A TALE OF TO-DAY,

BY ROBERT BUCHANAN,

Author of "The Shadow of the Sword," "God and the Man," "Stormy Waters," &c.

RIGHTS RESERVED.

And what's to me a ring o' gold That proves the written law? A ring of airn's around my heart That sadly breaks in twa! Old Bull x L

CHATTERS I AND II -Mr and Mrs O'Mara, both of them artists, occupy rooms in Peter street, Westminster, with their infant child, Dora. The husband is somewhat of a spendthrift and idle to boot, but the wife manages to keep the wolf from the door as well as she can by miniature painting. Maddened by misfortune, O'Mara descends to chesting at cards, but is detected at his friends' chambers, and leaves in disgrace. As he arrives home he hears the

voice of his wife and that of a strange man. CHAPTERS III. AND IV.-Mr Bream, the clergyman, who takes the greatest interest in Gillian, is the gentleman on a visit to her on her husband's return. He insists on being her banker, and lends her £10 for the purpose of providing medicine and change of air for herself and little one. O'Mara hears the conversation, and after Mr Broam's departure he asks for the money from her. She refuses, and a struggle ensues. She falls and cuts her temple. O'Mara takes the money from her eleuched hand and Jecamps, Mrs O'Main is taken to St. Thomas's Hospital, and recovers to hear that she is an heiress to £20,000 left her by an uncle.

CHAPTER V.—Summer Days.

Two gentlemen at ired in clerical costumes were walking together along a pleasant lane, bordered on one hand by a long line of lofty elms, swathed to midheight in trailing ivy, and on the other by a low hedge, odorous with wild roses, over which was visible a wide reach of the rich pasture lands of Essex, shining in a chequored pattern of deep emerald and du'l gold. It was verging on a midsummer evening, and both time and place were beautiful in deep serenity.

One of the waylarers was considerably his companion's superior in years. He was a hale, raddyfaced gentleman of sixty or so, portly and comfortable of prescace, and very lightly touched by time, save that his hair, which he wore rather longer than is the fashion of the present day, was snow white.

He had a mild, clear eye, and his babitual expression was one of rather absent minded benevolence. Some peculiarities of his dress, which was dusty with long walking in the summer lanes, and which, though of the last cut and the finest material, had a lack of complete neatness which proclaimed its wearer a bachelor, gave the learned in such matters the idea that the Reverend Marmaduke Herbert was a High Churci-man. His companion, something over twenty years his

junior, we have met before. Time had dealt not unkindly with Mr Bream, as it does with all men of simple lives who regard existence as a sacred gift in trust from a great Master, and are zealous to give a good account of its utmost minute. His cheerfully resolute face and manly figure were as of old, and only the thinnest possible lines of gray in his thick brown hair proclaimed the passage of seven years since we last met him. "We will close our round of visits, Bream," the

elderly clergyman was saying in a full and genial voice, "at Mrs Dartmouth's, who will, I daresay, give us a cup of tea. I expect you to be-all! charmed with Mrs Dartmouth, Bream. A most amiable and admirable lady." "I shall be happy to make her acquaintance, sir."

"A most superior woman," said Mr Herbert, "and a true—ah! daughter of the church. She is a widow, with one child. A daughter. When she first came among us, some six or seven years ago this summer. there was—ah! she excited considerable interest." "! Isdeed!"

"Yee, she had, if I may so express myself, theshi the charm of mystery. Nobody knew who she was, or whence she came. In a small community like ours in Crouchford a stranger is likely to exciteah! comment. That, however, passed away-and Mrs Dartmouth was accepted as what she is, my dear Bream, a most amiable and accomplished lady."

Mr Bream again expressed his pleasure at the prospect of making Mrs Dartmouth's acquaintance. "That," said Mr Herbert, pointing with the polished stick of ebony he carried in his hand to a cluster of red brick chimieys visible above the trees, "is her home. We are now passing the outskirts of

her freehold. She farms her own acres—an excellent woman of business." The line of elms had given place to a twisted hedge, separated from the high road by a deep ditch.

