

THE CONSTRUCTION OF HIGHWAYS

THE first International Road Congress began its sittings in Paris recently. In brackets below the title on the official programme occur these words:—"Fitting up of roads for suiting them to the new means of locomotion." In other words, the motor-car has compelled notice of the roads. It is curious, also, that in these days, when national and international conferences are continually taking place, often about matters of trivial interest, no such gathering should have ever been held before, says the London Times. Problems concerning the construction and maintenance of roads would, it might be thought, be of sufficient importance to have been matters of official communication between civilized countries long ago. For roads and their construction are all important to every country. Both in peace and war, for health and commerce, and in the daily life of every citizen as well, the road is a daily factor. It is true that an unofficial exchange of ideas between the civil engineers and surveyors of various countries has here and there taken place, but there has never been before a properly arranged congress at which results could be compared, and experiences noted, before this coming one, which meets next week. It has been most appropriately called by the French authorities; for France in the construction and maintenance of roads is pre-eminent.

The importance of roads is but little recognized by the multitude. Perhaps it is that familiarity has bred contempt. Since, however, the earliest man trod the earth, and the first wheel moved over the ground, the road and the foot-path, which is only the highway writ small, have been necessary to the free movement of mankind. A country without roads or with bad roads is to all intents and purposes uncivilized. A country with good roads—and the condition of its roads is not a bad criterion of a nation's progress—owns one of the greatest assets which can be possessed of a community.

The Roads of Olden Days

In olden times, when wars were frequent, highways were mainly constructed for military purposes, and many of the roads of the

Roman conquerors stand today as the best example not only of their time, but of today as well. Having been constructed for military purposes these great monuments of generalship seldom took into account the gradients of valleys and hills, for they lead direct from town to town with a straightness which if inconvenient to the draught animal of old, and the cyclist of today, had at least the great merit of being the shortest way. In big towns, to judge by the remains at Pompeii, and elsewhere, the Romans solved the dust problem; for their roads were constructed on the pave system, paving stones large and small constituting the surface, and, with all their inherent disadvantages of unevenness, stone slabs, or setts, produce neither dust nor mud. Perhaps in the days of Rome's power the pave was smooth enough, who knows. There are many today who think that good pave, properly laid on sound foundations, will be the dustless road surface of the future.

Gradually the value of roads became more recognized through the Middle Ages, though it was natural that, when the greater party of the population who held power in the State rode on horseback, a road suitable for wheeled traffic should have been at a discount. In fact it was obviously better that the road in the days of the knights and squires, when forces were mounted on both sides, should be made of soft material. If constructed of hard stone, the dame on her palfrey and the armored horseman would equally have suffered. As wheeled traffic, however, increased in volume, so the necessity for making the surfaces better and harder, and the roads straighter and wider, became obvious. At last came the palmy days of highway construction, during the days of Telford and Macadam at the beginning of the last century. Speed and room for his Majesty's mail was the cry.

There were no railed roads then to carry mails and passengers, and the teams on the galloping stages often accomplished a maximum of 19 miles an hour, and averaged 14 to 15 miles an hour on level stretches of road. Then came the downfall of the highway.

So greatly had the popular imagination been caught by the iron horse, his flanged wheels, and his railed track, that practically

no new main road has been constructed since the great North and Holyhead roads of Macadam and Telford, some 80 years ago. During that period the population has more than doubled, and the wealth and importance of the country has increased in an enormous degree. Our roads, however, are no better than, if as good as, then. Thus interest in the highways has nearly faded away, till quite lately, when the motor-car and cycle have revived it. The 1,100 coaches which were running in 1830 for the purpose of carrying mails and passengers had dwindled down in 1845 to a few dozen. Now they have almost disappeared. Thus it comes about that the road, its construction and maintenance, the literature about it, its histories and mysteries, are unknown and unfelt today. Once more, however, the road is forcing its supreme and everyday importance on individuals and Governments alike.

