

# MR. JACOB A. RIIS, REPORTER, AUTHOR, PHILANTHROPIST.

THAT was unique recognition of philanthropic work which the talented author of "How the Other Half Lives," Mr. Jacob A. Riis, at present and for many years past a newspaper reporter in New York, received from the King's Daughters of Brooklyn quite recently when they named their settlement house on Henry street in his honor. Bishop Potter, who dedicated it, remarked on the occasion, "The sight of a modern reporter who is at the same time a philanthropist is a novelty which touches the human heart." This was not intended as a reflection upon the class to which Mr. Riis belongs, but accentuated the fact that reporters have little time, even if they have the inclination, for philanthropic work in its largest sense, as practiced by Mr. Riis.

Mr. Riis is by this time accustomed to having honors bestowed upon him, and not alone in this country has he received them, for it was only last September that he was knighted by the king of Denmark. He was decorated with the title of "Knight of Danneborg," an exceptional distinction even for a native of the country to which the distinguished order pertains.

It is doubly gratifying to his friends that he should have won his honors in this country and also have received merited recognition abroad.

Mr. Riis was born in Denmark in 1849, came to this country in the steerage and nearly succumbed to the privations attendant upon the life of a poor alien in a new country and a great city. He finally obtained employment as a reporter, which profession he has followed ever since. It was in the pursuit of his occupation as a police reporter that he obtained an insight into the suffering and misery among the tenement house population of New York and garnered the material which he set forth so interestingly in "How the Other Half Lives," his first and most successful book. Since this was published he has written "The Children of the Poor" and "A Ten Years' War," but, as he himself has said, he writes his books only from his experiences and when strongly impelled to do so by an overmastering motive.

Mr. Riis' labors in behalf of tenement reform have given him great celebrity, but this he deprecates as perhaps subservient of the highest principles, since he has but followed his natural bent and has not indulged in it from any other desire than to benefit the miserable wretches who are crowded into the human hives with which his profession has made him so familiar.

As to the remark with which Bishop Potter opened his address, "To think of a modern reporter as a philanthropist rather taxes the imagination," Mr. Riis said he could not agree with the reverend gentleman's views of journalism, for, after 20 years' experience, he was able to say that he had received the greatest encouragement from that

source and had come to have a genuine reverence for the work. "The world is not so bad," he said in concluding the little speech he made at the dedication of the settlement house. "It is good, thoroughly good. You simply have to touch it right."

These, of course, are the views of a

It is gathered that he was well born, his father being a schoolmaster in the quaint old town of Ribe, on the north coast of Denmark. Danish conservatism can hardly be understood by those who are not familiar with the formal society of a Danish town or settlement. Social lines are closely drawn, for the

funds were soon exhausted, and he was reduced to great straits, on one occasion walking from New York to Philadelphia, after securing his ferry passage across North river by pawning his silk handkerchief. He worked in brick-yards and at any job that offered, on his way back to New York, a few years

not a competency. But the first three days in his new position, he has said, were passed without food, and on the third night he fainted from hunger and exhaustion. No wonder he has sympathy for the poor and distressed, having experienced a measure of suffering in his own life.

one, I hope), and that is really the height of my ambition. I never wrote a book in my life before, and only wrote this one because I knew of this thing and no one else seemed to be there to take it up. The book was written because somebody had to do it. Oddly enough, the simple telling of that which every one can see for himself and should see for himself seems to have struck lots of people 'all in a heap.' But the subject is not exhausted. So far as I am concerned, I stand merely upon the threshold. If any new light comes to me, if there is more to tell, which no one else who can say it better seems willing to speak, I shall do it myself as a plain duty."

