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LONDON LETTER

London, January 1st, 1914.
 LAST night, at Sandringham, her Norfolk home, Queen Alexandra once again performed the time-honoured Royal New Year's Eve ceremony by celebrating the formal opening of the main entrance of the spirit of the new year. Shortly before midnight all the occupants left the house, and when 12 o'clock struck the Queen-mother unlocked the door, and entered followed by the King and the other members of the Royal Family, with the visitors. Then the infant year was greeted with a toast proposed by His Majesty, and this having been duly honoured the whole party retired to rest. A custom idyllic in its simplicity and as beautiful in sentiment.

WITH the passing of 1913 every Briton feels that it has been, in all departments of national life, an extremely strenuous and notable one. Of course, we have our Cassandras who go about wailing and telling the people that the "end of all things" is at hand, that our country is going to the dogs, that the masses are in smouldering rebellion, and that we have no future as a people. Every generation of Britons has had this kind of prophet of gloom, but so long as the bulk of Briton's sons play their part willingly and efficiently, whatever their calling, there is no doubt that the prosperity of the old land will be maintained. Certainly, no impartial reviewer can adopt a pessimistic attitude with regard to the outlook in Britain. The year 1913 has been the boom year of British trade, and although the returns are showing some signs of falling off, the volume of trade still remains at a very high tide.

Peace has been maintained during the year in England, and the unhappy Balkan war has come to an end. In spite of the appalling cost of armaments in Europe there are happily signs of growing international endeavours to lessen the burden of naval and military taxation which is approaching an intolerable strain. Large numbers of Englishmen hold with M. Anatole France "that slowly, but surely, with broken steps, all the peoples of the world are moving towards peace." As regards England's domestic politics it appears not unlikely that some of the most debatable questions will be settled more or less amicably by the Englishman's saving genius of compromise.

Even in the problem of labour unrest there is noticeable improvement in the labour world, with better prospects on the horizon. One need not pose as a philosopher to make the observation that labour turmoil is usually a sign of good trade inasmuch as the workers do not as a rule give up their work to fight when there is a great deal of unemployment about. Altogether there is a widespread belief that the clouds here and there will pass away, and that the good sense of the British people will find a way out of all the troubles which seem to threaten them.

ALREADY we on this side of the Atlantic are beginning to take a lively interest in the British Dominions Exhibition in 1915. Around that year a number of historical memories entwine themselves. It celebrates the centenary of the battle of Waterloo, marking the completion of a hundred years of peace between ourselves and our neighbours across the Channel, the seven hundredth anniversary of the signing of Magna Charta, the quadrennial assembling of the Imperial Conference in London, the anticipated publication of the report of the Empire Trade Commission, and the coming of age of the Prince of Wales, on which occasion the Empire will keep high festival—these are only a few of the reasons for the holding of an exhibition of the natural resources and principal industries of the Empire in that year. Now that the Crystal Palace has become public property, it is in this

building under whose roof was held the first great exhibition of 1851, the coming exhibition is to take place. Lord Strathcona is extremely enthusiastic upon the scheme and characteristically says: "London, our Imperial city, will in the year 1915 be a centre of the keenest interest to every citizen of the Empire, and she will welcome from every quarter of the globe those of her children who avail themselves of that Imperial year for a visit to the homeland. In the course of people drawn to the metropolis of the Empire in 1915 there will be a unique opportunity for reviewing our Imperial blessings and our Imperial responsibilities." We are sanguine that our Canadian sons and daughters will take a noble part in this projected exhibition.

Mlle. KYASHT has concluded her five years' engagement at the Empire Theatre in the metropolis, and is now charming new audiences on American soil. The gifted ballerina was the first of the modern Russian "stars" of the dance to be seen in London, and so gratified was the English capital with the feat that it greedily asked for more. Hence the later coming of Pavlova and Karsavina, with whom Kyasht, in her own style, displaying personally in a unique degree, fused with technique, has never had anything to fear from comparisons. Probably Mlle. Kyasht would never make an actress, but she is unsurpassable as a formal and decorative dancer. For the lengthy period of half a decade, with the rarest of holidays, which can have been no light task, this artiste has upheld the purest traditions of ballet dancing in London town. In private life Mlle. Kyasht is known as Madame Ragosin, her husband being the son of a Russian general. Her successor at the Empire will be Miss Phyllis Bedells, a dancer of tested worth, a practised mime, and what is more, a gay and sympathetic personality.

THE recent purchase by Mr. Mallaby Deeley of the Duke of Bedford's mid-London estate has set all the antiquarian tongues wagging. The buildings and precincts included in this remarkable purchase are, of course, immensely interesting to at least a large minority of London population. It is said that no living man knows modern London. But there are many thousands of people who know enough about it to feel interested in what is to become of the properties bought by Mr. Mallaby Deeley.

Covent Garden and Drury Lane—could two names have appeared in the documents of a modern business transaction with more historic association than these, unless it were the Abbey, St. Paul's or the Tower? The Covent Garden Theatre has long been a tribunal of dramatic art, not merely for the British Isles, but for Europe. Drury Lane—who does not associate that with many of the brightest stars in the actor constellations of British history?

There is nothing like Covent Garden district anywhere. Outwardly and inwardly it has preserved through all modern changes something of the roystering, Arcadian, flashy yet shady, criminal, sporting, drinking, fisticuff, stagey atmosphere of Stuart times, in which it was laid out. In King Street something of the old gentility of what was once the fashionable parade of London still lingers in dim, refined old art shops whose clients are a mystery unless they are members of the Garrick Club who have absent-mindedly walked too far east. Here, too, is the greatest theatrical effect that London offers—an early scene at Covent Garden when the growers and waggons in from the country are met by the revellers from the picturesque, fancy dress ball in a spring morning among the flowers and vegetables. It is uncertain to what purpose the historic site will now be devoted.

CALEDONIAN.