Road Maintenance in England

There is, as regards this country, a curious fact, to which public opinion should be awakened. At this conference official representatives of all nations will be present. In this country, however, there is no Government department which takes any cognisance of roads. There is no Minister or Ministry to answer questions concerning highways. There is no authority to appeal to, if aggrieved. The county surveyors, excellent men for the most part, their highway committees, and the county councils, to which both are responsible, manage and maintain our best highways. The rest of our roads are the care of the highway committees and district councils, numbered by the hundred. The procedure seems to have been more than usually English and casual. No wonder confusion and waste exist. At one time the Government helped, or, at any rate, had a finger in the pie, but since 1888 the Exchequer has not given any direct grant in aid of main roads, but lumped together all sums given to county authorities, in itself a vital error, and there is no central authority to outline a continuous or definite policy, or to see that public money is spent efficiently and not wasted.

Perhaps after this International Congress in Paris, in which the delegates from every

nation, except Great Britain, represent a distinct Government department in their own countries with which they can confer and communicate, those responsible for the ordering of our national destinies may think it worth while to bestow a moment's attention on this question, and so arrange that the 27,556 miles of main road and the 117,000 miles of good secondary roads traversing this country shall be to some extent recognized as worthy of national care. Take the money value alone. If we estimate that the main roads are worth about £5,000 a mile, a most moderate calculation, and the second-class roads half this figure, no less a sum than £430,280,000 is represented in money value alone. The sum is a simple one:

27,556 miles of main road at £5,000 per mile	£137,780,000
117,000 miles of secondary roads at £2,500 per mile	£292,500,000
	£430,280,000

This sum is two-thirds of our National Debt, and we are the only country in Europe of importance which has not got a Ministry of roads and bridges, or of ways and communications, and which has no central Government department to organize, control, or see that the present expenditure of many millions a year is wisely directed.

Mr. John Burns has wisely sent an official of the Local Government Board to watch proceedings at the Congress. It is the best that we can do—at present. The delegates of the forthcoming Congress in Paris are drawn from the following nations: France, Germany, Russia, Austria, Belgium, United States, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Italy, and Portugal, and, semi-officially, as stated above, Great Britain is also represented.

Arrangements and Aims of the Congress

The arrangements include four days devoted to sectional meetings in Paris, journeys to the Riviera to view the route goudronnée of the South, and to places near Paris where road experiments are in progress, and there will be inspections also of the main roads near Paris where specimens of pave, old and new, flint, limestone, and basalt roads, gradients and bridge building, kerbing, channelling, foot-

paths and avenues are to be observed. The wood-paving plants of the City of Paris will also be visited.

The importance of this Congress is fully realized on the continent. M. Fallieres, President of the French Republic, is chief patron, while M. Clemenceau, Minister of the Interior, M. Louis Barthou, Minister of Public Works, Posts, and Telegraphs, and M. Pichon, who presides over the French Foreign Office, are also patrons. Every official of note whose duties are concerned with roads, traction or traffic is a member. The papers to be read are written by representatives of all nations, and include every aspect of road problems. The British representatives are Lord Montagu, representing, among others, the Royal Automobile Club and the Roads Improvement Association, Mr. Rees Jeffreys, of the latter body, and secretary of the Motor Union, the Hon. Charles Rolls, also of the Royal Automobile Club and Roads Improvement Association, Mr. Montagu Harris, of the County Councils Association, and several of the best known civil engineers and county surveyors, such as Mr. Taylor, of Hampshire, Mr. Maybury, of Kent, Mr. E. Hooley, of Nottinghamshire, Colonel Crompton and Mr. Thomas, of Buckinghamshire, and many other students of road affairs, will also be present. Scotland is also represented by its Road Surveyors' Association.

