

Questions & Day.

ELECTRIC TRAMS.

THE proposal recently made by an English syndicate to take over the tramways in the larger towns in this colony, and to inaugurate a new system of electric tramways, has drawn attention to the subject of electric locomotion. Few persons have any acquaintance with the subject, and in view of the interest which will centre in the matter when the various City Councils discuss the proposition, it has seemed to me worth while to give some description of a system of electric trams now running in the colonies. The experience of Hobart can scarcely fail to be of value and interest to us when propositions for the same or a similar system is under discussion.

One of the most important enterprises that Hobart can

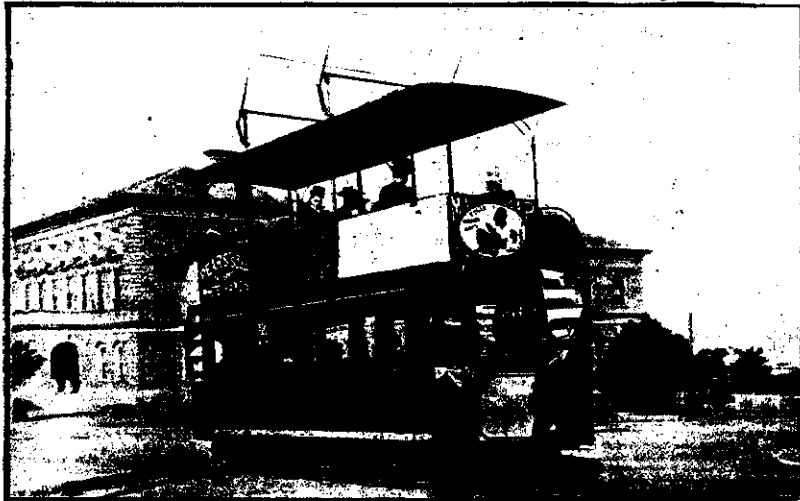
city. The traffic returns show a handsome profit over ordinary working expenses, and if it were not for the fact that the Company is saddled with two directorates, one in London and the other in Hobart, good dividends could be paid. The Company started with a capital of 105,000 £1 shares, 90,000 of which were issued, two-thirds being held in England. They also obtained from Parliament a free right for ever to construct lines in any part of the city and suburbs of Hobart.

At present there are three routes in operation, viz., 'The Cascade,' which runs from the Railway Station through Park and Macquarie-streets to the Cascade Brewery and gardens, where one can either sample the celebrated ale or partake of strawberries and cream, accompanied by harmless flirtation with the Hobart belles amongst the shady fern tree bowers. It is needless to say that I tried 'baith,' so as to be able to give an unbiased opinion to my better half when I returned to New Zealand. The distance is 210 chains, the gradients being one of 1 in 23 for 10 chains; one of 1 in 27 chains; the average rise is 1 in 40.

No. 2 route, designated Sandy Bay, commences at

the corner of Elizabeth-street through the busiest portion of the city, and continues on through one of the most beautiful suburbs of Hobart. From the top of the car the eye becomes enchanted with the lovely vistas of the Derwent River and surrounding champaign, which is dotted here and there with beautiful mansions and lovely gardens. The distance is 270 chains, and the gradients are one of 1 in 16 for 6 chains, one of 1 in 17 for 23 chains; one of 1 in 20 for 4 chains; one of 1 in 22 for 10 chains. The roads are constructed of 40lbs vignoles rails laid in pairs, joined with ordinary fish plates and bolts, and spiked down to hardwood sleepers, placed at about 3 foot centres. Owing, however, to the rails being old railway iron, and also lying disused a considerable period before the cars began to run, the road is not so smooth as one could desire, but this is speedily being rectified by replacing with heavier metal and rebuilding the road. The regulation speed is 12 miles on the level, and 7 miles up any of the grades with loaded cars.

The system adopted is known as the overhead one, patented by the eminent electricians, Messrs Siemens Bros., of London, who were the sole contractors for the plant and machinery, which was erected under the able supervision of Mr. A. C. Parker, the present electrical engineer and manager at Hobart. The electric station off Macquarie-street is one of the show places, consequently I paid it a visit, and was courteously shown through the works by Mr. Parker, who explained the *modus operandi* to me. I am also greatly indebted to Mr. Gould, for accompanying me over the different routes. This gentleman is related to Canons Gould, of Otaburu and Oamaru, both of whom I am well acquainted with, consequently my visit of inspection was made doubly interesting and gratifying.



ELECTRIC TRAM CAR IN HOBART.

AN ARTICLE ABOUT AUTOGRAPHS.

A LEGEND is current in certain commercial circles concerning a city merchant who wrote three different signatures. One of these autographs was only understood by himself, the second could only be unravelled by his secretary, while the third was a dark and inscrutable mystery to both of them, and to everyone else as well.

