

Richard Burbage, the great tragedian, on a waste plot of ground formerly part of the site of the priory of St. John the Baptist, in what is now Holywell Lane, Shoreditch; and it was opened sometime during the summer of the year. Not long afterwards a second house was erected, Shoreditch being again chosen for the location—a fact which indicated that the far East of London was in those days a well-reputed neighbourhood. John Stockton in a sermon preached in 1578 refers to it as “a gorgeous play-place erected in the fields”; but it was of course built of wood, and this description, notwithstanding, must have been a very primitive structure. It was called “The Curtain,” either from the striped curtain which was exhibited as the sign of the house, or more probably from the plot of land on which the building stood—*Curtina* being base Latin for a little court. The name, be its original significance what it may, survives in the Curtain Road of the present time. Both these theatres soon became the scenes of brawling, riot and debauchery, and earned an evil reputation in consequence. Contemporary writers speak severely of them both; and they seem to have furnished low entertainments (this, be it remembered, was before the Elizabethan drama had sprung into existence) quite in the taste of the disreputable company by which they were patronized. The third theatre erected in the course of the same eventful year was “The Blackfriars,” which was built on the spot now occupied by the *Times* offices and playhouse yard by the servants of Lord Leicester, who after their settlement at their new home became known as the Lord Chamberlain's, and later still as the King's servants.

The experiment thus initiated proving successful, these three theatres were soon confronted by rivals for popular favour. Playhouses now began to spring up with quite marvellous rapidity in the outskirts of the metropolis. Altogether some seventeen were erected before 1630—a goodly number when one bears in mind the then relatively small population of the great city. It is not of course implied that they were all actually in existence at anyone time. “The Theatre,” for example, disappeared unduly after only a twelve months' tenure of life. But the fact that they existed at all bears ample testimony to the wide and deep interest which was then felt in the great channel for the national genius—the drama.

Of these theatres the two most interesting to modern readers are beyond question the “Fortune” and the “Globe,” for both of these figure more or less largely in the story of Shakespeare's dramatic career. The “Globe” was built in 1599 by Richard Burbage, the “Fortune” a year later, avowedly as an opposition house. The former was the principal scene of Shakespeare's exploits and upon its stage many of the great dramatist's finest plays were first produced. Curiously enough both these rival houses came to grief through fire. The “Globe” was burnt down in 1613, during a performance of Henry VIII. The “Fortune” was completely destroyed some nine years afterwards.

It should be added that the playhouses of the time were divided in public and private—a distinction the exact meaning of which it is now not very easy to explain. Roughly speaking, however, it would seem that private theatres were marked out by seven distinguishing characteristics. They were smaller than public theatres; they were generally roofed in; the performances were ordinarily given by torch or candle light; they had pits furnished with seats, while public theatres had only yards without sitting accommodation; the audiences were generally of a superior character; visitors by extra payment had a right to sit on the stage during performances—a privilege not generally granted, though it would appear often taken, at public theatres; and the boxes—or rooms as they were called—were enclosures which could be made secure by lock and key. Of the eleven theatres existing in, or rather around, London at the end of Queen Elizabeth's reign, three, or perhaps four, were classed as private. The rest, including both the “Fortune” and the “Globe,” were public playhouses.

WILLIAM H. HUDSON.

PARIS LETTER.

THE strike of the railway employés has ended before it may be said to have commenced. It is full of instruction for would-be strikers to look before they leap. It had altogether a shop origin, so the public took no interest in the event. The strike was led by a noisy minority that relied upon intimidation and violence to gain their ends. It was limited to the operatives of the railway factories. The engine-drivers, signal and points men, porters, etc., kept aloof; hence no paralysis in the working of the lines was to be apprehended. The companies never lost their heads for an instant; dealt with the “spurt” coolly. The Government took no side, but showed from the outset, by telling off the regiment of railway soldiers to work the lines where necessary, that the suburban traffic must not be stopped. This formed a capital experience for the technical soldiers.

