

course of erection. In seven days from now the first train will be run from Joppa and we are arranging for a celebration of the event, which is of no small import to us.

"The Akka-Damascus railway is progressing rapidly. Starting at the great fortress of Acre it will run down the plain of Acre along the coast of the Mediterranean and branch out to Haifa. Thence across the famed plain of Esdraelon, with the hills of Galilee to the north, and passing near Nazareth the road reaches the Jordan by way of Shunem or Jezreel. At this point the banks of the Jordan are of solid rock, and in the center of the stream stands a natural pier of the same material.

"From this pier east and west will be erected suspension spans, connecting the west bank of the river with the slopes of the Jordan plateau on the east. The road will extend from the Jordan over the slope of this plateau and along the crest overlooking and inclosing the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee. Reaching the plateau proper near El'all and thence north to Damascus direct it passes through the most fertile and beautiful plains of Palestine.

"An English company has mapped out a road to connect Damascus on the north with Gaza in the extreme southwestern portion of Palestine, in the plain of Philistia. The distance is almost two hundred miles.

"It will be seen that ere long our little country will be covered with a network of railways. In the last few months, a wonderful change has been wrought in the city of Jerusalem. Several hundred new buildings have been erected, including residences, shops, hotels and hospitals. The old residents are all surprised and know not what to think of it, because there does not seem business enough to warrant all this expense.

"The reason for this outlay and building activity is to be found in Baron Rothschild's purchase lately of a large tract of land, comprising some thousands of acres east of the River Jordan and near the Damascus railway. This year he will send 1,000 Jewish families to the tract. Near Acre he has also purchased a large tract on which will be located three large colonies.

"About three weeks ago, the baron

gained control of the land by paying what he calls 'hand money' to the owner of the plain of Esdraelon. By this he has bound himself never to sell the plain to any one but Jews. At present the Turkish government refuses to allow the Jews a deed to the plain. However, it is expected the government's consent will soon be gained to the transaction. It is only recently that the restrictions preventing the Jews coming to Palestine have been removed.

"A number of his colonists will be located in the houses being built for them in this city. A Mr. Scheick has been given the contract to build houses along the line of the Joppa road for some miles. A large institution is under construction which will be dedicated for the use of the Jews having no one to care for them. Houses for the accommodation of 100 families will be built on the Bethlehem road, near the depot."

#### MUSIC AND THE DRAMA.

A SEATTLE paper has the following to say concerning Siberia, which will be produced in this city for the first three nights of next week:

"Mr. Bert Coote, to whose painstaking supervision such satisfactory results were produced from practically raw material, deserves more than passing mention for his work. The special features introduced in the third act won plaudits from all parts of the house. These included the ballet evolutions just referred to, the extremely graceful serpentine dance by Miss Julie Kingsley, the laughable appearance of Mr. Coote as the manipulator of the Carmencita skirt and the clever feats of Miss Laura Ashby. Miss Kingsley is known all over the country for her proficiency in this peculiar skirt gyration, and she certainly has no cause to feel dissatisfied with her reception last night. Miss Ashby performed several difficult balancing feats dextrously and cleverly and did some wonderful juggling tricks. Mr. Coote's Carmencita dance convulsed the house. The enactment was all that could be desired and every part was presented with greater or less merit. Mr Osborne portrayed Nicholai Neigoff, a lover of the people, with much force, and Mr. Frank Jamison made an accomplished villain as Sparta. Miss Alice Sheppard was a beautiful figure

as Sara and her personation showed both art and skill. Miss Julie Kingsley rendered the pathetic scenes in which Marie appears distracted with considerable power, and was warmly applauded. Peter Trolsky, the dispenser of samovar, was crisply presented by Mr. Coote, who amused the audience by the rendition of his lines as well as by his ludicrous make up and appearance. His scenes with Vera, a part cleverly rendered by Miss Bertie May, provoked much merriment. Mr. Thomas Quinn represented the Governor-General with true official dignity and Mr. Walter Hale depicted the crafty, dissolute Jaracoff very creditably. Mr. Lipman sustained the part of Ivan with good taste as did Mr. J. A. Nunn the character of the landlord."

The Calhoun Opera Company gave general satisfaction during their three nights' engagement in this city. This organization did not "blow their horn" quite so much as the Duff company, yet they gave a more pleasing and more artistic performance. The Calhouns can rest assured that they will be well received if they ever again visit Victoria.

E. A. McDowell is still confined in the Bloomingdale asylum and is hopelessly insane. Mrs. McDowell is now travelling with a company headed by E. D. Lyons. The fate of her husband has caused the poor lady great suffering, which is said to have told on her greatly.

Fred Bryton is now said to have lost his voice completely. During the month he played with the Rankin party he was hardly able to speak above a whisper. Excessive smoking is largely the cause attributed for his loss of voice.

U and I, with John T. Kelly in the cast, is underlined for an early production at The Victoria.

The Calhoun company played to over \$1600 in the three nights.

Katie Putnam will be seen at The Victoria in the near future.

Schilling's minstrels will be an early attraction at The Victoria.