As the two friends walked on a little shower of wild field blossoms fell at their feet, and a little childish laugh drew their eyes to a spot where, the hedge being thinner, the figure of a little girl in a white summer dress touched here and there with fluttering pink ribbons, was standing above them. "Ah! little mischief!" cried the elder cleric.

"You are there. We are going to call upon mamma. Is she at home?"

"Xes," answered the child, looking shyly at Mr

Bream, "mamma is at home." "That is well. This, Dora," continued Mr.

Herbert, "is Mr Bream, who has come to Crouch. ford to be my curate. As I am introducing you to your parishioners, Bream, let me seize th-ah! opportunity, and present you Miss Dora Dartmouth, the Reverend Mr John Bream." The little girl bowed with a wonderfally demure

aspect, and then, fearful of her own gravity, said "I'll go and tell mamma," and was off at the word, like a flash of variculoured light among the bushes. "A pretty child," said Bream.

"A delightful little thing, my dear Bream. A real child, a ratity nowadays. The precocious infant is ah! unendurable and its commonness is one of the saddest features of the degeneracy of our times." Mr Bream had an almost imperceptible dry smile at moments, and it crossed his face now.

A wooden gate, set in a red brick wall, and leading to a short gravelled carriage drive, led to the house, a pretty and pleasant two story building swathed about to its chimney cowls in rose vine and creepers. A glass reofed verandah ran the entire length of the house, supported on square wooden pillars, and covered also with the same sweet smelling growths. The still summer air was heavy with their breath. A fire of roses, roses white and red and plak and

yellow, burned on the lawn before the house, and suc smitten roses glowed like lamps all over its front. The deer stood open, and Mr Herbert entered, like a frequent guest certain of his welcome.

Bream, following him, found himself in a wide, old-fashioned entrance hall, occapying the whole depth of the house back to the open French windows leading to a second and wider lawn. A mighty chestnut tree, in full leaf, stood in its centre, and on either hand it was bounded by the sweeping ourve of the shrubbery, through a wide gap of which the corner of a hayrack and fields of tall green wheat were visible. The hall was solidly and comfortably furnished as a

reception room, and on the left a door led to another apartment, on the right was a huge open chimney with a wide tited hearth and wooden settles. The place was a curious and pleasant mixture of old architecture and modern conveniences, and of old and modern decorations. Strange monsters born of the fancies of Chinese and Japanese artists encumbered the high mantelshelf, and delicately coloured fans and exotic plaques of earthen ware shone against the fully polished black oak of the walls. "What a delightful room," said Bream.

Mr Herbert, with a sigh of content, sank his portly frame into an arm-chair.

"I shall really be very glad of a cap of tea," he

remarked. "Dera!" called a clear, feminine voice on the lawn

outside. "Dora, my darling!" Dera's voice was heard in answer from a distance,

and a quick patter of light feet on a gravel path showed that she and her unseen summoner were close to the open French window. Bream, who had taken a scat behind his vicar, started and stared with a audden wonder and doubt in his face. Mr Herbert, ilicking the dust from his shoes and gaiters with his pocket handkerchief, took no notice of these signs of perturbation. "Go and tell Johnson," the voice proceeded, "to

pick sone strawberries for tea." "Oh, mamma, can I help?"

"I think you had much better not," said the voice.

"You had better go to Barbara, and get her to dress you. Look at your shoes, and oh! what hands. There, run away and tell Johnson." The little feet were heard fading in the distance. "Am I mad?" Bream asked of himself, "or

dreaming? I would know that voice among a

thousand," A lady, clad like the child to whom she had been overheard speaking, in a white summer dress, entered at the open window and glided towards the two Visitors. Bream's face, as he rose, was against the light, and only dimly visible. Mr Herbert had stepped forward to their hostess.