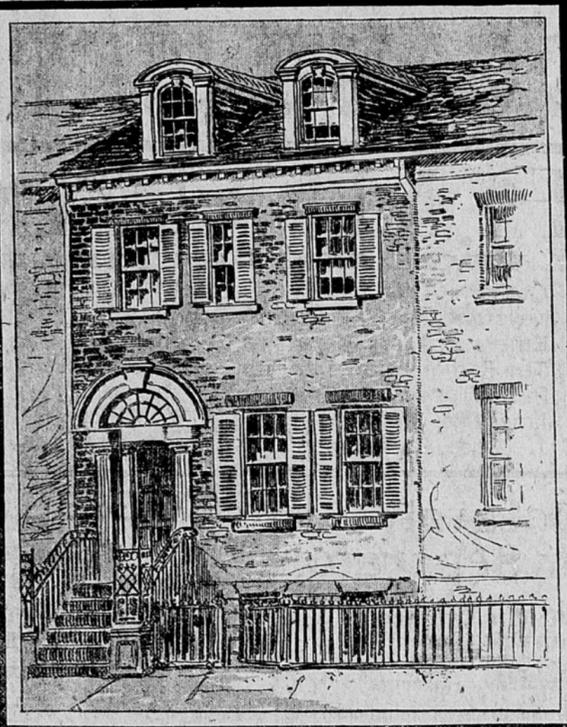
These remarks show the real man—his simple earnestness, his sturdy character, his humanitarian sympathies. It was one of the pleasures of the occasion to which allusion was made at the opening of this article that it occurred on the twenty-fifth anniversary of Mr. Riis' marriage and that his wife shared the honors of the dedication by being made co-chairman with her husband. This leads up to mention of the romantic attachment that has existed between Mr. Riis and his devoted wife, who, like him, is a native of Denmark and whom he wooed when a boy, but only won after he had started his fortune in America. According to her lover, she was the prettiest maiden in Ribe and, as she was the daughter of a rich and aristocratic family, had many suitors, most of whom were vastly preferable from a worldly point of view to the carpenter's apprentice to whom friends had given the major portion of that \$40 which constituted his capital when he sailed for America.

But the boy who had learned English by reading Dickens at odd moments in his work, who had been brought almost to death's door by privation and who had triumphed over all, was not the sort of suitor to be turned aside, and so the young lady was compelled to yield. The cheer of his beautiful home he has carried into the slums for the brightening of other lives, and the quaint humor that is expressed in his writings is the direct outflow of a quainter nature. Of his birthplace he says, alluding to the fact that after the night watchmen were abolished all the people united in a petition to have them reinstated. "The town that had been waked every hour of the night since the early middle ages to be told that it slept soundly could not possibly take a night's rest without it."

Mr. Riis' education was gained in the same manner that the great majority of successful men have obtained theirs—i. e., out of school. He alludes to the pride his father took in his son's first book, tempered by the regret that he had not gained his knowledge in the regular way—in school and college—as follows: "There was at last a man of letters in the family, though he came by a road not down, on the official map."



Jacob A. Riis.



King's Daughters' Settlement House, Henry St. Brooklyn.

thorough optimist, a man of broad sympathy and sweetness of nature, who has not allowed his surroundings to turn him from the path which he marked out for himself at the beginning. A glimpse of the author-reporter's early life is afforded in some reminiscences he has recently published, from which

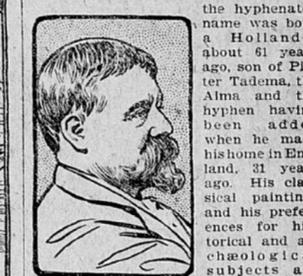
people are greatly attached to tradition. So when the son of the schoolmaster decided to leave school and learn the carpenter's trade he was all but ostracized by the community and finally, with \$40 as his total capital, came to America, where he thought he might get at least a start in life. His

later, passing a night in a cemetery, with a tombstone as his pillow, and sleeping as soundly and sweetly, he declares, as he ever slept in his life. His energy and courage received their reward, and when he had once found a position that supported him he stuck to it until he made it yield him fame, if

Mr. Riis' literary success came to him unsought and was the direct expression of his sympathies, as he merely put on paper what transpired before his eyes and passed in procession as he took his daily walks abroad. He said several years ago: "I am not a literary man—only a plain newspaper reporter (a good

## SIR LAURENCE ALMA-TADEMA.

Among the recipients of knightly honors at the hand of the late queen of Great Britain was the eminent artist, Alma-Tadema, whose latest portrait accompanies this article. This artist with the hyphenated name was born a Hollander about 61 years ago, son of Pieter Tadema, the Alma and the hyphen having been added when he made his home in England, 31 years ago. His classical paintings and his preferences for historical and archaeological subjects are well known. His



home in St. John's Wood is said to be the most artistic residence in London, a perfect paradise of art, in which dwell with him a talented wife and two charming daughters, all of whom have achieved more or less distinction in either art or literature.

