

# Notes and gleanings

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One of their habits became known to all that big section of the population of London which surges around Fleet-street and the Strand—the London of journalists and of the members of

the dramatic profession. In the Adelphi every day, except for an interval to which I will presently refer, the two brothers were to be seen always at the same table; always eating a quite frugal meal; always surrounded by some of the very large circle of friends they had among their customers. They were both well educated, very intelligent, and very agreeable men, and always perfectly simple and modest. There was no appearance of the pride of purse which their immense success might well have produced in men of less refined nature.

Now and then one of them, Agostino, would be absent for a while, and when he returned to his usual seat at the same table he revealed to you another side of his character. He was a member of the National Council of his native Switzerland—the popular Chamber of the sturdy little republic. He was a man of strong convictions; very Catholic, very Conservative, and probably he found it necessary to be regular in his attendance, because in the National Council the Radicals have usually the majority, and with their policy Agostino, both on religious and political grounds, had no patience. Doubtless he fought his battles quietly, but I am sure he fought them very resolutely and very tenaciously. As everybody knows, the firm gradually went into theatre enterprises, and for a number of years were in control of the Adelphi and the Vaudeville theatres, where they had many successful productions; their reign was one of clean pieces and dignified management. They are both now dead; and the chief responsibilities of the great firm have fallen mainly on the shoulders of John M. Gatti and his brother, Rocco, the sons of Agostino Gatti. John M. Gatti, born in London and a lifelong Cockney, threw himself into the life of London to a degree that would have been impossible in his father or his uncle. He is one of the pioneers of the modern electrical industry in London—especially in Westminster—with which he has always had a very close association. He was at one time Mayor of Westminster, and seemed inclined to take an interest in the larger political life of the country in the House of Commons. But primarily a business man and of too tranquil, perhaps of too shy, a nature to court public life, he has been content to remain one of the most active and prosperous business men of his native city. He has found besides full scope for his activities in the London County Council, where he fills the responsible position of chairman of the Finance Committee.

A transformation in the social life of London has been created by members of this family, for until the Gatti restaurants came, there was scarcely any provision for the large class whose means are between extreme poverty and great wealth. The only place at which to get a cup of tea or of coffee in London was in those frowsy coffee-houses—sadly declined from the coffee-house which was in the days of Swift and other eighteenth-century figures the resort of the aristocrats and the wits of that splendid age. It was the Gattis also who, besides producing finely ornamented and airy restaurants, introduced music at a meal—an unheard-of novelty at the period when they began. These restaurants, in their well-chosen position, have been for two generations very popular, especially in the literary and artistic circles, and the family must be regarded as one of the pioneers of the brighter, more comfortable London we have to-day, a transformation which can be appreciated by those only, like myself, who had to find their frugal meals either in the coffee-shop or the tap-room of a humble public-house.

Mrs. Gatti, the widow of Agostino and mother of John M. and Rocco Gatti, who died late on Thursday night (Sept. 17th), was a striking and winning figure, which perhaps may have accounted for the name "Madame" by which she was popularly known and was addressed when she appeared in one of her children's restaurants. As the remaining female head of a large family—for she was a great-grandmother—she might have been appropriately called 'The Matriarch' of the Gattis. She had some months of illness in her house in Carlton-hill, W., and she was in her 79th year at the time of her death. I never saw her, but I have heard a great deal of her. She inherited all the best qualities of her race; she was pious; a combination of strength and gentleness—the gentleness predominating over the strength—and her benevolence to those in trouble or need was inexhaustible.

And now they are building at Gatti's, as my readers know, and the Red Room has already disappeared, never to gladden our ladies' hearts again, I am told. A pity, because there are not many public rooms, at once so cosy and friendly and as get-at-able as that Red Room was. Alas!

