

# IMPRESSIONS BY THE WAY

## THIS YEAR'S EXPOSITION.

PROBABLY the most important void in the Chicago World's Fair of 1893 was the absence of any adequate display of the products and enterprises of the South. For various reasons—chiefly reluctance to bear the necessary expense, and failure to appreciate the magnitude of the occasion—most of the States of that section took no part in the great exhibition.

That this was a mistake, that an opportunity had been missed, the South was quick to realize. To repair the mistake, to create the opportunity anew, a movement was started in the city of Atlanta for another display, to be held this summer, and to be primarily the South's own, as well as general in character. The Cotton States and International Exposition has been rapidly taking shape ever since January of last year. Its extensive grounds and buildings, situated in the suburbs of Atlanta, are now well advanced toward completion; Congress has voted \$200,000 for a government exhibit; numerous States of the Union and several foreign countries, especially those of South America, will be officially represented. It is noteworthy that a spacious building will be devoted to industrial and educational exhibits made entirely by colored people. The Chicago Fair had no department of this nature, yet we find it made a feature of an exposition held in the supposed headquarters of race prejudice.

When Atlanta invites the nation to see what she has to show it, next September, she will do so with our best wishes for the success of her undertaking.

## THE PROBLEMS OF DIVORCE.

TWELVE or fifteen years ago there was formally set on foot a movement to reform our system of divorce. Its chief concrete aim was to end the evils and inconsistencies of existing legislation upon this important subject by inducing Congress to frame a national divorce law.

The promoters of the movement regarded their purpose as possible, if not easy, of attainment. They did not anticipate that so many years would pass without bringing them perceptibly nearer to its accomplishment. It is admitted that the present state of affairs, with its range from total denial of divorce in one State to extreme laxity in others, is il-

logical, unsatisfactory, and productive of many scandals. But the necessary groundwork for effective legislation is some agreement of public opinion, and this it has as yet been found impossible to secure upon the moot questions of the sundering of the marriage tie.

Sociology is a growing science, and the Divorce Reform League has no doubt stimulated the popular interest in and comprehension of an important branch of it; but a national divorce law is not a probability of the near future.

## SWEATERS' DENS IN PHILADELPHIA.

AN ill sounding and evil word that has crept into the language within recent times is "sweater," used in the sense of a grinding employer, a middleman who takes contracts for cheap clothing, and has it made by workers whose pay and conditions of labor are the worst possible. Probably the earliest literary use of the term is that quoted by the Century Dictionary from Charles Kingsley's "Cheap Clothes and Nasty": "The work is let out to contractors or middlemen—sweaters, as their victims significantly call them—who, in their turn, let it out again." The "sweating system" is now a familiar evil of the great cities of this country and Europe. In London its horrors were exposed by a royal commission; in New York they have been widely published, and, it is to be hoped, at least partially remedied. We have heard less of their existence in Philadelphia; yet a clergyman of that city has recently published a description of its sweaters' dens that exceeds in horror anything we have read.

"Of the nearly seven hundred that Philadelphia has," the writer says, "nearly six hundred are in the square mile of area in which my church stands;" so that he should know whereof he speaks. "In a room ten feet by twelve will be found huddled together seven or eight people and several machines. I have often stood squarely on the floor and laid my hands flat on the ceiling. The floors are at times inches deep with dirt and scraps of clothing. The whole place wallows with putrefaction. In these human sties the creatures who make the clothing we wear work, eat,

sleep, and perform all the operations of nature. The men and women who bend over the machines and ironing tables are ill fed, unwashed, half clad. Proprieties do not count for much in a sweat shop. Conveniences and common decencies are unknown. Nothing counts there that cannot be turned into hard cash. The dearest things on earth are given for that. Even their children's lives are sacrificed to get the work done. The child is set to work just as soon as it can draw a thread. The factory age in Pennsylvania is thirteen years. They know it, and so if you ask them their age, even if they cannot yet speak plainly, their answer is 'thirteen.' It is pitiful to see the little children toiling with the look of age upon their faces before they are out of babyhood."

If this picture be a true one—and surely the clergyman who gives it is entitled to credit—then the slums of the Quaker City stand in greater need of cleansing than the worst purlieus of New York. The metropolis has almost become accustomed to being held up before her sisters as a "horrible example" of the various forms of municipal depravity; yet within a hundred miles of her she sees a city that has worse pavements, dirtier streets, poorer water supply, dearer gas, a higher tax rate, medieval transportation facilities, a city hall that is a notorious monument of jobbery, and—it now appears from the testimony cited above—fouler depths of industrial degradation; and she asks if there are not beams in the eyes of some of the critics who are so keen to note every mote upon the somewhat tarnished brightness of her civic escutcheon.

#### THE THEATER HAT.

THE Theater Hat has been an object of so much discussion, derision, and denunciation that it might have been expected to shrink into insignificance and retire into innocuous desuetude long ago. As a matter of fact, however, its vitality and exuberance seem to be greater than ever. Too ancient an institution to serve longer as an available subject for the professional humorist, it has become a topic of editorial

diatribes, and has made its way into politics. As we write, the Legislatures of several States—including two of the greatest of the Union, New York and Illinois—are devoting their collective wisdom to the consideration of bills attacking it. It may yet become a tremendous party issue like the tariff or the silver question.

We call upon the women of America—who have exhibited such historic self sacrifice in past times of national peril—to settle a question that threatens political strife and may ultimately bring about civil war. Let them abstain from the alluring temptations of the seven storied headgear. Let them reflect that there is no lack of smaller hats that are both beautiful and becoming. Let them think of the fellow mortals who occupy the seats behind them; and a threatening problem will be solved without the invocation of pains and penalties, arrests, fines, and bayonets.

Seriously, though—and good humored appeals have been made so often and so fruitlessly that it is time to treat the matter seriously—the high hat must go. We are opposed on principle to unnecessary legislative interference with individual liberties, but the strong arm of the law is an effective remedy when milder methods have been tried in vain. The woman who destroys the enjoyment of others who have, like herself, paid for their seats in a place of amusement, is not only guilty of indecent selfishness and signal bad taste; she is positively dishonest, she makes herself a crying public nuisance. If she cannot be suppressed without legislation, let there be a statute against her severe enough to meet the necessities of the case.

It may be urged that a censorship of hats would be impossible, owing to the difficulty of drawing the line between permissible and illegal altitudes. Then take the course laid down in a bill now before a Western Legislature—forbid them altogether, and let women remove their head coverings in theaters, as they sometimes do already, and as men invariably do.

The high hat must go—not only from theaters and other places of entertainment, but churches also.

*IMPORTANT NOTICE.*—Do not subscribe to MUNSEY'S MAGAZINE through agents unknown to you personally. If you do, you may find that you have been victimized. Every few days we receive complaints from people in various parts of the country who have subscribed to MUNSEY'S through some swindler. The subscription, of course, never reaches this office.

*DON'T FORGET THIS.*—If you will show MUNSEY'S MAGAZINE to your friends and secure for us five new subscribers, sending us one dollar for each name, we will give you a year's subscription free for yourself for your trouble.