"I have taken the liberty," he began----"Which is not at all a liberty, to begin with," said

Mrs Dartmouth, with a pleasant smile. "Thank you-I have done myself the honour, let me say, to make known to you the Reverend Mc Bream, my future assistant in the duties of my pariel. You will remember that I mentioned his name to you a day or two ago." "I remember very well," said Mrs Dartmouth,

extending her hand frankly to Bream. He took it with a curious clumsiness. "Welcome to Crouchford. Mr Bream. You are here," she said to Mr. Herbert, "just in time for tea." "Then I am here, Mrs Dartmouth," said the

reverend gentleman, "just at the time I wanted to antive at. We have had a long walk and the roads are—ah! dusty."

"It is laid on the lawn. Will you come out?" She led the way to where, under the spreading shade of the great chestnut tree, a table gleamed, set with the whitest of cloths and the prettiest of glass and china, to which a stout, homely, brown-faced woman of thirty, dressed in a next cotton print in contrast with the ruddy brown of her face and her bere arms, was just putting the finishing touches,

"That'll do, Barbara, thank you," said her mistress. "Will you see that Miss Dora changes her shoes?" Barbara, with a curtsey to the reverend gentlemen, which Mr Herbert repaid with a fatherly nod and smile, and Bream passed unheeded, went into the

"Mr Herbert tells me, Mr Bream," said Mrs Dartmouth, when the little party were seated in the rustic chairs set about the table, "that your last curacy was in London—in Westminster, I think?"

" Yes," Bream answered. "You will find this a pleasant change, I hope; the country is really delightful in this neighbourhood." Bream, a luttle more collected, raplied, "Beautiful,

indeed." "Bream," said Mr Herbert, "is hardly altogether a stranger here. He is, to a certain extent—an I en pays de connaisance. He is an old friend of Sir

George Venebles." "Indeed!" said Mrs Dartmouth. "You know

Sir George, Mr Bream?" "We are old friends. We were at Rugby together, and at one time were inseparable. We have seen little of each other of late, from many causes. believe he has spent most of the last five years almost entirely abroad. I have to thank him for my appoint ment as curate here, for it was he who introduced me to Mr Herbert and induced him to eagage me." "Sir George and I are old friends. I was his

tenant here before he consented to allow me to buy the freehold," said Mrs Dartmouth. Dora arriving at this instant with an enormous

glass dish of strawberries, and Barbara following her with the teapot, Mrs Dartmouth busied herself in distributing the materials of the pleasant meal, additionally pleasant amid such surroundings. Had Mr Herbert been a man of quick observation, which he decidedly was not, his curate's strangeness of manner since their hostess's appearance could hardly have escaped him. They had made many visits together that day, and Mr Bream had come through them all with flying colours, and was at that moment being lauded in a dozen Crouchford households as a delightful companion. Here, he was decidedly stiff and embairssed, and though he had recovered from the first shock of the condition with which he had met Mrs Dartmouth, he was still constrained in voice and manner, looked harder and longer at the lady than was altogether polite or necessary.

Mrs Dartmouth seemed quite at ease under his scruting, unless a livelier flush of colour on her face, which might have been equally accounted for by the heat or by the shade of the large pink Japanese umbrella attached to the back of the chair she sat in, mas cel'ed there by his protracted reading of her features. She addressed her conversation, after the beginning of the meal, mainly to Mr Herbert, who answered with a rather high-flown olerical gallantry in the intervals of absorbing a vast amount of tea, now and then bringing Bream into the talk, until after a while he found his tongue and his forgotten manners simultaneously, and came into it himself, naturally and easily.

The shadows lengthened on the green as they sat and talked, when Barbara came to her mistress's side with a card. She bent her head for a moment to her visitors, and after glancing at it said to Barbara: "Certainly, ask him to join us here, and bring another cup and saucer. Sir George Venebles," she announced to her visitors. "You have not met him since you arrived. Mr Bream?"

"No," said Bream, "though I have a standing invitation to the Lodge. I expect I shall get a blowing up for not having availed myself of it on my first coming here."