The chief heads under which discussion will fall are as follows: (1) Construction and Maintenance; (2) The Present Road; (3) General Methods of Maintenance; (4) Struggle against the Wear and the Dust; (5) The Future Road; (6) Traffic and its Working. In addition, special reports will be presented on each question, such as (1) the Effects of New Methods of Locomotion upon the Roads; (2) The Effect of the Roads upon Vehicles; (3) Signals Upon the Road; (4) Roads and Services of Mechanical Transport. It is likely, therefore, that before the end of the Congress much valuable information will have been given for future use. Let us hope that Great Britain and its Government will realize the coming importance of roads, and that reforms and reorganization of our haphazard system may result.

Lady Churchill's New Book

MRS. GEORGE CORNWALLIS-WEST makes no apology for adding one more to the multitudinous volumes of Reminiscences which every publishing season produces nowadays. In quite an opposite spirit she asks, "Having been favored by Providence with delightful and absorbing experiences, having traveled all over the world, and met many of the most distinguished people of my generation, why should I not record all that I can about them, and about the stirring things I have seen, or shared in doing?" Why not, indeed? asks the London Times concerning the book. Especially, if, as in the case here, the writer has the genuine chronicler's gift and can write with a light and easy pen. From the nature of the case her book has none of the serious interest that belongs to her son's Life of his meteoric father; but it is an agreeable and amusing supplement to those volumes and while throwing some welcome sidelights upon Lord Randolph's character, it is full of lively gossip about the people whom they knew in London or met in their travels. It ends with a striking chapter on the good work done by the Maine, the American hospital ship which Lady Randolph and her friends equipped for the benefit of the sick and wounded in the South African war. Nor are the two or three chapters which deal with the author's early life, when she was Miss Jerome, living with her American family in New York, Newport and Paris, by any means the least interesting. Mrs. Jerome and her daughter saw a great deal of the Court and society of the Tuileries in the last days of the Second Empire, and long afterwards Lady Randolph kept up a certain intimacy with the celebrated Princess Metternich, who, as the brilliant wife of the Austrian Ambassador, had been the very chief and centre of that "exotique" society to which the Empress Eugenie paid so much attention, and whose influence contributed so much to her unpopularity among patriotic French people. Among many little points of interest in these chapters we may note two—one a remark made in 1869 by Count Hatzfeldt, at that time Secretary to the Prussian Embassy in Paris, and afterwards so well known as the German Ambassador in London. The day after one of the petits Lundis at the Tuileries, he remarked, in Mrs. Jerome's drawing-room: "I never saw their Majesties in better spirits than they were last night, and God knows where they will be next year at this time." At that date, in fact, everybody except the Parisians knew that the French Court was dancing on a volcano, and the German Embassy knew it best of all. The second point is given in a letter written after Sedan by General Palikao, who had been head of the fighting Ministry which succeeded that of Emile Olivier. Writing from Ostent on October 21 he said: "Je suis venu a me demander comment un pareil desastre a pu se produire, sans que le principal auteur de ce lugubre drame ne soit pas enseveli sous les cadavres

de son armee! . . . La mort de l'Empereur a Sedan sauva la France et son fils; la capitulation a tout perdu."

Lord Randolph and Miss Jerome were married in 1874, not without some opposition from the old Duke and Duchess of Marlborough, as all readers of Mr. Churchill's life of his father will remember. Lady Randolph wisely says very little about the political side of her husband's career, which has been treated once for all in that book; but here and there we have a mention of some of his striking successes, or a personal reference, not too kind, to his associates in the Fourth Party. For instance, she finds Mr. Balfour's attitude as difficult to understand as some extreme tariff reformers have found it in these latter days, and she does not attempt to disguise the breach with Sir John Gorst. Like a good wife, she did not appreciate the newspaper attacks upon her husband, and even at this distance of time speaks of them as "vicious" and "poisonous," epithets which other people might apply with a good deal more reason to Lord Randolph's own attacks upon his political friends if he happened at the moment to disagree with them. Lady Randolph indeed, although the editor of the Anglo-Saxon Review may be called a journalist herself, is a little headlong in some of her statements about newspapers. "At the last general election," she says, "with few exceptions, the whole Press of England preached protection, and yet free trade won all along the line." Were there then no Liberal newspapers in Lancashire, Yorkshire and the Midlands, not to mention London? However, political controversy is not the staple of this entertaining volume, and only intrudes itself now and then in the midst of a succession of amusing social experiences and sketches of great people all over the world. Here, for instance, is a picture of the old Emperor William towards the end of his long life, when Lord and Lady Randolph met him at tea in a villa at Gastein:

"The Emperor was a fine-looking man, notwithstanding his age, and he had that old-world manner which is as attractive as it is rare. He was full of gaiety, and chaffed some of the young people present. It was a mystery to me how he survived what he ate and drank, although he was doing a cure. He began with poached eggs, and went on to potted meats and various strange German dishes, added many cups of strong tea, and ended with strawberries, ices, and sweet, tepid champagne. We talked banalities; it was not very exciting."

There are plenty of other sketches of Sovereigns and statesmen, especially at the magnificent and yet easy-going Russian Court, where Alexander III had a long political talk with Lord Randolph, and where both guests were interested in the strange mixture of splendor, extravagance, and laissez-faire. At another time we are brought back to London and are introduced to General Boulanger, whom Lord Randolph was indiscreet enough to "take up" and entertain, not seeing the man

as he really was—a vain, foolish creature, the cat's-paw of a lot of intriguing politicians. Lady Randolph was better inspired when she went canvassing in elections at home, whether for her husband or for others. Here is an amusing story which she pledges her word is not ben trovato:

"Being asked to help canvass for Mr. Burdett-Coutts, I was pleading with a waverer for his vote. Waggishly, and with a sly look, he said 'If I would get the same price as was once paid by the Duchess of Devonshire for a vote, I think I could promise.' 'Thank you very much,' I replied, 'I'll let the Baroness Burdett-Coutts know at once.'"

APACHES OF PARIS

Of that curious breed of criminals, the Paris "Apache," a correspondent writes: "Paris juries are renowned for their softness of heart. Ever since the practical suppression of capital punishment hardly a day has passed but some ghastly murder has been committed and almost always for the most miserable cause. Only a day or two ago a young man stabbed his mother to death for the simple reason that she refused to hand him over \$50 to pay off some debts, and murder is often done for even more trifling sums. Without the guillotine and the lash France must expect such foul crimes not only to continue but to increase and the day must come when the government will have to revert to strong measures."

"As it is, Paris is anything but a safe city, unless one keeps to the main thoroughfares, and even those threaten to be invaded by the Apache. Quite a fashionable amusement nowadays is to go, well escorted, to the Apache quarters and visit the taverns frequented by these charming gentlemen and their fair companions. It is a pleasure not unminged with danger unless the greatest discretion is used."

"Every one may not know that the true Apache is always a young man under 30 and very often under 21. He is frequently recruited from the ranks of the apprentice butchers and a fact significant to criminologists is that a very large percentage of the murders committed in France have butchers as their authors."—London Dispatch.

ALL THE FAULT OF THE COW

A South Side woman went to a butcher shop the other day to get a roast of beef. The butcher is a little old man, inclined to be cranky. He began to cut the roast. She thought he was sawing off too much bone.

"That roast will have too much bone in it I fear," she said.

The butcher stopped and sighed: "Madam," he said, "that's the cow's fault. These cows would be in awful shape if they had to run around without bones."

The woman said no more.—Denver Post.

It's always better to throw bouquets than it is to hand lemons.

