

OUR LONDON LETTER.

LONDON, July 4, 1891.



So far as we can judge from recent events, London is at last waking up to the fact that she is the premier city of the greatest empire in the world. Her way of managing things in the past was apparently to allow streets, buildings and institutions to grow up in a haphazard sort of way, with no real plan and generally with no connection with what has gone before or what perchance may come after. Now, however, there is some chance that this may all be changed—if England and London are to remain where they are on the roll of nations, it must be. We have a County Council, which,

even although it has done almost incredible things is, at least, better in every way than the old and corrupt Metropolitan Boards of Works. Its great work so far has been the widening of old and the building of new streets, for there is no city of any importance in Europe, in the world, that allows its main thoroughfares to remain poky, narrow little passages, with hardly, in many cases, room for the carriages to stand abreast. But it has been the extraordinary energy of the private individual that has made England what it is—nearly all her triumphs have been the result of one master mind, who, oblivious of red tape, of custom and of precedent, has gone to work in his own way, leaving officialism to follow in the rear. The latest scheme of this beneficent private individual is a particularly happy one. The need has long been felt, ever since, in fact, apprentices and clerks gave up living over their masters' shop or warehouse, for some kind of residential club for young men and women, who, perhaps strangers to London, and with no friends, have to poke themselves away in tiny and badly-managed lodgings, where often they have but a bed-room, and that a sorry one. It has often been thought that if a residential club were built, possessing all the conveniences on a slightly modified and less expensive scale, of the large club houses in the west end, and that if it were fitted up for residential needs, a very long felt want where young men are concerned would be immediately supplied. A number of abortive attempts to supply the want have been made, but they have all failed, for want of money and good management, but now we seem in a fair way to have it supplied in a manner somewhat commensurate with the need. Mr. Durward Brown, the prime mover and originator of the scheme, is an architect by profession, and he has drawn up a number of plans for the first of a proposed series of buildings, which are to be put up all over London. I have seen the plans and drawings and am certainly surprised at their magnificence—everything which modern luxuriance can suggest will be provided—the decorations and fittings being of the finest, no shoddy, no scamping, and above all no jerry-building will be allowed. On the ground floor of the building, which it is calculated will hold 450 residents, will be the singing and reception rooms—a notable point, showing the way that public opinion is tending, being that ladies will be admitted quite freely to all the reception rooms. The arrangements for meals and victualling will be of the best, the whole of the cooking being under the control of a first-class chef. The upper floors will be devoted to the bed rooms and single rooms, which in every case will be exceedingly light and airy, with a bow window and an alcove, curtained over to hide the bed. Lifts will be kept going at all hours day and night, and no objection will be raised against men stopping out as late as they like as long as they behave themselves when they do come in. A number of lawn tennis courts will also be among the attractions, and a swimming bath. It has been estimated that the cost of the building, land and furniture will be £100,-

000, to procure which a limited company will be formed. No difficulty should be found, however, as it is calculated that the money will be returned at the rate of some eighteen per cent.; only five per cent., however, finding its way into the pockets of the shareholders, the remaining balance being devoted to the betterment of the scheme.

On June 29, Mr. Willie Edouin, finding that "A Night's Frolic" hardly proved the success that was anticipated, revived "Katti" at the Strand Theatre, where it was first produced three years ago with signal success. It is an adaptation from a French original by Mr. Charles S. Fawcett, who has made his farce screamily funny although wildly extravagant. The vagaries of Katti Bloter, the German maid-of-all-work, so admirably acted by Miss Alice Atherton, kept the house in roars of laughter, and Mr. Willie Edouin himself as Fenniken Fluffy was equally amusing and mirth-provoking. Whether or no "Katti" will recuperate Mr. Edouin's exhausted treasury remains to be seen, but it will if its success is at all equal to its merits.

I paid another visit to "Ivanhoe" at the Royal English Opera a few nights ago and was more than ever pleased with both the opera and the performers. Sir Arthur Sullivan's music, too, is of the sort which one can appreciate better after the first hearing, and Mr. Julian Sturgis's libretto improves on acquaintance. But it is the performers who seem mostly to have improved—Miss Lucille Hill as Rebecca and Mr. Eugene Dudin being simply superb, not only in their singing but also in their acting—and it is but seldom that one has the opportunity of seeing good acting in grand opera. By no means miss seeing "Ivanhoe" if you are coming to England this year.

Mr. W. T. Stead has prepared another bomb-shell with which to startle London. This time it is a character sketch of the Prince of Wales, for the *Review of Reviews*, written *apropos* of the baccarat scandal. The Prince, Mr. Stead says, has had his warnings, and if he disregards this latest one, he will have to abdicate his claim to the throne. Practically the article is the protest of the Nonconformist conscience against the Prince's way of living, and the article gathers additional weight from a number of caricatures anent the baccarat case and the Prince's debts, which have been reproduced from the comic papers of America, Australia, and France.