Barbara appeared, followed by the new comer. Sir George Venebles was a man in the early thirties, one of those happy people who seem to radiate health as a lantern does light. He had the fair skin, brouzed by constant exercise in the fresh air, and the light brown hair common among Englishmen of pure strain. He was, as he looked, as hard as nails all over, and had not an ounce of superfluous flesh any. where about him, though his breadth was rather more than proportionate to his height, which was five fort eleven in his stocking feet. He wore a short clipped moustache and a crisp brown beard of a golden breuze tinge, which admirably finished a face more remarkable for its evidences of health, pluck, and kindliness than for accurate beauty of line, though he was a handsonie fellow too, judged even by that standard. He was dressed in cords and spurred boots, literally powdered by the dust of the road, and carried a riding crop. "You're a pretty fellow, don't you think," he

asked Bream, after greeting Mrs Dartmouth, "to have been more than twenty four hours in the place and never to have given me a call! I called at your diggings just now-just fancy, Mrs Dartmouth, he's gole and taken Mrs Jones' first floor, over the Supply Stores in the High street, when he might have had the free run of the Lodge as long as he liked,"

"I shall come over there presently," answered Bream. "It's a maxim of mine to work upwards, not downwards. When I know all the oi polloi of the district I shall claim acquaintance with the lord of the manor."

"Do I belong to the oi polloi?" asked Mrs Dartmouth, a question which created a diversion by sending Mr Herbert's tea the wrong way.

CHAPTER VI.-MRS DARTMOUTH. THE meal finished, Mrs Dartmouth rose and invited

her guests to a stroll about the grounds. In the dead quiet of the evening air the trees stood

silent, no breath of wind waked their leaves to the faintest rustle. The sun was sinking in a placid splendour of rose and gold, and in the opposing heavens a crescent moon was faintly glimmering in an ccean of tender sapphire. A riot of birds came from the winding borkage, blackcap and thrush, and linuet and blackbird merrily piping their adieu to the departing sun. The little party passed through the gap in the semioircle of trees on to a broad garry terrace separating the house domain from the farm. They had split into two groups. Sir George and Mr Herbert, and Mrs Dartmouth and Bream, while little Dora flitted from one to the other, and from bush to bush like a butterfly.

"Mr Bream," said Mrs Dartmouth, when they had got beyond earshot of the others, "I have to beg your forgiveness. Believe me, I do most sincerely." " For what?" asked Bream.

"For taking no farewell of the only friend I had, seven years ago."

"Surely, Mrs O'M-I beg pardon, Mrs Dartmouth, you have no need to ask my forgiveness for that. You have, I suppose, in common with other people, the right to choose your own acquaintances." "Ah!" said Mrs Dartmouth, "let there be no

conventional phrases between us. I noted wrongly, and I have repented of it many a time. When I heard from Mr Herbert and Sir George that you were coming here I was glad, not merely at the prospect of renewing an old acquaintance, but of apologising and explaining if you think my explanation worth listening "I cannot see that you have anything to apologise

for," said Bream, "but I shall be glad to hear any. thing you have to say." "You cannot know," said Mrs Dartmouth, "even

your sympathy cannot guess, what I suffered before and during the time you knew me in London. I look back on that time now as a soul escaped from purgatory might be supposed to look back on its experience

there. I wonder that I came out of it with life and reason. It was only last night—perhaps the mention of your name and the knowledge that you were coming here may account for it-I dreamed that I was back in Westminster, and I woke, crying and sobbing like a child. I woke in that way often for months after I had left London. All that time comes back upon me as a hideous nightmare. I have set myself resolutely to forget it-striven hard to banish any thought of it from my mind, but every detail is as clear in my

memory to day as if it had all happened only a week or two ago. I cannot even look at my child, healthy and strong as she is, thank God, without remembering..." She passed her hand across her eyes, as if to

clear away some shadow that offended them. "Why distress yourself by recalling it?" said Bream. "Because the only way for you to forgive me my

