

English Jottings.

ELECTRIC LIGHTING IN LONDON.—Ten years and two months have elapsed since, on April 1, 1891, the streets from London Bridge to Blackfriars, St. Paul's-churchyard, Cheapside, including both open spaces and narrow thoroughfares, were lit by what were then called the "Siemens system" and the "Brush system." High lattice posts supported clear glass globes at such a height above the pavement that it was fondly hoped that the atmosphere, about the transparency of which we so often complain, would tone down the shadows and subdue the glare. Unfortunately, the very contrary was found, and when, after many troubles, the premature attempt was abandoned, little or no effort was made by the contractors to renew the work, for it was not remunerative, and the public, so far from finding that they could not do without it, have almost forgotten that they ever enjoyed it, and it is only remembered as a rather unpleasant combination of flickering glare and exaggerated shadows. The inscrutable workings of fate, operating in conjunction with the hardly less intelligible doings of the Commissioners of Sewers, have so ordered matters that the revival of street lighting by electricity should fall at the summer solstice, and it follows that he who would criticise the result must make a special expedition to Queen-Victoria street, unless he be among those few stragglers who are detained there after nightfall. Such a special journey will be undertaken by but few enthusiasts, or by duty. The result appears not only to be satisfactory, but to have an air of permanence about it which says that it has come to stay. No part of London is so well paved, kept in such first-rate repair, so carefully cleaned in the small hours of the night, and generally looked after, as the city. The vestries, with their petty squabbles, and constant endeavors to make the rates go as far as possible, and to throw their burdens on to other shoulders, look after the streets with varying success. None of them have attempted to light their thoroughfares by electric light as yet, and we doubt whether the ratepayers would sanction the expense. In the meantime, we shall have an excellent opportunity of judging the comfort and usefulness of arc lighting, as shown in the city, and the details as to the height of the posts and the current required; and there can be but little doubt that while nineteen Londoners out of twenty are at present quite satisfied with the lighting of the streets by gas, they will gradually be convinced that an illumination ten times greater than that which they now have is absolutely indispensable to their convenience and safety.—*Electrician*.

The Rev. S. Baring-Gould, of Lew-Trenchard, Devon, a priest of literary tastes and most versatile talent—writing full-blooded novels and "devotional manuals" with equal success—has just been recording his impressions of the general "stage management," so to say, of Continental churches. Very amusing and entirely instructive are Mr. Baring-Gould's impressions. He considers the Church in France to be in the "most healthy state," which all persons who have heard otherwise (a vast number, by the way) will be glad to know. The prevalence of male sopranos in the choirs of Italian cathedrals and large churches is very abhorrent to Mr. Gould, who says, with a diction and emphasis worthy of the late Charles Reade, "the piping of the enunchs makes one long for a whip of cords with which to drive them forth from the temples of God." Bravo, Mr. Baring-Gould!

Mr. Baring-Gould is certainly a striking example of the *fin de siècle* clergyman. Some twelve months ago he organised a tour of certain towns in Devon and Cornwall with an "entertainment" consisting of a lecture (delivered by himself) on the old songs and folk lore of the two counties, the discourse being illustrated by songs and *tableaux vivants* rendered by regular "professionals," with all the usual accessories of scenery, costumes, limelight, and general "fit up." Mr. Baring-Gould's "company" travelled with their own acting manager, agent in advance, property man, and

what not, just like a regular "show," and was, I believe, extremely successful, both financially and otherwise.

Still we are bored with controversies, "questions in the House," and much other ridiculous comment on the subject of Mr. Calderon's picture of St. Elizabeth of Hungary. It is positively lamentable that representative men like the Duke of Norfolk and others should concern themselves in serious argument over an artist's treatment (truthful treatment, if one may credit contemporary chroniclers) of one phase in the existence of an absurdly idealised maniac, whose life was of no use to anybody, not even herself, and who (happily for those connected with her) died at an early age by means of a system of insane "self-denial"—practically suicide. It is to be hoped that the preposterous agitation against this picture will (like the "saint" in whose name it is supposed to be got up) speedily wear itself out in the exuberance of (not its own verbosity) but its own hysterical maundering. I daresay I shall be accused of "breaking a butterfly on a wheel" in thus seriously commenting on what must appear to many but an absurd trifle, but I think the matter wears one serious aspect: it shows only too plainly that the drivelling superstitions of the middle ages have by no means so completely departed from among us as all rational persons must have hoped they had.

The young girl who committed suicide by letting herself down into the bear-pit at Frankfort, is said to have been alive in the animal's clutches for full forty-five minutes. Much indignation is felt at the refusal of the keepers to shoot the animal, because it was a valuable one, though called upon by the bystanders to do so, and the two keepers have been arrested for manslaughter.

The harvest prospects in Russia are unfavorable and in certain provinces a famine appears inevitable, although holy water is being lavishly sprinkled on the parched fields. People are already on the verge of starvation, and a disease has broken out among them, their bodies being swollen out to enormous dimensions. They only have bread every other day, and then it is made of oatmeal mixed with tree-bark.

A pneumatic gun, which is, "almost noiseless, absolutely smokeless, and has no recoil," is the latest invention of an English engineer, Mr. Batt. Unlike other pneumatic guns, the projectile itself carries the store of air compressed, if necessary, up to 10,000 lb. per square inch.

A curious case of gross superstition was recently brought before the Criminal Sessions Court at Samara. Six persons were tried and sentenced to imprisonment for terms of various duration up to four months, for deliberately disinterring the body of a woman who had died of intoxication, and floating it down the Volga as a means of causing rain. It seems to be quite a fixed belief among the Russian peasantry that throwing the dead body of a drunken woman into the river is a sure cure of want of rain.

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