners informed that there must be no more trifling with the law or criminal prosecutions would follow. Dismissals of children in a number of other mills followed, many employers having learned what had happened, and many children who have never known the advantages of schooling will be sent to school instead of to the mills as soon as the fall term begins.

CIRCUS ELEPHANT ON A TEAR.

Broke His Keeper's Ribs and Had Fun With the People of Reading.

READING, Pa., Aug. 20.—The big elephant Charlie in Pearl's circus made a desperate attack on his temporary keeper, James Mackey, this morning, hurled him into a ditch and broke three of his ribs. Then with a chain dangling about his neck the beast went snorting through the streets, terrifying many persons. He made his way to the City Park, plunged into the lake, and before a group of terrified women and children could get away spurted a stream of water, mud and gravel at them. The pebbles were thrown with such force as to cut the faces and arms of several children. The elephant then trampled down some flower beds, went up the mountain side to the boulevard and over the hills to the vineyards, and after an absence of two hours was captured and taken back to the circus.

M'LAUGHLIN STILL PLAYING.

Neither Mr. Croker Nor the Van Wyck Boom Arrives to Disturb Him.

SOUTH JAMESPORT, N. Y., Aug. 20.—Ex-Register Hugh McLaughlin, the Democratic leader in Brooklyn, passed a quiet Sunday despite the report that important political conferences were to take place here to-day. At a late hour to-night neither Judge J. J. Willett of Alabama and his Van Wyck boom nor Mr. Croker had put in an appearance. It was, however, reported among the small army of Brooklyn politicians here that Judge Willett was expected. Mr. McLaughlin would not discuss the matter or comment upon the Van Wyck boom.

Yesterday was Mrs. McLaughlin's birthday. She was sixty-five years of age and her husband presented her with a check for $500, and there were many other costly presents. Instead of looking for Mr. Croker or Judge Willett last evening, Mr. McLaughlin set off a lot of fireworks in honor of his wife's anniversary.

ORANGE FREE LIBRARY PLANS.

The Sticklers Preparing to Build It as a Memorial to a Son.

ORANGE, N. J., Aug. 20.—Architects have been requested to enter a competition to furnish plans for the Free Library to be erected by Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Whipple Stickler of Orange, as a memorial to their son, the late Dr. Joseph William Stickler, who died suddenly a few weeks ago, and plans must be submitted by Sept. 25. The building is to cost, exclusive of heating and ventilating, $30,000. It is hoped to begin work on the library this fall.

A condition of Mr. and Mrs. Stickler's offer was that the Free Library trustees should provide a site for the building. A large lot has been selected at Maine street and Essex avenue, and the new building will have light and air on all four sides.

John I. Blair Will Be Ninety-seven Years Old To-morrow.

BLAIRSTOWN, N. J., Aug. 20.—Thirty-two of the business men of this place have agreed to close their stores all day on Tuesday in honor of the ninety-seventh birthday of that most distinguished townsman, the Hon. John I. Blair. Mr. Blair is enjoying excellent health, but seldom leaves his residence, though he takes an active interest in his extensive railway interests and in politics, especially in connection with the foreign policy of the Administration. He has always been a Republican and is heartily in sympathy with the expansion policy of President McKinley.

Newport's Sunday Night Entertainments.

NEWPORT, R. I., Aug. 20.—There was a large gathering of society folk at the Casino to-night. The following cottagers entertained parties in the grill rooms: Mrs. Potter Palmer, Mrs. Stuyvesant Fish, Mrs. Henry Clews Reginald Brooks, Mrs. E. Rollins Morse, Mrs. C. Oliver Iselin, Mrs. Clarence Dolan, Mrs. John Clinton Gray, Mrs. Elisha Dyer, Jr., Mrs. George B. DeForest, Mrs. William Page Thompson, Mrs. Nathan Thayer, F. O. Beach, F. B. Riggs, Mrs. Joseph Harrimanand R. B. Van Cortlandt.

Laying a New Trolley Roadbed in Brooklyn.

A new style of roadbed has been adopted by the Brooklyn Rapid Transit Railroad Company, and a gang of men is making the change on the Court street route. Heavy girder rails are being laid upon beds of concrete ten inches wide and a foot deep. No ties are used. The rails are held at proper distance by steel braces running crosswise. These in turn are kept in place by the granite paving blocks. President Rossiter says the new style of roadbed will make riding in trolley cars as smooth as bicycle riding on asphalt pavement.

Housekeeper an Acid Suicide.