ingratifude is by your knowing, as much as anyone, other than myrelf, can know, what a mad desire I had to cancul, to root out, destroy, cast aside, ali that reminded me of that time. My one desire was to get free of it, to get beyond it al, to persuade myself, if possible, that it had never been. I passe t the first year of my freedom abroad, moving from place to pla e, trying, in the bustle and movement of travel, to forget. Forget! How could I, when the one thing in the world that was left me to love, my little Dora, brought back memories of that time at every minute of the day? The very pleasure I felt in seeing her grow back to health recalled the agouy I had known in seeing her dying-dying of hunger, Mr Bream, as you saw her."

No hardness of voice or passion of gesture gave any force to her speech. They were not needed. Her voice throbbed as an even note of pain, her face was white, her eyes looked straight before her with something of the wild look Bream remembered in them seven years ago in the garret in Westminster, when he had warned her that Dora's life was in dauger. "I returned to England—not to London. I have

never entered London since that day I left the hospital, and with God's help I never will. I resolved to try some kind of occupation, some steady, daily task, some work that must be done at its appointed hour, and see if that would not banish the memories which had clung to me all over the continent. This house and farm were advertised to let. I am country bred, and had passed most of my early years on a farm, and a longing for the dear old innocent life, for the fields and woods where I had been so happy as a child, came back to me. I took the farm, at first on a lease, and threw my whole heart into its management. The experiment succeeded, well enough at least, to give me hope that it might succeed altogether if I gave it time. Sir George consented to sell me the place—it is an outlying piece of property, bought by his father only a few years ago, and since then I have remained here, working and educating Dora. You are the only person in the world, Mr Bream, who knows my secret. I know that I have no need to ask you to keep it, but I do ask you to pardon my ingratitude in being si'ent all these years." "Are you quite sure," asked Bream, "that you

have been silent?"

She looked at him questioningly.

"Do you remember the date on which you left the hospital? It was the eighth of April. On the eighth of April of every year I have received a £50 note, with a slip of paper, bearing the words, " For the poor of your parish, from a friend grateful for past kindness.' It was not your hand, but I have always thought it came from you."

"Yes," she said quietly. "It came from me. Conscience money, Mr Bream "

"More than enough," said Bream, "to buy you all the absolution you ever needed. I hardly required your explanation; I understood from the first. I am sorry that circumstance has brought me here, since my presence awakens such unwelcome memorics." "Do not think that," she answered. "Since I

have never forgotten, you cannot charge it to yourself that you have made me remember. You are as welcome to me now as you will be, before long, to every one of your parishioners." It was some little time before silence was broken

between them again. Then Bream asked, "You have never had no news of-him?" He shrank from mentioning O'Mara's name, re-

membering that she had avoided it. " None whatever." "You have made no inquiries, caused none to be

"God forbid!" "But is that wise? You may be a free woman now, not free merely in the sense of his absence, but

free altogether, by his death," "It is best," she said, "to let sleeping dogs lie.

Besides, in what direction could I look for news? He disappeared utterly, leaving not the smallest trace. And it is seven years ago." "It is some comfort," said Bream, "that the

scoundrel committed his greatest villainy just at that moment, and when he thought he was shifting a burden from his shoulders was, in reality, robbing himself of a fortune." She made no answer to his remark. They had

reached the end of a long-shaded alley. They turned, and she held out her hand. "Then—we are friends again, Mr Bream?"

"We were never anything else," he answered, as he took the proffered hand. "I have never thought of you all the time but with respect and pfty. I am glad, gladder than I can tell you, that the need for pity is past, and that you are happy at last." "Yes," she said, looking wistfully down at the

summer snow of acreia leaves with which the path was strewn, "I suppose I am as happy as one has a right to expect to be in this world. But that is enough of me and my affairs. Tell me of yourself. What have you been doing all this long time?" "Really," he said. "I have nothing to tell. Coming

here has been the only event in my life since we last

"Well," she said, "I suppose men are like nations - and those are happiest that have no "We all have histories," he said, "of one sort or

another. Mine is finished, for the present at least." She remembered the words later, though they had little enough meaning for her at the moment. Her other guests came in sight, Mr Herbert and Sir George Venebles strolling side by side, the latter with Dora perched upon his shoulder, like a tropical bird, busy in weaving wild flowers about his hat.

