



A YOUNG CANADIAN.

OUR LONDON LETTER.

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Railways and railway reform seems just now to occupy the attention of the greater portion of London. Schemes of all sorts and kinds are being projected—some happy and some decidedly unhappy. One hears that the new railway from Peckham to the city, worked altogether by electricity, and which was only opened a month or two ago, is so successful that it is intended to immediately extend it to Islington in the North of London, which is sadly wanting in railway facilities. Anyone who looks at a map of London will see at once in what a thoughtless and useless way our different railways have been built. All the termini of the great country lines are scattered about the metropolis at distances of, in some cases, three or four miles, and the underground railway is altogether inadequate owing to its plan—it serves, in truth, no part of London in a really satisfactory manner. But now new schemes are cropping up all over the town. First is the new railway to the North of England, which is to have its terminus in St. John's Wood, and which will utterly ruin London's prettiest and most pastoral suburb. Then there is the proposal to join Kensington and Notting Hill (a certainly much needed reform) by a railway running underground and worked by cable. This is opposed very strongly, as it is suspected that much harm will be done to Kensington Gardens. Then, and this is the most important reform of all, an underground railway is proposed to run from the far west of London right into the city. It will be worked by electricity and will follow the main thoroughfares of the Uxbridge Road, Oxford street, Holborn and Cheapside, all of which are very much congested of the traffic and all of which are quite untouched by the present railway system. The parliamentary committee on this last scheme have taken the opportunity of pressing home a very much needed reform. Mechanics and workmen, whose work brought them

to central London, have found it impossible to live anywhere else but close to their work, and consequently in London's worst suburbs, owing to the high fares charged by the existing railways. The committee have decided only to pass the bill for the West London line on condition that the company shall carry workmen the whole length of the line at the rate of one penny. The length is six miles, so that this will be a great step towards the cheap fares which Mr. Blondell-Maple, M.P., and others have advocated with so much reason and common sense.

The performance of "Lady Bountiful" last Saturday night, at the Garrick Theatre, was hardly the success that was expected. I was there and can testify that, although the applause was hearty and apparently genuine, the play, to a large extent, missed fire. One expects from Mr. A. W. Pinero a polished style—a brilliant dialogue quite unsurpassed in these days of coarse French farce and German tomfoolery, but as far as "Lady Bountiful" is concerned, one is disappointed. Once or twice, notably at the end of the third act, Mr. Pinero wakes up and we have both writing and acting—both worthy of the author and of the players—but the rest of the play sadly wants pruning and polishing up; it doesn't get a proper grip of the audience, and they go away dissatisfied and perplexed. The heroine of the play is a stranger, unsympathetic, unloveable and unloving—one cannot understand her vagaries, and there seems no possible dramatic reason for her sudden changes of front and of character. The part is played, as well as it can be, by Miss Kate Rorke, while Mr. J. Forbes Robertson is the hero—a young fellow with no money and no qualifications except knowledge and a love of horseflesh. Mr. Harte has a small character part, which he of course plays to perfection.

I went last Thursday night to the private dress rehearsal

of Henrik Ibsen's "Ghosts," with which the Independent Theatre of London is—if the Lord Chamberlain does not swoop down at the last moment and stop the performance—to open. Here in Great Britain the law makes it illegal for any stage play to be acted for money which is not properly passed by the censor of plays—the penalty being £50 for each performance—that is to say, £50 from each performance for every performance in which he takes part. The managing-director and leading spirit of the whole concern is Mr. J. T. Grein, a young Dutch-English journalist, who is not altogether unknown to fame as a dramatist himself. Mr. Grein's services to the English drama have been immense, for it is he who widened the audience of the English dramatist by creating a market for his ware on the continent, where, up till quite lately, the English drama was an unknown quality. "The Middleman," "Judah," and "The Profligate" were all produced in Belgium and Germany owing to Mr. Grein's kind offices, so that English dramatists owe him much, and courtesy should prevent the law interfering with a young enthusiast who hopes, and not without much reason for the faith which is in him, to do the same for the English stage as M. Antoine did for the French. Besides a number of original English plays by such well-known novelists as Mr. George Moore, Mr. William Wilde and Mr. C. W. Jarvis, Mr. Grein intends to give a number of translations from continental authors, whose works have hitherto not been seen on the English stage, because of alleged impropriety of subject and indelicacy of treatment. As it will be illegal to take money for these performances, admission will be denied to the common crowd and will be by invitation alone, but an invitation for the first five performances (which will take place at intervals of a fortnight and at which a different play will be presented on each occasion) on the subscribing to the funds of the proceeding no less a sum than £2 10s. Next week I hope to give a full description of the inaugural performance, it being impossible to get a proper idea from simply seeing a dress rehearsal.

GRANT RICHARDS.