Mrs. Minnie Miller, 35 years old, whom J. P. Sullivan of 230 Ninth avenue had employed as a housekeeper, drank carbolic acid at noon yesterday and died two hours later in the New York Hospital. Sullivan is a widower with three children, and Mrs. Miller took care of his home. She had been acting queerly for some time, Sullivan said.

POINTS WITH THE ACTORS.

THE NEW POPULARITY OF DRAMAS ON RELIGIOUS THEMES.

Why Stuart Robson May Have Been Attracted to an Unorthodox Role—A Comedy of the Old Wallack Repertory Condensed—A New Chinese Melodrama.

Stuart Robson, although the son of an orthodox clergyman, is a firm unbeliever, and on several occasions has made public addresses against the pulpit. It may be that, besides seeing a possibly popular play in "The Gadfly," the theme of the book appealed to him personally. The best piece on the subject of agnosticism to be acted here was "Daniel Rochat," translated from the French of Sardou and used at the Union Square by the Palmer company. That was a virile work as compared with Sardou's later stage exposition of a religious subject in "Spiritism," which failed in Paris and New York alike. Theatrical managers used to be afraid to take up plays which had Christianity for a main theme, even though it might present a wholly orthodox view. Pious characters were not deemed undesirable, but the feeling was that devout people in the audiences were keenly susceptible to shock, and that it would not do to present an aggressively Christian hero, much less an agnostic or an atheist. When "The Sign of the Cross" was brought out at the Knickerbocker, the first night seemed to settle it as an irretrievable failure. Its central character was a young Roman oppressor of early Christians. He was a cruel and lustful scoundrel until a gentle Christian maiden, whom he had marked for a victim, converted him to the new faith. The nature of the play was floridly melodramatic. Its illustrations of persecution and torture were graphic. The performance was excellent. But the first Broadway audience, or an overwhelming majority of it, refused to be impressed favorably. The reviewers rated the piece as good, but it was rejected utterly by the two-dollar auditors, and the owners decided to send the actors and their outfit straightway back to London. At the last moment, however, they resolved to make a trial in another American city. They sent "The Sign of the Cross" to Pittsburg. Their forlorn hope of a better result was based on the fact that it had succeeded greatly with religious people in England. A week in Pittsburg was prosperous, and during two ensuing seasons the play, rejected with scorn by upper Broadway, has been accepted elsewhere, even in other sections of New York city. That experience with a religious drama has been followed by "The Little Minister" and "The Christian," each with a Christian preacher as its hero, and both appealing with great success to the most discriminating people. So it seems as though all sorts of our people who go to theatres are unprejudiced as to plays on religious subjects. The managers not only think so, but are inclined to favor such pieces, of which we are to have several new ones next season.

It was hardly to be expected that on a night so hot as Saturday was, over a hundred persons would have to be turned away from the Star Theatre because there was no more room inside. Such was the case, however. After two months without a serious play of any sort on Broadway there was a large crowd who wanted to see "The Queen of Chinatown." Some late arrivals tried standing on the edge of the crowd at the rear of the theatre. They could hear the heroine's moans for justice and the hero's declarations even if it cost him his life she should have it, but they could see neither the suffering maiden nor the large hearted "true American." Glimpses of an elaborate scene of bright yellows and reds, and numerous Chinese lanterns could be caught over the heads of the crowd. The top feather on the Queen of Chinatown's hat was the nearest thing to a character that could be seen. The late-comers decided that they would at least find out what the yellow and red painted canvas was supposed to show and who the people with the noble sentiments were. It was found by looking at a programme that the yellow and red paint represented *Hop Lee's* Gambling Den. A further inspection of the uppermost three feet of the scene made this seem quite possible. The characters were all our old friends brought down from the shelf and dusted and polished up for the season of 1899-1900. An endeavor to get some of the plot by standing on tip-toe and looking over about twenty bobbing heads was too wearisome even for such a work of art as "The Queen of Chinatown." An invitation then came to view the melodrama from the wings. The late comers accepted with thanks and arrived behind the scenes just as the heavy villain was fanning himself and mopping his brow in a most unvillainish fashion. He had just given the adventuress his last warning for the seventh time, on this occasion, however, having varied the process by standing in the middle of Mott street, while she smoked a cigarette on the sidewalk. This scene having finished about fifteen supernumeries dressed as newsboys went on to fill up the rear of the stage while some specialties were performed. This meant work for the stage manager. The boys had to be kept moving to give action to the scene and yet be kept from being noisy. A soubrette went before the footlights and sang "Knocked 'Em in the Old Kent Road." As she saved her best effort, a coon song, for the encore, she wanted to be sure that there would be one. So a Dutch comedian, who had been doing comic tumbles at one side of the stage, was called off by the stage manager, who told him to walk around among the supers and tell them to applaud at the end of the song. The Dutch comedian wandered among the boys and delivered his message, doing comic tumbles all the while, which greatly amused the gallery boys, who probably never realized that he was doing anything but just trying to be amusing. During a whistling specialty the newsboys did a cakewalk. From start to finish of it the stage-manager called out directions to them in a loud voice. If it had not been that the base drum and the trombone players were getting in extra loud work, probably due to renewed strength from a summer vacation, the stage manager's voice would surely have been heard by the audience. "Now put some life into it," he fairly yelled. "Whoop her up." His efforts were rewarded for the cakewalk brought forth a prolonged volley of applause from the hail melted and entirely willed spectators. The play was certainly amusing viewed from the rear, among pieces of opium dens and lamp-posts of Mott street. There was one rather sad figure back there, however. It was a little boy not more than seven or eight years old who was to have been in the cake walk. The authorities refused a permit, however, and the little fellow could only stand in the wings and watch "the artistic triumphs" of the older boys.

