

IN ENGLAND'S CAPITAL
BRILLIANT SCENE AT THE QUEEN'S
LAST DRAWING ROOM.

Gossip of the Great City—Opening a New Theatre—Private View of the Royal Academy—the Queen to Give Medals to Her Household—Fashionable Weddings.

LONDON, May 5.—The Queen has come back looking wonderfully well and in such spirits! The Riviera does her a world of good, and her rheumatism from which she always suffers at Windsor entirely disappears. Her Majesty had by no means a pleasant passage across the channel. The sea was choppy and the rain came down in torrents when the Queen walked slowly from the quarterdeck of the yacht to the platform.

It was an ideal spring afternoon for yesterday's drawing room, such an afternoon as turns one's thoughts to river parties, country and fresh air. The dresses could not fail to have impressed the most casual observer with a sense of their beauty and variety. Never before have colors been so bright and fresh, never can materials have been so artistic and rich and effective, while embroideries seemed to have reached the very point of perfection. The flowers were very suggestions of summer itself and jewels sparkled and glittered in profusion in the bright light of a glorious May afternoon.

The Prince and Princess of Wales are to arrive at Eaton on Saturday evening on a Saturday to Monday visit to the Duke and Duchess of Westminster. The new mansion which the present Duke has built was designed by Waterhouse, and is admirably arranged.

The eastern side is much admired, a cloister extending the whole length, which leads to a terrace a hundred and twenty yards long. Here are the drawing room and dining room, and at the south end is an enormous library. There is a separate wing for the family to inhabit when there are no guests.

Everybody was extremely sorry to hear of the illness of the Duchess of Teck, for she has always been a great favorite, her universal bonhomie and courtesy being recognized and thoroughly appreciated by all classes. Although at present I hear there is really nothing alarming in her condition, it was found necessary for her to undergo a surgical operation on Saturday at the White Lodge, Richmond Park. Although the season proper has scarcely begun, plenty of people are to be seen in town, and the streets look quite gay.

There was no important evening entertainments last week, but there were plenty in the day time, with many weddings.

On Tuesday there was a large assemblage at St. Peter's Eaton Square, for the marriage of Lord Boyne's second son, Frederick Hamilton-Russell, with his cousin, Lady Margaret Scott. The united heights of the young couple must have amounted to something considerable, and the bride looked quite imposing in her white satin gown, with a court train, and Honiton lace wedding veil.

On Wednesday a number of relations and a few intimate friends were bidden to Christ church, Mayfair, to assist at Lady Parker's second noces. Captain Matthews, the bridegroom, was supported by Major Henry Ormsby-Gore as best man; while Lord Maclesfield, assisted by his cousin, officiated as page to his mother, both wearing smart white satin suits. Lady Parker's bridal white toilette was modified by a tone of mauve flowers and a bouquet of the same shade; with her came Miss Holford, in the capacity of dame d'honneur. Immediately after the service, without holding any reception, Captain Matthews and Lady Parker started on their honeymoon trip abroad.

Thursday was the date fixed for several weddings, but the most important, from a social point of view, was that of Miss Mary Lowther and M. Vieugue, whose engagement has been the happy result of Miss Lowther's sojourn in Japan. The marriage was to have taken place at the Oratory early in the day, according to the rites of the bridegroom's religion; but at the last moment the "powers that be" decreed that recent rules in the Roman church forbade any other marriage ceremony to follow, and the wedding itself had been fixed for early in the afternoon at St. Margaret's, Westminster. However, there it took place with great éclat, and a number of people went on afterwards to Lowther Lodge, where Mrs. Lowther entertained the wedding party.

The old Her Majesty's Theatre has given place to the new, and the opening of Mr. Beerbohm Tree's new playhouse in the Haymarket was treated as, and undoubtedly was, a theatrical event of considerable importance. It drew together a long concourse of people, many of whom came apparently merely to see what was to be seen outside of the theatre itself.

I was fortunate enough to get a ticket

for the first night, and it is needless to say that the audience included a great number of distinguished persons. In the box occupied by the Prince of Wales there were also the Duke of Teck, General Sir Dighton Probyn and Sir Arthur Ellis. The opposite box was occupied by the Poet Laureate and Mrs. Alfred Austin. Among others present were Lord Russell of Killowen, Mr. and Mrs. Chamberlain, Mr. and Mrs. Aquith and the Marquis and Marchioness of Granby.

After a preliminary flourish of brass instruments the green painted, fire-proof curtain of sheet iron ascended, giving to view red tableau curtains, gold embroidered. Between these Mrs. Tree presently entered, curtseying, in the poudre costume she was to wear in 'The Sats of the Mighty,' and proceeded to recite the Inaugural Address, composed for the occasion by the Poet Laureate.

Then we had 'God Save the Queen,' sung by Miss Clara Butt, and chorused by the Queen's Hall Choral society, and following on this a first view of the act-drop painted from a piece of Gobelin tapestry, representing the reception of Aeneas by Dido. Then after some plaintive music by Humperdinck and some unexplained pauses, the curtain drew up upon the prologue of Gilbert Parker's 'Seats of the Mighty.'

The dresses were marvels of good taste, but those worn by Mrs. Tree undoubtedly came first. The best is a court gown of gold tissue. The style is Watteau, of course, but the charm of the costume was the godet skirt, which fell in voluminous folds, hiding yet showing the dainty decoration of bows and knots in turquoise embroidery. The underskirt was bright rose red, and (I only saw it on occasions) the pretty shoes and stockings were in the same tone as the slip. Throughout the play Mrs. Tree wore her hair 'poudre,' and dressed small, with a lace lappet twisted round and culminating either in an upstanding feather or a diamond cluster.