#### Alpine Flora.

*The Times* (18th Sept.):—

Authorities and associations in Switzerland and Tirol are making great efforts to protect the Alpine flora. Travellers can help them by refusing to buy flowers (edelweiss, rhododendron, orchids, etc.). State your reason each time, so as

to educate the natives. They will then discover that gardening is more profitable. The picking of wildflowers is really the predatory instinct turned into a thoughtless habit. As a legitimate trophy a single specimen is better than a hundred. For colour effects in rooms our garden flowers are far more suitable.

To which, I am sure, my readers will all say, "Hear, hear!"

#### Swiss National Council Protest Against U.S.A. Action.

*The Nottingham Guardian* (23rd Sept.):—

The Federal Council assembled on Monday afternoon (Sept. 21st) for their usual autumn session, which will be the last before the general election on October 25th.

The Council of States began a debate on the arbitration treaties with France, Japan, Belgium and Poland, and approved the treaty with Japan.

In the National Council, during a debate on the administrative report of the Federal Council, the reporter made a protest against the introduction by the United States of a control over Swiss production, and claimed that Switzerland might with as much right establish a control of the American motor industry through her consular officials.

I have previously referred to the matter, and am glad a protest has been made in the National Council. The action complained of is, of course, merely an example of Tariff Reform and its quite logical interpretation.

#### "I miss my Swiss."

a tongue-twister in English, is likely, according to the *Daily Mail* (24th Sept.), to be one of the hits of the programme which "The Chauve Souris" present at the Strand on October 2nd:—

I miss my Swiss,

My Swiss miss misses me;

I miss the bliss that Swiss kiss gives to me.

I hear her yodelling sweet melodies,

Like the birds and the bees from the Swiss trees.

Her dear papa makes watches that are Swiss,  
That's why he watches me like this;

I lost her in the mountains—

In the mountains she must be;

I miss my Swiss,

My Swiss miss misses me.

Well, well—pretty, pretty—but rather feeble all the same, and hardly up to "Chauve Souris" excellence. By the way, I have always considered the Chauve Souris the one purely and sublimely artistic show London gave us last year, and I hope that this year's season of the talented Russians will be as good. Good luck to them!

#### Economic Conditions of Europe.

*The Times* (10th Sept.):—

A Central European Economic Conference which has been sitting at Vienna for two days was concluded on Sept. 9th. The Conference, which was attended by representatives from 12 European States, including Great Britain, France, Italy and Switzerland, was useful and successful in that it afforded the opportunity of the free expression of the economic grievances which exist in Europe to-day.

A resolution proposed by Dr. Elemer Hantos (Hungary) was unanimously adopted. It was to the effect that the present situation in Central Europe was largely the outcome of tendencies on the part of small nations to isolate themselves and to try to enforce their will upon their neighbours. As a remedy, it suggested the conclusion of a series of non-political agreements, embracing transport and currency. Preferential Customs tariffs were also advocated, together with an identical gold basis for the currencies of all States.

The constitution of a permanent Central European Economic Organization for the study of these questions and the drafting of agreements is to be the first step in the policy recommended by the resolution.

If "preferential Customs Tariffs" have any meaning at all, I should say that they are meant to remedy to some extent the mischief done by "tariffs pure and simple." Which reflection I commend to my tariff reform friends for study during a quiet hour of leisure.

There is not much else to glean from the British Press this week. Mention is made by *The Times* (17th Sept.) of "Calderon's Miracle Play—Open-Air Performance at Einsiedeln," and the article is worth reading. *The Catholic Herald* (19th Sept.) has a long article on "How Switzerland Celebrated the New Saint," viz., St. Peter Canisius, at Fribourg.

Meanwhile the summer has passed away; summer time will be a thing of the past when these "Notes and Gleanings" are read by my readers on Sunday morning, and autumn and winter will again awaken our appreciation of deep, comfortable easy-chairs, snugly drawn up to the fire. May the weather clerk be lenient this season and give us plenty of nice, sunny days, so that we do not forget altogether how it feels to be in the open air when the sun is shining, and there is a nice, keen tang in the air, which makes us feel strong and alert and years and years younger. And so say all of us, including "Kyburg."

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