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LONDON NOTES.

(From our own correspondent.)

TOO MANY INTERNATIONAL CONGRESSES.

The truth must out—we are beginning to revolt from international congresses. The Free Trade Congress tried the patience of some of us, but the Constitution Congress proved to be the last straw. Very courageously the *Times* has raised its powerful voice against the abuse of an instrument intended to promote understanding and friendliness among nations, and preaches a sermon on the well-worn text of "Familiarity breeds contempt." The distinction between personal exchanges of good feeling and State visits, on the one hand, and sectional exchanges, such as those on Free Trade and political theory, on the other, is clear to most plain people. It would indeed be to the detriment of international relations were party feeling to spread beyond the bounds of nationality. Yet that is the only obvious result that springs from theoretical discussions on practical themes. While it is a privilege that responsible persons greatly appreciate to welcome and entertain distinguished guests and experts in many branches of learning, the other side of the matter must not be overlooked. It is most important that international meetings should not be cheapened in value by too great an activity of discussion on party questions.

The Art Congress, which has been sitting here concurrently with the Free Trade Congress, had certainly a greater justification. This meeting has been a great advance on the last meeting at Berne. Forty nations were represented. America sent some 250 members, France 100, Germany 70, while there were present 40 members from Australia appointed as an Imperial Commission. Although the official languages were English, French and German, other languages, unintelligible to the majority of hearers, were employed, until the Imperial Institute began to resemble the Tower of Babel. It is worthy of remark that although nearly every Government took official cognizance of the Congress, and indeed gave a grant towards it, the English Government did not do so. It is stated, however, that the Scottish Education Board took an official interest in the Congress. I gather that the general impression left on the minds of the members was the increasing importance of their profession. Art, they feel, is struggling successfully to come into line with science and letters, and the status of the art teacher is beginning everywhere to approximate to the status of teachers in other branches. If the system, recently adopted in New York, by which all art teachers must have taken their B. A. degree before they are qualified to take the most elementary classes, becomes more widespread, it is likely to raise the standard of art teaching as well as the status of the teacher in most countries. At the public schools in this country, the teaching of art was, until recently, somewhat casual, but I doubt whether it is now possible to find drawing as an alternative subject to gymnastics in any ordinary curriculum. It is not, however, unknown that a master who teaches Latin, Greek, French, German, history, and writing should also teach drawing.

The twenty days' trial of the Mile End Board of Guardians has at last been concluded, with the not unexpected result that all the accused have been found guilty of bribery, conspiracy, and corruption. The process has been extraordinarily intricate and tedious, and the poor, patient jurymen have earned a good deal of sympathy. The moral of the case is pretty clear. It is possible that the honesty of public bodies has declined during the last twenty years, if we are to follow Mr. Justice Phillimore's opinion, but it is certainly clear that the indifference of Londoners to their civic duties, as compared with the relative keenness of provincial municipal voters, puts the wrong sort of men into power. Things will not be much better if Mr. John Burns carries through his contemplated reform of transferring the powers of the Boards of Guardians to Municipal or County Councils. The interest shown by the Londoner in his Borough Council is no greater than his interest in his Board of Guardians. The absence of interest in the first place, and of control in the second, places doubtful people in authority and tempts them to misuse the large sums of money entrusted to them.

By the time London assembles again, after the moors and the turnip-fields, there will be substantial changes to be observed in the streets. The colonial government buildings in the Strand are making visible advances upward, while a little lower down the Strand the much disputed "statue" building of the Medical Association will face them robbed of its hoardings. The Marble Arch improvement is already a matter of the past. Some new business premises at the corner of Oxford Street and Duke Street, which have for more than a year presented nothing but an impenetrable front of artistically painted hoarding, are also making progress. It will be a great relief, at some time during the future, to be rid of the raised gangway and wooden arches, though the latter are certainly rather useful during rainy weather. In Pall Mall there is not yet much to be seen on the new site of the Automobile Club, which is the old site of the War Office, except men hard at work and prodigious excavations.

GENERAL NEWS.

NEWS FROM AMERICA.

THE RIO DE JANEIRO EXHIBITION.

Rio de Janeiro, August 11.

The grand national exhibition in this city was opened today in the presence of the President and Ministers of State. The exhibition is excellently arranged, and competent observers state that it falls but little short of the great expositions in Paris and St. Louis. Each of the Brazilian States has erected a handsome pavilion, wherein are displayed exhibits representing the industrial progress made by the country. Thousands of foreign visitors have arrived in this city.

THE SITUATION IN CUBA.