The companies gave notice that after a fixed day if those employés “on the out” did not return their situations would be filled up. And it was officiously intimated concurrently that such locked-out servants would be called upon to at once put in their military service of three years under the flag. Railway officials are exempted from obligatory military service, because they are ranked as a reserved battalion and the first to be instantly mobilized

in case of war. The prospective of being enrolled acted as a very cold douche on the strikers. The latter, once again ordinary citizens and summoned to put in their service under the flag, could be instantly ordered to perform the very functions on the railways as soldiers that they had quit to strike as private individuals. As in Germany, France has a special school for instructing soldiers in the technical knowledge of not only working, but of repairing and destroying railways. The headquarters of this battalion is at Versailles; the men are trained as plate-layers and bridge builders, to points and signal duties, engine-drivers, traffic working and the management of stations and dépôts. They constitute the section of Railway Sappers and Miners, and wear on the sleeves of their blue tunics a little locomotive in red cloth. Their headquarters or Normal School is at St. Cyr, near Versailles; they work the line from Chartres to Orleans, a distance of forty-four miles, and which explains the riddle to many travellers to Brittany why soldiers are on that line, engine-drivers and stokers, points men, signallers, station masters, etc. These sappers do not issue or take the tickets, or tax and deliver goods. Portions of other of the State lines are also worked by these railway soldiers.

Now that the Chamber has voted the ultra-protectionist tariff—for the Senate will be as usual squeezed into its ratification at the twelfth hour—people ask: “What's the use of it?” since the Government stated at the commencement that it will not be bound in negotiating treaties, even by the minimum scale, as such would be unconstitutional. Now this is a case where the “less” contains the greater, and so a nut for squarers of political circles to crack. The custom dues law is hence a facultative, a non-obligatory law, whose text has no meaning, and where nothing signifies no more nothing. Foreign traders would do well not to be in a hurry to throw up the sponge, nor their representatives here to quit the country, in anticipation of having “no more work to do.”

Deibler, the executioner, like other public servants, has to accept a pension on reaching the maximum of age, sixty years, laid down for the government of his office. Civil servants have to retire generally at fifty-five—quill driving is more exhausting than decapitating. Deibler is to be allowed to hold on till sixty-three; he is vigorous, and now very accomplished. His salary is 6,000 francs a year, and “everything found” when on duty; he is a cabinetmaker by trade, and of late a smith; he complains that in the factories the artisans decline to make any part of his “infernal machine,” so the pieces for a guillotine are prepared in different workshops unknown to the men. The *couperet* of the guillotine, ninety pounds weight, was manufactured in Birmingham, but the cry for home manufactures has compelled the present “national razor” to be made in Paris. What becomes of the old guillotines kept in the storehouse with the new machines, just as old muskets are stored in arsenal garrets? A journal affirms that the guillotine which executed Louis XVI. and Marie Antoinette now does duty in New Caledonia. The memoirs of the Sansons, the Paris executioners under the Reign of Terror, do not corroborate the authenticity of that curio. During the period for the “removal” of adversaries each large city had its own machine, independent of that in the baggage of the Commissioners of the Convention who followed the armies and punished, as traitors with instant death, those generals who were defeated.

The Legislature has closed its session till October. The dog-days were truly telling on its sagacity; it has not much to show in the way of effective work; several important measures have been laid on the table of the House—not an unusual half-way to limbo. The Ministers have managed to run passably well in harness; there has been not so much kicking in the traces as weakness on the part of some of the draughtsmen. Public opinion does not condemn the de Freycinet Cabinet *en bloc*, but indicates the superceding of a few of its weak-kneed and jelly members. The Premier personally—caution, finesse, and hard work itself is blamed for increasing huffiness of late, and the falling back on that *ultima ratio*—giving his resignation if the majority do not ratify his wishes. There is a shadow over his tact, and intriguers for his portfolio are becoming bolder. M. de Haussenville, the commercial traveller for the firm Comte de Paris et Cie, is again on the road trying to sell divine-right political wares. The public does not even demand to see his samples.

M. Mercier, according to a telegram from Quebec received by a journal, intends to take up the independence of Canada as a plank in his platform. The French did not expect that out-turn for their attention to the Quebec Premier while here. Another journal recalls that it is not so long ago since the Parliament of Quebec voted an address of loyalty to Queen Victoria.

Since the star of Boulangism has not only set, but is “out,” politicians shivering in the cold commence to think there is some business to be done in Prince Victor Napoleon; it is thus that his photo, on the occasion of his recent anniversary, was so freely distributed. In addition we are told that the Prince is tall, well-muscled, not muzzled; has a “lovely pair of black eyes,” and a brush moustache, and speaks slowly and sonorously. These attributes are shared by many mortals not princes or pretenders. Further, the prince is very intelligent, very studious, very obstinate, and very reflecting. The *Polonius* adds, that Victor Napoleon knows his time for reigning has not arrived, that justice does not exist in this world for the proscribed, that he has confidence in the name of Napoleon, in the device of “Resurgam,” and that in politics as in love

fortune favours the brave. Since the Danton monument has been erected “audacity” has become a household word.