There is a pleasing reversal in the brief farce that Frederick Bond used at Proctor's last week. It is taken from the old Wallack comedy, "My Awful Dad," the characters transferred being the father, the son, their house servant and the widow in search of a lawyer's advice. In the opposition of a father, who is gay and a spendthrift, with a son, who is industrious and miserly, who upbraids his parent for the latter's wild dissipations and begrudgingly pays his bills, there is quite enough of the unusual to give the sketch a favorable start. Matings of this sort are few in dramas of full length, and are almost unknown in twenty-minute plays, the situation usual with dramatists reversing the behavior of these two characters. Then the language in which this odd relationship is explained is brightly comic, with no more of an old-fashioned flavor than is pleasing. The first of the incidents preserved is the home-coming of this frisky parent. He has had an all night outing, and his son awaits him in censorius mood. The elder's defence is in retorts that smother the other's fault finding. Next the father receives his son's caller, a young and attractive widow. She desires the law's aid in releasing her from a will that binds her not to marry a young man. Her white haired listener is smitten and readily sympathetic. He waxes enthusiastic in an address in her behalf to a suppositious jury, bidding her, in asides, to bow her head and to weep so as to make her actions harmonious with his harangue. At a moment when the parent has become very tender, the son interrupts. The disclosure that his client has been imposed upon so angers him that he is at loss for words. As he hesitates his father supplies suggestions, which the son follows, as offering the best chance in sight for ridding himself of the parental offender. They are in the form of advice to the widow, and to the effect that she marry the father and include promises that the groom's debts will be paid. Then the curtain drops on the elder inviting all present to his wedding, the son interjecting savagely that all would be at his expense. Aside from the freshness of this material, the brief play gains by far better acting than is usual in these short pieces. Mr. Bond's portrayal of the sportive father easily dominates, yet leaves a chance for his associates to make their impression. Charles Halton, as the protesting provider of his parent's pocket money, is in pleasing contrast to the other, and Mrs. Eva Vincent shows an Irishwoman that recalls Mrs. Yeamans, perhaps for being at times quite different from that actress. Dallas Tyler's widow is good to look at; little else is demanded of her.

An attempt will soon be made to establish a German theatre in London. The city has a larger German population than Hamburg, but since Sir Augustus Harris brought a company to Drury Lane, four years ago, no regular performances have been given in the German language. Karl Junkermann, who acted at the Germania here several seasons ago, is to have charge of the enterprise.

Harry Monkhouse, the comedian who was here in "A Gaiety Girl," is the latest London actor to become a star. He is appearing in a farce called "Larks in London." Its fun comes from the trials of a professor, who writes an opera and has it accepted thirty years later on condition that it be used as a burlesque. Most of the action passes on the stage of a theatre.

Kyrle Bellew and Mrs. Potter are to have their own theatre when they produce David Belasco's version of "The Duke's Motto."

Juliette Nesville, who went to Paris and tried acting there, will return to London to be the comic opera singer in the English version of "The Proper Caper."

Florence Warden's "The Guinea Pigs" did not entirely please in London, although its high merit in some particulars was acknowledged. It dealt with the conflict between the wealthy promoters, of which Hooley was the greatest example, and the classes of society to whom riches are not so important. The correctness of the play's observation was admitted, and its dialogue was bright. But London did not like it. It is doubtful if any play on that subject would succeed there. Discouraging reports came to this country concerning H. A. Jones's "The Rogue's Comedy." That was a similar theme and failed on that account. Here it was considered one of the author's best works.