Chinese and the Poppy

HINA, our Peking correspondent informs us, has at last been able to notify the foreign Legations that all the Powers have given their assent to the prohibition of the import of morphia, except for medicinal purposes, and that the import of the drug will be forbidden from January 1. We ourselves, says the London Times, gave our consent to the prohibition six years ago, in the Mackay Treaty, of which so many provisions have proved abortive, and the United States followed in 1903. But, for one reason or another, some other powers have been slower to accede to the wishes of Peking, and it was not until Tuesday that Japan announced her readiness to meet them. The assent of each of the powers was necessarily conditional upon the assent of all. So long as any one of them continued to claim the right of importing the drug into China, a renunciation of that right by others would merely have transferred their share of the trade to the country which stood out. But it was not only against the risk of such a transfer that the framers of the Mackay Treaty—and doubtless also the framers of all subsequent agreements upon the subject—had to take precautions. They had also to provide that the prohibition of the import would not be used by the Chinese for the establishment of a lucrative government monopoly in the manufacture of that commodity at home. The treaty accordingly contains an undertaking by the Chinese government to take measures at once for the prevention of the manufacture. Whether that undertaking has been observed better than a good many others in that instrument is one of the interesting points which the International Opium Commission that is to meet in January at Shanghai will have to investigate very closely. The self-denying action of the powers must be, of course, conditional upon the fulfilment of this undertaking by the Chinese.

In a careful study of the subject by our Shanghai correspondent, on which we commented last January, he declared that the first efforts to enforce the stringent anti-opium regulations of November, 1906, would be found in the area of poppy cultivation within the empire. The Imperial Edict decreed that this area should be reduced by one-tenth annually for ten years, so that by the end of ten years no poppies should be grown in China. In accordance with the spirit of this enactment, we, for our part, have agreed to reduce our exports to China of Indian opium also by one-tenth for three years, and doubtless we shall continue the reduction at the same rate should we find, at the end of the three years, that China is dealing earnestly and successfully with the opium problem. But the Indian export is a relatively small factor in that problem. Only a seventh of all the opium used in China in 1906 was of foreign origin. Six-sevenths were produced from the native plant, and one of the vital facts which the Commission must ascer-

tain is whether the acreage under that plant is being reduced in accordance with the Edict or not. Such evidence as is at present available on the point does not conclusively establish that it is diminishing. It is alleged, for example, that in the province of Su-chuan, which consumes nearly half of the opium used in all China, the Edict is practically a dead letter. This province produces its own opium, and the chief result of the regulations, it is said, has been to substitute official stations for its sale, in the place of private establishments. In Ho-nan, again, it is reported that another device has been practised to evade the Edict. It is simplicity itself. The area under poppies was returned at some 25 or 30 per cent. greater than in fact it was. This gave the cultivators a comfortable margin on which to effect the prescribed reduction of 10 per cent. There are doubtless other methods of escaping from the confiscation of land and goods which is the penalty awarded in the regulations to offenders. The Commission must try to discover what they are, and how far they have accomplished their end. Some of these subterfuges may be difficult of detection, but trustworthy evidence ought to be forthcoming as to the acreage under the crop before and since the Edict. That is a matter to which Europeans who have traveled through the provinces can speak, and some of them assert that, in the parts of the country which have come under their observation, there were more poppies last winter than ever. Our correspondent laid stress upon the contention that, so long as the Chinese grow the crop, the drug extracted from it will be consumed. The conclusion to which he came was that when he wrote, there was no evidence to show that the Central Government seriously intended to enforce the regulations in the spirit in which they were framed. On the other hand, he discerned indications, in the attitude of men so influential as Prince Ching and Chang Chih-tung, that they might be seeking to trade upon the sympathy of foreigners with the anti-opium crusade in order to fill the depleted coffers of the State. That those coffers will be depleted seriously, and the coffers of the provincial governments more seriously still, by any real restriction on the trade in opium is a fact which has a very direct and important bearing upon any estimate of the real intentions of the government. There is, undoubtedly, a strong popular opinion in some parts of the country in favor of the suppression of the use of opium, but it is not by any means a unanimous opinion. If the researches of the Commission prove that it is strong enough to compel the government to enforce the more important of the regulations, and, in particular, the regulations for the reduction of the area under poppies, we shall be ready to do all that is reasonable, upon our part, to support a policy so admirable. The assent of the Powers to the prohibition of the importation of morphia encourages the expectation that they would be as willing as ourselves in so good a cause.