Mr Henry Irving writes a sinuous, gladiolated hand, which has often puzzled and perplexed his correspondents, and sometimes mystifies even his most intimate friends. Some time since a friend asked him for seats for his family to witness the play of Henry VIII. Mr Irving, in response to this request, scrawled across half a sheet of note-paper the words, 'Lyceum Theatre, Private Box, etc.' In the afternoon the gentleman had occasion to send to the chemist's a prescription for influenza, and, by some mistake, the note from Mr Henry Irving was sent instead. But the chemist was not to be beaten, and a bottle of medicine was duly returned with the theatre-pass carefully enclosed. This story will be readily believed by anyone who has seen Irving handwriting. But it seems to matter but little whether a man's signature be legible or otherwise so long as his name and fame be notorious. This being the case, his autograph will be sought after and prized by those ardent folk who deal in such things, and that such a business is profitable as well as pleasurable the following authentic details amply prove—

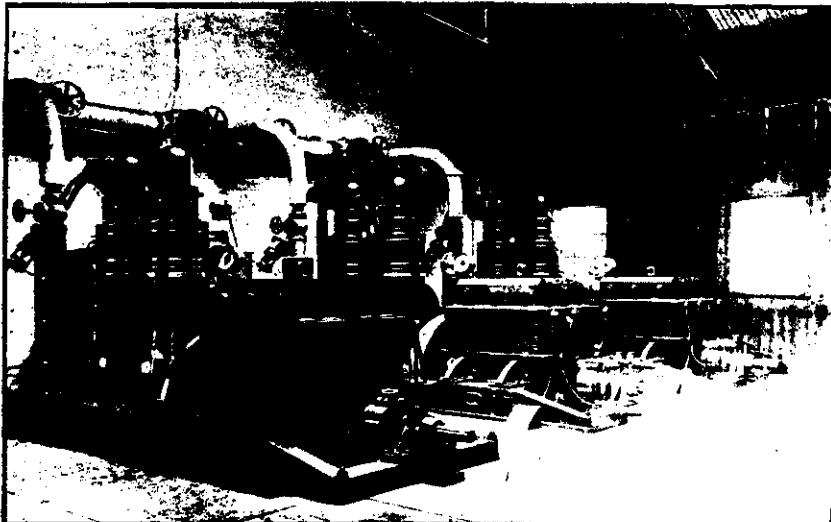
Mr Gladstone is of opinion that Milton was the first author to sell a manuscript. He received £5 for it. Its title was 'Paradise Lost.' In wondrous contrast to this was the sale of a number of Tennyson's autograph MS. poems in 1853. The MS. of his popular poem 'Maud' realised the sum of £111. 'The Brook' changed hands for £51; 'Dedication of Poems to the Queen,' with a note at the end to John Moxon, £30; 'The Daisy,' £24 10s; 'Stanzas Addressed to Rev. H. D. Maurice,' £23; and 'The Letters,' £18 10s. At an auction in New York a year ago, Poe's manuscript of 'The Bells,' was put up for disposal, and brought in the sum of £45. At a sale in Paris in 1892, the autograph of Bismarck realised the sum of £4 10s; the signature of King Humbert of Italy brought £1 5s into the exchequer. A beautifully clear letter and signature of the late Czar of Russia were handed over for £3. A signature of H. R. H. the Prince of Wales brought in 18s; while that of President Carnot realised 15s. Turning for a moment to the celebrities of the past, it is interesting to note that the signature of Queen Elizabeth is now worth £15; while that of Queen Anne will only realise 30s. As a striking contrast to this, it is also a noteworthy fact that poets' signatures in the past have always been considered more valuable than those of queens and other royal potentates.

In the year 1858 a signature of Shakespeare was purchased by the authorities of the British Museum for 300 guineas. The same notable contrast obtains in the present.

In June, 1891, a letter of her Majesty Queen Victoria realised the sum of £7; while a letter written by the poet Shelley changed hands for £9 15s, and was regarded as a great bargain at such a low figure.

A letter of Martin Luther's, with a signature attached, was recently disposed of for the respectable amount of £26. This letter of the great reformer was dated 1528, and was in an excellent state of preservation. The quaint, fantastic signature of Queen Elizabeth, attached to a State document on vellum, though seriously damaged by damp, recently sold for £7. Two and a half pages of a letter written and signed by H. R. H. the Duchess of Teck may be secured by the nominal sum of 8s; whilst the signature alone of the fated Marie Antoinette is considered to be worth £4. In contrast to this, a letter written by Louis XVI. of France, the husband of the unfortunate Marie, is offered for the sum of 10s. Thirty shillings is the price now demanded for the characteristic signature of the ambitious Napoleon Bonaparte.

A single page written by the late Prince Consort is valued at two guineas; but half that amount will purchase a long letter by our present Prince of Wales. The autograph of H. R. H. the Princess of Wales has recently been sold for the low sum of seven shillings and sixpence, while, strange to relate, an original autograph telegram in the same Royal handwriting is valued at five guineas.



ENGINE AND DYNAMO ROOM, HOBART ELECTRIC TRAM COMPANY.

boast of is their electric tram system, which, with the exception of two small suburban lines in Melbourne and Sydney, is one of the best and most complete in the Australasian colonies, and one that we trust will speedily be copied throughout New Zealand. The cost is much less than either the cable or horse systems, and is considered by experts to be far superior, and the consensus of public opinion is decidedly in favour of electric trams as shewn by the following figures. The line was opened for traffic in September, 1893, and up to the end of January, 1895, a period of 16 months, the cars half-covered 490,088 miles, having carried no less than 2,038,074 passengers. The population of Hobart is about 30,000, so any one can form an idea how the system is availed of in that

Junction of Macquarie and Murray-streets and runs through most picturesque suburbs until it reaches its destination, a most charming seaside resort, greatly frequented by holiday-makers, who can either revel on the lovely beach holding sweet communion with Nature, as well as her daughters, or partake of the delights of the beautiful tea gardens and ferries. As Sandy Bay is on the main line to Brown's River (or Kingston), and the country being undulating, magnificent views can be obtained of the lovely harbour and surrounding islands. The distance is 228 chains, and the gradients are very steep, one being 1 in 24 for six chains. There are three severe curves, one having a 67 foot radius.

No. 3 route, Newton and South Glenorchy, runs from