If the late Sir Richard Burton's *magnus opus*—"The Scented Garden"—ought to have taken its place among the curiosities of literature, still more must Lady Burton's letter anent the burning of the same be included among them. Rarely have more pathetic and melancholy lines been penned. However much the destruction of so curious and singular a work may be deplored, it is impossible not to admire the simple stoicism of the woman who, rather than let go forth what she had reason to believe might still further debase a certain number of connoisseurs in a certain class of literature, chose not only to give up the £6,000 offered her for the MS., but deliberately annihilated all the work of her husband's last years. All those who knew the Burtons thought as highly of the wife as of Sir Richard, and the couple's devotion to one another was noteworthy. Just before Sir Richard's death they had begun writing out together what would have proved a most fascinating book, their joint reminiscences, for it would have been difficult to have named any one of literary or of political European eminence outside the Burton circle.

The Literary Ladies' Dinner seems by all accounts to have been a very lively and brilliant function, although Mrs. Lynn Linton and "John Strange Winter" were conspicuous by their absence; both English and American women who write were fairly represented. Mrs. Emily Crawford, the veteran correspondent of the *London Daily News*, the *New York Tribune* and *Henry Labouchere's Truth*, had come over from France on purpose to be present, and in answer to Mrs. L. T. Mead's toast of the Queen, played an excellently composed piece. Among those present were Mrs. Mona Caird, of "Is Marriage a Failure?" fame, Mrs. Frank Leslie, the only publisher present, Mrs. Louise Chandler Moulton, who responded to the toast of American literature, and Miss G. Middlemass.

Apropos of literary feasts, Mr. Walter Besant has already sent out invitations for the Annual Incorporated Society of Authors' Dinner. Some 200 guests will be present, and among the after-dinner speakers will be Mr. Oscar Wilde and George Augustus Sala.

GRANT RICHARDS.

Personal and Literary Notes.

Quite a little romance hangs around the marriage of the daughter of Joseph Jefferson, the American actor, to B. L. Farjeon, the English novelist. Miss Jefferson was in London with her father in 1876, and, having read some of Farjeon's books, expressed a wish to meet the author. Mr. Jefferson, who knew the writer, arranged an introduction, and it was a case of love at first sight on each side. They were married after a brief courtship. The novelist is below the medium height, with a round, jolly face, fringed by side whiskers. He writes all his stories on a typewriter. He is also a shorthand writer, and carries a notebook, in which he jots down his ideas as they strike him.

When Mr. Herbert Gladstone first went to Oxford, his rooms were at the top of No. 1 Staircase, University Hall. A stranger would have thought it queer to have heard gentlemen visitors standing at the bottom of the stairs, shouting at the top of their voices, "Tuppence," as if they would give that amount to be carried up. But a look through Mr. Gladstone's album lying on his table would have afforded an explanation, for there, in the order of their ages, are photos of the whole family, from the G.O.M. downwards, and, lastly, one of himself, under which is written "Little Tuppence," which, it appears, is a pet name of his with the family and some few of his more intimate friends. The said friends would take the precaution to shout and ascertain if he was in his rooms before making the long journey upstairs, perhaps to find he was out.

Prince Louis of Battenberg, like all the German princes, has learnt a trade. He became a printer. A short time ago, when serving on the Dreadnought, it occurred to him to turn his early training to account, so he printed a history of the Dreadnought, and presented a copy to each of his shipmates.

The Prince of Wales is very fond of animals. Amongst the large collection of pets at Sandringham is the little green parrot which talks splendidly; he is located in the hall, and to every visitor he calls out, "Now then, hip, hip, hurrah for the Queen." It is understood H.R.H. became possessed of the bird in a peculiar way, having personally purchased it of a small boy in Trafalgar Square, whilst crossing it with his equeyry one day.

Mr. Hubert Herkomer, it is said, aspires, like Michael Angelo, to do everything. He paints in oil and water, etches, writes plays, composes music, is stage machinist as well as scene painter, carves, is an architect, and also "teaches the young idea how to shoot." For all the varieties of his artistic work he has separate rooms, all arranged and fitted up to serve the special purpose for which they are designed and to facilitate his work.

Zola receives £1,000 for every novel published in feuilleton form. The publisher, Charpentier, has published one million and thirty-one thousand volumes bearing his name. The novelist says that his critics are right in their remarks about the extent of his gains; but, he observes, parenthetically, that his money goes more quickly than it comes. He lives in very expensive style, and does not trouble about saving; but, having roughed it when young, he will not flinch before poverty should it surprise him in his old age.

Every year the King and Queen of Saxony retire to the rural castle of Sibyllmont, in Silesia. Her Majesty daily visits amongst the poorest of her subjects, and even in her dress seems to endeavour to bring them closer to her. Her costume invariably consists of a short grey cloth skirt and a plain grey velvet bodice, with a little white shawl crossed over her breast. A little Dutch hood of white linen is on her fair hair, while a pair of stout shoes complete a costume that is modelled closely upon the style of the villagers.

President Balmaceda, of Chili, is a stern and arbitrary man, with cold grey eyes, thin lips, and an angular chin. He possesses more education and ability than are usually found in a South American dictator.