It is related of Alma-Tadema that he assumed the prefix in order to be among the A's in the art catalogues and thereby more prominent than he would be among the T's. However this may be, he has made the name a famous one and still keeps on painting, notwithstanding the remark of a well meaning old lady when she heard of his being knighted that she supposed he would now "give it up and live like a gentleman."

## LATEST PORTRAIT OF THE BOER GENERAL, DE WET.

If an excuse were needed for presenting the portrait of De Wet, the brave Boer leader, which appears in the accompanying illustration, it might easily be found in the fact that he has protracted the defense of his cause in South Africa beyond the expectations of both friends and foes. Nimble, agile and full of expedients, he is yet well aware that he is pitted against an implacable and

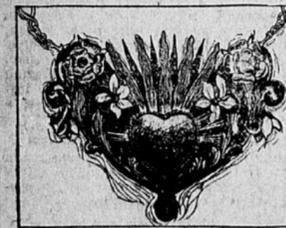


relentless foe in the person of the British commander, Lord Kitchener. Great Britain crushed all opposition before by the massing of her troops under Lord Roberts, and the little Irishman went home to receive the plaudits of the multitudes, but the guerrilla warfare conducted since by General De Wet has taxed all the resources of the great conqueror of the Sudan and would doubtless have been equally successful if Roberts had remained in command.

As this portrait shows and his recent gallant fights have amply proved, De Wet is a man of determination, of dogged obstinacy and heedless of sacrifices so long as results are obtained which inflict injury upon the British.

## A TRIBUTE TO MME. CRONJE.

The women of France have just forwarded to Mme. Cronje, the heroic wife



of the famous Boer general, now in captivity at St. Helena, a beautiful or-

namment which is at once a tribute to their esteem and a symbol of the heroic virtues of that estimable lady. It is intended as a "pectoral," or breast ornament. It is about 4 inches long by 2 1/2 broad and consists of a golden heart as the chief figure, surrounded by an aureole of glory represented by rays of gold, emblematic of the heart of gold possessed by the brave woman who not only accompanied her husband everywhere in the field, but insisted upon sharing his captivity.

This unique and beautiful Parisian production, costly and elegant, was obtained by subscriptions from women all over France, 51,000 having contributed 1 sou each. This fact is set forth in a beautiful book which accompanies the jewel, and doubtless the gift will be very comforting to the illustrious exiles at St. Helena.

## A SARCOPHAGUS 2,000 YEARS OLD.

Some antiquarians found recently in the Isle of Wight an old grave containing a sarcophagus which scientists have estimated to be not less than 2,000 years old. It is thought to be a relic of Phoenician occupation when the merchants of Tyre sent to ancient Britain for their tin.

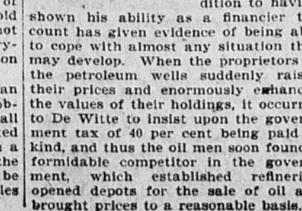
The Phoenicians of olden times had at least two sources of supply, accord-



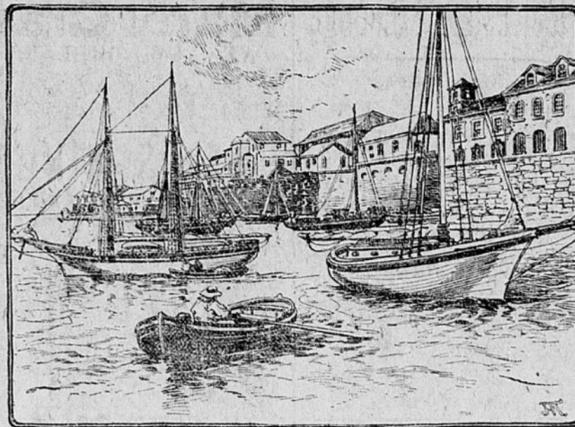
ing to historians, one being the mines of Great Britain, and the other those of Huelva, in Spain, a port near the mouth of the Rio Tinto, from which Columbus sailed on his first voyage to America.