"There," said Sir George, depositing her on the ground, "you've had a long ride, and I want to talk to Bream. He and I are old friends, you know." "But I haven't finished the hat," said Dora, pout-

ing, "and I was making it so pretty." "Very well. There's the hat. Work your sweet will upon it," he continued, taking the curate's arm, and drawing him apart from Mrs Dartmouth and Mr Herbert, "have you any engagement to-night?" "Nothing that I know of, unless Mr Herbert

should want me." "Then come over to the Lodge and dine with me, there's a good fellow, and stay till morning. Why on earth you wanted to go and stick yourself into that hole in the village, when you might have come and put up with me, is more than I can understand."

"It is nearer my work, for one thing," said Bream, "I want to get to know my parishioners, and to be within easy call of the vicar, until I have learned the reutine of the place. But I'll come over to-night and dine with you,"

"Good!" said Sir George, clapping him on the shoulder. "I'll get Mrs Dartmouth to lend you a horse, and send it back in the morning by a groom. It will be like old times having you about me again, old fellow. I'm devilish solitary, all alone in that great rambling place since the old man died."

"Solitude," said the curate, "is not an incurable disorder, I should think, for a man with ten thousand a year, and one of the best estates and oldest names in the country." Sir George made no answer, but flicked at his boot

with his riding whip in an absent minded fashion. "You seem to have been getting on very well with Mrs Dartmouth," he said abruptly. "What do you think of her?"

"She seems a very pleasant, amiable woman," answered Bream, rather constrainedly. "She bought this place from you, she tells me," he continued, merely for the sake of saying something to continue the conversation, "Yes," said Sir George. "I sold her the place.

Pretty, isn't it?" "Very pretty."

Their talk languished after this, though they were old and close friends, who had not met for seven years. Bream's mind was busy with the matter of his recent talk with Mrs Dartmouth, and Sir George walked beside him in a moody silence, slapping his boot at intervals. "It is time we were going," he said at last, re-

ferring to his watch. They turned and rejoined Mrs Dartmouth. "Bream is going over to the Lodge to dine with me, sir, if you have no objection," said Sir George to

"By no means," said Mr Herbert. "Our work for the day is over. You will meet me at the school tomerrow morning at eleven, Bream," "I am mounted," said Sir George, "and Bream is

not. I wonder, Mrs Dartmouth, if you would lend him a horse until the morning? You could ride him back yourself, Bream," "I will lend him Jerrica," sald Mrs Dartmouth,

'Barbara!" she called across the lawn to the servant. who was clearing away the table under the chestnut tree. "get Jerrica saddled for Mr Bream." They strolled back across the lawn, Dora chatting to Sir George as she added the finishing touches to the

decorations of his hat, and getting absent minded monosyllables in reply. "There," she said, "now it's lovely. Stoop down and I'll put it on for you." He stooped, obedient to the small tyrant, and whom

the had put on the hat, took her up in his arms and lissed her. His sombre face contrasted oddly with the festive appearance of his headgear. "What makes you look so solemn?" she askel

"Do I look solemn?" he asked in return. "Oh, dreadful!" said Dora. "I oan guess," s'is

added; "shall I? It's because mamma was talking such a long time to the new gentleman, Mr Bream, instead of to you. I saw you watching them."

"Sir George blushed a fiery red, and shot a quick glance at the others to see if they showed signs of having noticed the wisdom of this precoclous infant.

"Little girls shouldn't talk nonsense," he said, eeverely. ["I'm not little," said Dors, "I'm almost grown up.

I'm eight. If you call me little again I'll take the flowers out of your hat."