The Theatre Français is to revive during the Exposition months the most noted plays in the modern and classical repertoire, and produce in spectacular fashion several plays new to its stage. Jules Claretie recently received an adaptation of Daudet's "Tartarin de Tarascon" from an author who has his own ideas as to the best way of getting his plays before the public, although his name is unknown to fame. year produced six new plays and the Odéon twen- He enclosed a notification that unless the piece were acted by a certain date he would expect a penalty of $2,000. The Theatre Français last ty. The other Paris theatres followed in this order: The Gymnase produced eight plays, the Palais Royal and the Nouveau seven each, the Vaudeville, the Bouffes Parisiens and the Déjazet six, the Variétés, the Renaissance, the Folies Dramatiques and the Bouffes-du-Nord five, the Ambigu and the Athénée four, the Gaité and the Folies Bergere three, and the Châtelet, Nations, République, Comédie Parisienne and the Marigny two. Antoine at his theatre gave twelve new pieces, making the number of novelties of the season 120. It is thought that Coquelin will return to the Francaise one year from next fall. "The Slave," by Gaston Schefferes; "The Conquerors," by Samson and Raymond, and "For Love" by Dorchin, are to be novelties next year at the Français.

August Strindberg's new play is to deal with material taken from the history of Sweden. One of the old kings has won a victory over the Russians and stands on the pinnacle of good fortune. His friends warn him not to trust too much to the favor of the gods. While a "Te Deum" is rung news comes that the Russians have won back their territory and thus made his victory useless. Other misfortunes follow. His son and mother foment a conspiracy against him and a pestilence arises. He is finally put under the Pope's ban. The tragedy aims to show the helplessness of individuals in the drift of circumstances. The philosophy of the play is summed up in the words of the king to his son: "You see, my son, what life is. When a man is twenty he thinks he has solved the riddle of life; at thirty he begins to think about the riddle seriously, and at forty finds it cannot be solved."

This, with two other dramas founded on episodes in Swedish national history, will be given during the next winter in Stockholm. Strindberg is also writing a drama of contemporary life. He has recovered his health and is said to be in better condition now than at any time since the beginning of his literary career.

Six plays reached more than one hundred representations in Paris last year. Not all of them were given so frequently because the public demanded to see them, as the long run has as many attractions to the Paris as to the New York manager. But as the record of one hundred performances always stands for itself, it is interesting. The plays were "Les Dames de Chez Maxim," to be acted here as "The Girl from Maxim's," "Le Vieux Marcheur," "La Vande a Fifi," and in musical plays, "Aymon's Four Daughters" and "Veronique." The first of the list, "The Girl from Maxim's," was the only piece which had more than two hundred representations last season. Kare, the Latin Quartier humorist who had so much fun out of Queanay de Beauregard's play, says that he has written a farce to be called "Paris-Basle and Return," which will contain the principal episodes of the Dreyfus incident. The revival of Edmond Rostand's "Les Romanesques" at the Théâtre Français has met with a success denied to the original production. But its author did not then have the vogue of "Cyrano de Bergerac" to his credit. Augustin Daly intended to try the piece in English next winter. Worms, who was about to re-engage the company at the Français, has consented to remain another year for the gala performances to be given during the exposition months. Alexandre Dumas's "The Three Guardsmen" and Sardou's "Patrie," in which Mlle. Brandes, Albert Lambert and Mounet-Sully will appear, will be the most important productions of the summer. It will be observed that both are melodramas.

A comedy in two acts written by Carmen Sylvia (Queen Elizabeth of Roumania) has recently been acted for a charitable purpose in Leipsic. It had previously been given in private only, and the German public had its first opportunity to see a play written by a reigning sovereign, if her country is one of the Balkan states. The German actors who recently wanted to play "The Weavers" in Vienna, and were not allowed to do so, petitioned the censor to let them give scenes from the work. They were not allowed to do that either. Agnes Sorma is not to have all the advertisement that comes from acting in German in Paris. A Viennese company is to give operetta there. Sorma will confine herself to German works and attempt no French pieces. Her repertoire has been increased by the addition of several classical roles, but for an actress who has gained renown in Germany, it remains somewhat narrow. She is looked upon in her own country as a star who won her reputation before she had enjoyed the advantages of routine.

Mrs. Craigie, who has so far but one successful play to her credit, is much in demand by London actors and managers. Possibly she is very much in vogue just now, and that in London plays a much more influential part than it does here. Managers do not keep