The Bank of France in the new charter it is applying for, promises to establish a branch in every important town in the realm, and to discount and collect bills for sums of five and ten francs. If industry complains henceforth of the French Old Lady of Threadneedle Street being unaccommodating, it is difficult to please. Further, the Bank will discount paper every day, not twice a month as in its provincial branches. There is no reason why the State Bank ought not to follow in the wake of the popular Banks of Germany and Italy; it would solve the difficulty of a plethora of money or capital, when the payments for the pensions to the working classes become things of beauty and joys forever. In seventy years these accumulated deductions of salary, or premiums, will amount to seventeen milliard francs.

The little boy aged seven and a-half, who was given a baby sixteen months old to care, and did so by strangling it with his fingers, is at present undergoing criminal study in an asylum. He concealed the body in the bottom of a cupboard, placed stones against the door, and then helped the parents of the infant to search for it, when it was found to be only in a faint.

A French journalist now in Newfoundland, sent out express to peep into the cod and lobster difficulty, writes that the opening up of the country by emigration is a day dream. The duties levied are so high, even on the necessities of life, that emigrants could not exist. Fishing is the only occupation, and this industry is over-stocked. The famous “homarderies” are run by Nova Scotians, who come in the season to Newfoundland, returning on its close. The colony is steeped to the lips in debt, and to read the local journals, which are not at all to be accepted as gospel, all public men and functionaries are simply robbers of the public treasury. Leading men have only one road to follow—to feather their own nest, and that of all their friends. Newfoundland has but one industry, and hence is akin to parts of Ireland; if the Dominion will pay the debts, the colony will join the Federation, but it is better to leave Newfoundland a crown colony.

Z.

IN SEARCH OF ART IN NEW YORK.

WE reached New York too late for the autumn exhibitions of the Academy and American Society, so our next thoughts turned to the Metropolitan Museum. But this, we were told, was closed for repairs. The Metropolitan closed and the autumn exhibitions over! Well, we had taken New York art by surprise. Turning our steps in the direction of 22nd Street and Fifth Avenue, in which vicinity the dealers abound, Goupil's gallery was visited first, then Reichardt's, Blakeslee's and others. None of them, however, had considered the disappointed feelings of visitors coming out of season, and the galleries were full as usual of the imitations of good painting that at congregate at the dealers. But amongst the inevitable trash, the eyes were cheered at Goupil's by two water-colour sketches by Mauve; one of a cow in a green field, with a damp and breezy sky; another in which a bit of Mauve's special pastoral was sung—a shepherd standing with his flock in the shadow and protection of a dark barn, with an atmosphere aslant with snowflakes. Another water colour here of an old woman washing her feet was also charming. It was by the celebrated water-colourist, Walker, and was of course not to be criticized but delighted in. Then came a three inch square of frivolity, by Rossi, the well-known illustrator, a little boudoir scene of a gallant tying a lady's shoelace. Still another noticeable Mauve was a sketch of an old hooded waggon in a snow storm. From the shadow of the hood two villainous-looking and mysterious individuals peered forth into the storm. Correctness of tone and composition much to be admired was seen in some central park sketches by William M. Chase. We ended our morning by enjoying the etchings at Kohn's. Ribaut's cooks—groups of two cooks, three cooks, five cooks and seven cooks, all with square caps and long aprons, some with ladles and some without. The wall by the side of the staircase was covered with etchings of Millet's “Sower,” Millet's “Reaper,” Millet's “Angelus,” and many other of Millet's works, all giving an idea of his perfection of tone. Downstairs we found an etching of Josef Israels, a Dutch painter, who holds his own with Bastien Lepage. The subject was two girls standing among the pools on a seashore; they looked as if the master had sketched them in two minutes with a J pen. But the bold lines sprawled out very successfully a homely bit of humanity which was alive and classical.

Leaving the dealers we went home to learn that the exhibition of the “New Water-Colour Club” was to be open the next evening and that the Metropolitan repairs would be finished at the end of the week, so that we were not so much out of the season after all. The “New Water-Colour Club” is the coming society of water-colourists and has for its president a favourite young artist, Childe Hassam; at the exhibition the president's work was conspicuous. He is a poetical interpreter of street-faring New York; he finds a motive in the crowd of coaches and carriages and high-wheeled omnibuses rolling on Fifth Avenue; in the dark-cloaked gathering of people under the flaring electric light of a theatre porch; in a cabman standing at his post on a night when the rain pours and the lamps are reflected around him in the puddles, or glisten in the rain drops on his own waterproof; in