This dread threat brought them to the house. Sir George was glad of the obscurity in the wide hall, which hid his still blushing face, and he lingered there talking a little at random, till Jerrica and his own horse were announced as walting. Then he gave Dora a final kiss, and shook hands with Mrs Dartmouth and the vicar. "You surely are not going to ride home with those

flowers in your hat," said the hostess. Till I get out of sight of the house," he answered.

"It pleases Dora." She laughed and turned to the curate.

"Dora and I always take tea at five o'clock," she said, "and we shall always be glad to see you." He thanked her, and rode away with the Baronet. The road was solitary, and they had gone a mile or more before Sir George untwined Dora's garland. Even then he rode on with it in his hand for some distance, and it was with an audible sigh that he let it fall from his fingers to the dust.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

LETTERS FROM INDIA.

BY MR W. S. CAINE. [Special Correspondent of the Pall Mall Gazette

and of the BRISTOL MERCURY.]

CALCUTTA, DECEMBER 24TH. A PLEASANT passage of three days on board the Peninsular and Oriental steamer Coromandel brought us safely to Calcutta. Mr Allan has been to Darjiling for a few days, leaving me to a busy week at the Congrees Hall, where the preparations are very backward, owing to the serious iliness of two of the most active men on the committee-Mr W. C. Bonnerjee and Surendranath Baneyee. The brilliant Indian moonlight now enables us to work double shifts of men, and we hope to see the back of the last workman and

the face of the first delegate simultaneously.

The organisation of an Indian National Congress is no light matter. It is placed in the hands of a body of men called the "Reception Committee," composed of the leading and active members resident in the city where the meetings are to be held. Their first duty is to find a suitable place. Calcutta has no public hall in which such a concourse could meet. The largest is the Town hall, a long, low, narrow building of had acoustic properties, holding about 2000 persons only. The committee have therefore had to build a special structure, Mr Rajendra Lal Mullic, a wealthy Hindu landowner, has given them the free use of a large bungalow, with six or eight acres of compound. In this has been erected a vast hall of bamboo and matting, 250 ft long by 125 ft wide, to seat 6000 persons. Four thousand chairs were to have been imported from Vienna and sold by auction afterwards; the rest of the seats being benches borrowed from various schools. But, alas! the steamer bringing the chairs has suffered shipwreck, and it has been a perious difficulty to get substitutes, adding greatly to the anxieties of the committee. The building is lined inside-roof, sides, and columns-with vari-coloured cloth, and when filled with 6000 turbanned delegates, will be a gay and picturesque sight. The building alone will cost

The next difficulty the committee has to face is the entertainment of the delegates. Mr Nirnai Chanan Bore has given up his famous mansion in the Suam Bazaar, with its thirty-nine marble floored rooms, for the use of the orthodox Hindu delegates. Forty cooks and fifty other servants have been engaged and drilled into discipline to look after the comfort of the 400 guests, of all castes and from every part of India, who are to be entertained in this Mohun Bagan Palace. The 150 Mussulman delegates will all be boused in two buge bungalows lent by Mr Palit and. Six Romesh Chunder Mitter. The whole of the delegates from the country, about 900, will be must at the rull way stations by members of the committee and conveyed to their respective lodgings, supploying a whole regiment of hackney carriages, buses, and

other vehicles. All this has to be done by a committee of volunteers to whom such work is entirely strange, in a city devoid of all accessories. It will cost 60,000 rupees, and the task of collecting the needful funds is also thrown upon this overworked committee. The genius of the whole basiness is the honorary socretary of the Reception Committee, Mr J. Ghozal, who may count himself fortunate if he gets through under 10) working days of twelve hours each. His tact, energy,