Governor Magoon, says a New York report, has sent a long dispatch to the State Department giving his views as to the conduct of the recent municipal and provincial elections in Cuba, and the bearing of the results upon the political future of the island. The elections passed off with a gratifying absence of serious disorder, and more than half of the registered voters went to the poll, a proportion that is considered very good in the circumstances. More important still is the fact that the warring Liberal factions show a disposition to find common ground upon which to work for the national well-being.

Nevertheless, there is good reason for stating that Governor Magoon is not inclined to regard the elections as furnishing justification for the total withdrawal of the American military forces from the island. These are actually being reduced in view of the promised complete evacuation by February next year, but the pace will not be accelerated, and Governor Magoon and the American officers occupying the more important provincial governorships will not be disturbed at any rate until after the presidential elections, which are to take place in December. Negotiations are in progress which will, it is believed, result in the nomination of Gen. José Miguel Gomez as the candidate for President of the United Liberal Groups, his great rival, Dr. Zaya, being given the Parliamentary leadership and the reversion of the presidency. The Conservative presidential candidate may be Dr. Cardenas, who has just secured election as Mayor of Havana.

FATAL FIRE IN NEW YORK.

New York, August 11.

A terrible fire has occurred in what is known as the Sicilian quarter, situated in and around East 112th-street, resulting in five persons being killed and over a score injured.

All the people hurt were injured through jumping from upper windows, though in many cases they might have remained in their rooms unharmed until the escapes arrived.

THE DUTCH-VENEZUELAN DISPUTE.

Willemstad, August 11.

In anticipation of a possible conflict between the Netherlands and Venezuela a station for wireless telegraphy has been erected here. The Dutch

cruiser "Gelderland" left yesterday for the neighbouring islands of Aruba and Island, conveying rifles and ammunition to the inhabitants of those places, who are at present quite defenceless. A communication from Maracaibo reports the departure of the Venezuelan river steamer "Felix" with troops for the bay of Maracaibo. It is generally believed that these troops are intended for operations against the revolutionaries.

RENEWED FOREST FIRES IN CANADA.

Frankfort o. M., August 12.

The *Frankfurter Zeitung* reports from Winnipeg that fresh forest fires have broken out, and threaten the towns of Kimberley, Sullivan, and Cranbrook. A heavy rainfall is generally desired, otherwise the damage will be most serious.

SCHOLARSHIPS FOR ACTORS.

Mr. Lee Shubert, one of the partners in the great theatrical business bearing his name, has taken an important step with a view to the improvement of national drama. Mr. Shubert, to whom stageland is already greatly indebted, has founded two scholarships, to be awarded annually to the most promising of the young actors in the schools of dramatic art, with the object of enabling them to study their profession abroad. Without such study, said Mr. Shubert to a contemporary's representative, there is a circumscription of view which is fatal to developing talent.

KING EDWARD AND THE EMPEROR.

Cronberg, August 11.

The Emperor and King Edward took a walk in the Castle Park before lunch today, the meal being served at noon. Beside the two rulers, there were present at the table Prince and Princess Friedrich Carl of Hessen, the Crown Princess of Greece, and members of the various suites; Dr. Spielhagen, former private physician to the Empress Frederick; Sir Frank Lascelles, British Ambassador in Berlin; Colonel Trench, Military Attaché to the Embassy; and several German army officers. The band of the 81st Infantry Regiment played selections during the meal.

The afternoon was occupied by an automobile excursion, and in the evening a State banquet took place in the Castle of Friedrichshof, the speeches exchanged between the monarchs being of the most cordial description. Shortly before 11 p. m. the royal party left the Castle and proceeded to the railway station, where a special train was in waiting to convey King Edward to Ischl. Present on the platform to bid farewell to the British monarch were the Emperor, Prince and Princess Friedrich Carl, and the Crown Princess of Greece. The two monarchs warmly embraced when bidding each other farewell, King Edward also exchanging cordial handshakes with other members of the royal family present. Before the train left the station the King engaged in an animated conversation with the Emperor through the window of the carriage.

The Emperor himself left Cronberg by special train an hour later, en route to the Sennelager.

The entirely cordial character of the meeting is a subject of most favourable comment here. King Edward and the Emperor spent the whole day in each other's company, obviously enjoying a most friendly conversation. It was generally remarked that both rulers appeared to be in the very best spirits.

ENGLISH PRESS COMMENTS.

London, August 11.

The meeting at Cronberg continues to evoke great interest here, and the following extracts from the Press indicate the popular view of the situation:—

The *Daily Express*: It is said that Germany fears an aggressive English war. Our respect for German intelligence makes it difficult to understand how this absurd superstition can have arisen. It is impossible to point to a speech by any responsible politician of any party or to a line written by any responsible publicist expressing bellicose designs against the Kaiser or his people. Possibly the King's visit may help towards the realization of Great Britain's pacific intentions, if the contrary is believed.

(Continued on page 2.)