## THE CZAR'S GREAT FINANCIER.

One of the personages whom the Czar Nicholas II delights to honor above most of his advisers is Count De Witte, who was once a clerk in the freight department of a railroad and is now in charge of Russia's national finances. In fact, it is because of Count De Witte's great success in paying off a loan of \$50,000,000 that he has been presented with a title and kept in a place of honor and responsibility, in spite of the scandal his late wife brought upon him by speculating in stocks. In addition to having shown his ability as a financier the count has given evidence of being able to cope with almost any situation that may develop. When the proprietors of the petroleum wells suddenly raised their prices and enormously enhanced the values of their holdings, it occurred to De Witte to insist upon the government tax of 40 per cent being paid in kind, and thus the oil men soon found a formidable competitor in the government, which established refineries, opened depots for the sale of oil and brought prices to a reasonable basis.

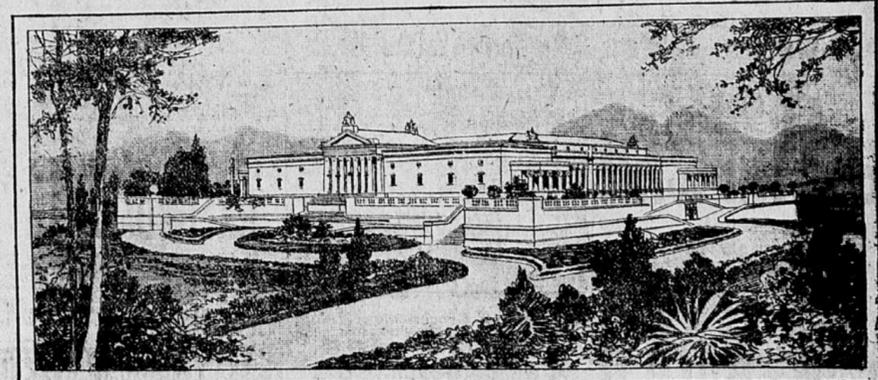


## COLOMBIA'S HOTBED OF REVOLUTIONS—CITY OF PANAMA.



The report recently promulgated during the latest of Colombia's revolutions that in case the state government could not protect the city of Panama United States warships would exert a beneficial influence on the isthmus, but gave rise to a variety of emotions. The city of Panama, shown in the illustration, important strategically as the Pacific terminus of the Panama railway and as commanding one entrance to the French transisthmian canal, has been a hotbed of revolutionary disturbances almost ever since it was founded in 1518. It was an important place while the conquest of Peru by Pizarro was going on, and in 1670 was so wealthy that it was sacked and half destroyed by the celebrated British buccaneer, Morgan, afterward governor of Jamaica. It was then transferred to its present site, but has always borne a turbulent existence, particularly attracting the attention of revolutionists, who, though often starting their disturbances in the thinly settled interior of Colombia, usually end up at Panama, on account of its being the chief port and center of wealth.

## MEXICO TO HAVE A MAGNIFICENT ACROPOLIS.



Monterey, Mexico, is soon to witness the erection of a modern acropolis upon the summit of one of its beautiful "mesas," or table topped hills. Plans have been accepted for a magnificent palace, the beauty of which may be faintly conceived from the accompanying illustration. It will occupy the leveled summit of a mesa 100 feet above the plateau in the center of the princely Milmo domain, which covers an area of 900 square miles. It will comprise two courts or "patios," after the style of architecture so favored in Mexico. These patios will be decorated in the Greek-Ionic style, with friezes telling ancient classic stories; mosaic pavements, long rows of colonnades and caryatids. The hill upon which the acropolis is to be situated will be ascended by means of double ramps, from terrace to terrace, and there will be a peristyle, below which a spirited "quadriga" will prance in the waters of a gushing cascade. This glorious creation, which it is estimated will occupy two years in construction, will belong to Mrs. Eugene Kelly, one of the beautiful Milmo sisters, who is a native of Mexico and already owns handsome homes in England and the United States.