and enthusiasm are, indeed, boundless,

The chairman of the Reception Committee is, after the president, the most important personage of the Congress. Not only has he to presideat all committee meetings and act as Director-General, but he must deliver an address of welcome on the opening day to the president and delegates, which is expected to be a model political speech, and strike the keynote of the whole Congress. The office could not be in better hands than those of Mr Manomohun Ghose, one of the foremost Hindu reformers of Bengal. Mr Ghose is the son of a subordinate judge, who played his part in the educational reforms of the last generation. He is forty six years old, and the brother of Mc Lalmohun Ghose, the Liberal candidate for Deptford. In 1862 he left for England with his friend Mr S. N. Tagore, to seek their fortunes, which they found. Mr. Tagore, being the first Indian to pass the Civil Service examination, now occupies the position of District Judge; Mr Ghose, being the first Indian called to the English Bar who has practised in India, is now the acknowledged leader of the Criminal Bar of Calcutta. His eldest son, now in England, has just passed the Indian Civil Service examination with great credit. Mr Ghose will be known to many of your readers as one of the three Indians deputed by the public bodies of the three Presidencies to advocate Indian questions in the United Kingdom during the autumn of 1885, in view of the pending dissolution of Parliament. He is an active member of the Brahmo Somaj, is married to a cultured lady of the same faith, who has twice visited England with her husband, and he is giving an English education to all his sons and

There has been some delay in finally deciding upon

daughters.

a president for this year's Congress-not from want of choice, but because it was thought desirable to give variety from previous presidents. A Hindu, a Mussulman, a Parsi, a British merchant, and a retired Indian civilian, have all in turn filled the presidential chair : and this year the committee decided to invite a Euragian. After much discussion, their choice fell upon Mr Gantz, a Madras barrister, president of the Eurasian Association of that city, and a staunch supporter of the Congress from its birth. He accepted the invitation in the first instance, but afterwards altered his mind, and declined. He has, however, been elected one of the Madras delegates, his reasons being purely personal and not from any indifference to the aims of the Congress. The committee then decided upon Mr Pherozshah M. Mehta, who was the chairman of the Reception Committee at Bombay last year. And their choice was a wise one. Mr Mehta is a Parsi, in the prime of life, a barrister occupying much the same position in Bombay as Mr Ghose does in Calcutta. He was the first Parsi who graduated M.A. with honours at the Bombay University, taking a fellowship of Elphinstone College, and was also the first Parsi called to the English Bar. He has twice been elected chairman of the Bombay municipality, and is probably the first authority in India on municipal questions. With Mr (now Justice) Telang and Mr Badrudin Tratji, he led the agitation in favour of the libert Bill, and founded the Bombay Presidency Association. the most influential political club in India. He was for some time Dean in the Faculty of Arts and President of the Graduates' Association of his University, and was appointed by Lord Reay a member of the Bombay Legislative Council. We are expecting great things from him as President of the Sixth Indian National Congress, and don't think we shall be disappointed.

The number of delegates this year will be less than at the two previous Congresses (1248 at Aliahabad and 1880 at Bombay), in consequence of the enormous difficulty and cost which in India attends the transport, lodging, and provisioning of so large a number of men of different castes, habits, and language. Last year, therefore, the Congress passed a resolution limiting for the future the number of delegates from each circle to five per million of the population, which gives, roughly, about 1000 delegates in all. The number of visitors, however, will be greater than ever, and the demand from the country districts for reserved places in the hall is so great as to show that if this restriction had not been laid the number of elected delegates would have far surpassed any previous congress, and the reception committee would have been simply crushed. Their responsibility is of course limited to the 1000 actual delegates, which has been found more than enough. I think that eventually the number will have to be reduced to 500. I have in previous letters commented on the election of delegates. I have now seen the reports from nearly all the districts, and they give evidence of a steadily increasing and more widespread interest than has

The Congress opens the day after to-morrow. The work is now beyond the risk of failure in any of its departments, and the hard worked committee find time to breathe. Leaving the great hall in the hands of the hundred tailors who are stitching on flags to

ever been shown before. In one way and another I

think it no exaggeration to estimate the number of intelligent men who have taken part in the election of delegates throughout India at 6,000,000.