In the second act Mrs. Tree wears a very lovely pelisse, made of taffeta in a shade of olive green. This is trimmed with jewelled galon and sable. The short fur lined mantle is curious for the mere fact that it has two hoods, one of red satin covered with ecru guipure, which decorates the back of the mantle and is surmounted by a large turn-down collar of sable, and another of green satin and ecru lace, lined with fur, which is drawn over her head, en lieu de mitoux.

The next dress Mrs. Tree wears is of flame-colored "moire miniature," and over this a mantle of white and gold brocade, lined with bright green and edged with ermine and jewelled galore.

Miss Janet Steer as La Pompadour wears a lovely dress of pale blue moire brocade, lined with pink. The style, Watteau, and the effect, tout-ce qu'on peut desirer. Innumerable jewels are worn on the neck and bodice of this lovely dress, and it Madame de Pompadour always looked so lovely I can quite understand the devotion of the King.

On Friday we went to the private view of the Royal Academy, and, notwithstanding the dreary downpour that lasted throughout the afternoon, there was a huge attendance, an overwhelming string of carriages up Piccadilly and the daintiest of spring toilets on view in Burlington House.

We who wished to view the pictures arrived in the early hours before luncheon, but those who came to see and to be seen poured in from three o'clock in unceasing numbers. A new feature was the way in which the visitors stood waiting in the vestibule, frankly enjoying each other's society rather than the galleries of pictures.

Society was represented by Lady Carew in a large green hat, decked with Neapolitan violets, and a gown of green and heliotrope brocade, with big sleeves of velvet, Lord Dufferin, Lady Chesterfield and hundreds of other well-known people.

The exhibition this year is not very interesting. The number of good pictures are few and the hanging committee have evidently been more lenient than usual, with the result that the walls are unpleasantly crowded.

Mr. Sargent occupies the post of honor in the large gallery, with a group of Mrs. Carl Meyer and her children, and Mr. Shannon is at his best in one or two portraits of old gentlemen.

I mentioned last week the unfortunate disagreement which has arisen between the young Grand Duke (and Duchess of Hesse). The pretty Duchess Victoria Melita has now rushed off to St. Petersburg to consult her sister-in-law, the Czarina. The little lady could scarcely have chosen a better confidante to flee to in her little troubles than her particularly sensible and clever sister-in-law. We have looked forward to seeing her and the Grand Duke figuring as quite a show couple at Grand-mamma's Jubilee so let us hope that a week or two at the Czarina's court will restore her Grand Ducal Highness' spirits as well as bring about a return of domestic bliss. Meantime, grandmotherly and motherly councils are of course, being given by the yard to both husband and wife, and a number of letters already written betwixt kinstfolk on the subject would fill a sack.

I have been permitted to have a peep at golden casket and key which are to be presented to the Queen on her approaching visit to Sheffield. The casket, which is most magnificent, is oblong in form, with

a pedestal and statuette at each corner, representing Europe with sceptre and orb, Asia with a veil of mystery, Africa with Egyptian coronal, shepherd's crook and palm, America with chapel of eagle's feathers and starry centre—the four divisions of the globe with which Sheffield holds commerce by her industries. On the dome lid of the casket stands a figure of Britannia with trident and shield.

On the sides and ends of the casket are tablets richly enameled, with Sheffield depicted on one, the coats of arms of the Queen and of the city of Sheffield on others. On the back appears the inscription: 'To Her Most Gracious Majesty. Town Hall of Sheffield, May 21st. 1897.'

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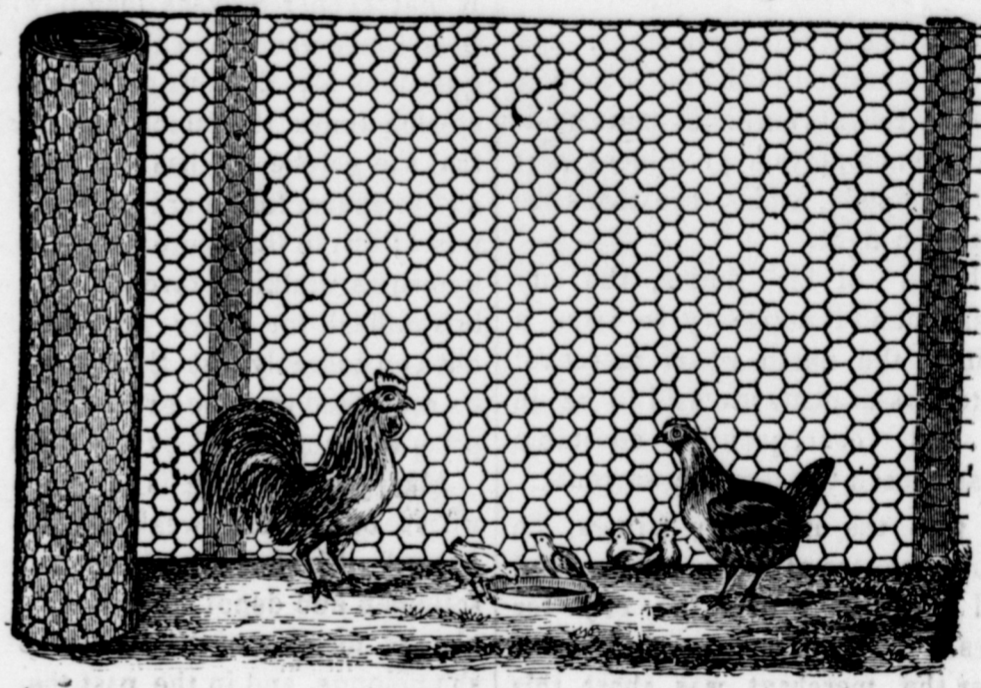
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