

## THE TRAVEL-TALK OF A SERJEANT-AT-LAW.



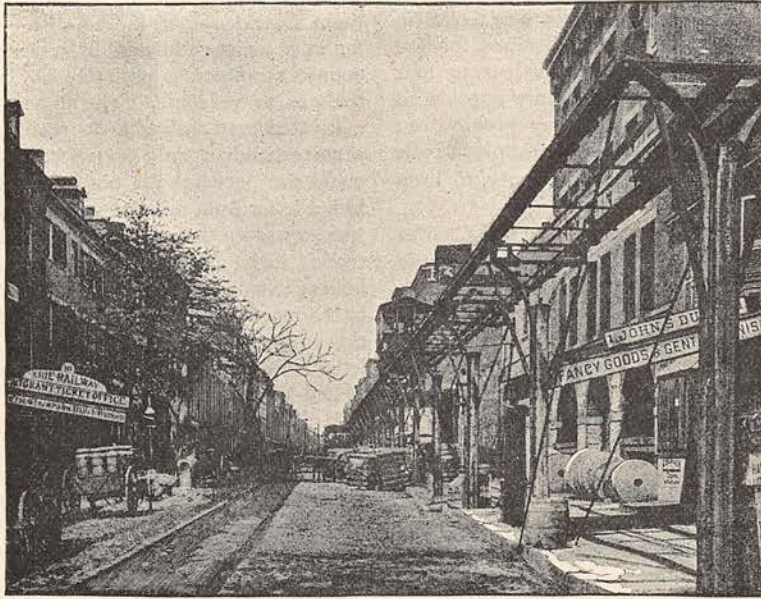
**M**R. SERJEANT BALLANTINE is one of the numerous great men who have lately been patriotic enough to cross the Atlantic with the object of letting the Americans see with their own eyes what old England is still capable of producing. These distinguished persons are much to be envied by humbler travellers : they come, they see, and, to the credit of America be it said, they conquer ; while they are away long enough to give their neglected country an excellent opportunity of discovering their true worth by their absence. Humber folk have, however, some compensations in their insignificance ; if they do not see so much of their neighbours' affairs, they are at least left in sole possession of their own.

It must be rather oppressive to devote one's first hour on American soil, as Mr. Ballantine devoted his, to the satisfaction of an "interviewer;" and it has to

not only asked him "silly, meaningless questions," but falsely reported him to be a hunchback! Mr. Ballantine, however, has now made things even, by comparing the reporter himself to Quilp.

Mr. Ballantine, unfortunately for himself, lacks some of the qualities which go to the making of a great traveller. Great travellers, so long as they are moving onwards, do not care whether they walk or sledge, or ride bullocks ; also, they are prepared to eat anything that comes in their way, or, if nothing comes in their way, to eat nothing. Mr. Ballantine, on the other hand, has the strongest prejudice in favour of well-cooked food, while he considers the unavoidable journey a very disagreeable part of travelling abroad. He was so unhappy on board ship that it is rather unreasonable of him to lament the sailing vessels of his youth. On one of these he would have suffered still more.

It was certainly hard on him that his homeward passage should have taken him eleven days, though



THE NEW YORK ELEVATED RAILROAD.

(From a Photograph by Messrs. J. Frith and Son, Reigate.)

be added that this first hour was by no means the last which he spent in such company. Mr. Ballantine, however, does not very much dislike being interviewed, though he seems sometimes to have suffered from the modest apprehension that the reporter might be finding it rather dull. But reporters, apparently, are easily amused : certainly, they do not bore themselves by too strict an attention. Mr. Ballantine found them very inaccurate, but on the other hand almost always good-natured. Only once did he meet a disagreeable interviewer. This was a wretch who

made in the famous steamer *Arizona*. But he found even this tolerable after his long journeys on American railways, of which he writes with an amusing horror. And his troubles did not always end with his journeys. He does, indeed, admit that the sleeping arrangements in American hotels are usually excellent ; but this redeeming quality does not prevent him from remarking sadly that their cookery is no better than the cookery of other hotels all over the world ; that is to say, it is, to the true critic, a deplorable failure.

Mr. Ballantine never came near to quarrelling with



any American except once, and that was because, in an unguarded moment, he had said that Americans cannot cook turtle. Now that he is safe on this side of the Atlantic, he repeats this serious charge, which, however, does not prevent him from owning that the Americans are, on the whole, an estimable people.

In connection with the interesting topic of cookery it must be mentioned that Mr. Ballantine, though little given to padding his work with descriptions of scenery, is entitled to the rare praise of having said something really original about Niagara. His first and almost his only remark on this famous scene is that here, for a wonder, he really got "one decent dinner!"

For journeys of a reasonable length, Mr. Ballantine seems to have been better pleased with American arrangements. The New York overhead railway must be much pleasanter to travel by than London's horrible tunnels underground, and not much more uncomfortable to the people who walk the streets. Mr. Ballantine has a high opinion of New York omnibus conductors, and remarks that, however full an omnibus may appear, it is never known to refuse a fare; there is always room for one passenger more. The full importance of this agreeable peculiarity will only be seen when it is mentioned that you cannot hire a cab in New York, no matter how short the distance, for less than a dollar. As a dollar is equivalent to four shillings of our money, the tariff certainly appears, to English notions, rather high, not to say prohibitive: possibly many unassuming and humble people in New York may be driven, through sheer poverty, to keep their own carriage!

We learn from Mr. Ballantine that the late Charles Reade, though a very clever man, could not be made to understand "that law did not always accord with justice." Perhaps the lynch law of the Western States is, in this respect, an advance on the older system. Mr. Ballantine was much struck with the spectacle of this wild justice existing side by side with the order and gravity of the regular American courts. In one column of a newspaper, he says, you read of some solemn and impressive trial, after the fashion of Westminster Hall; in the next, of some rather informal proceedings in another part of the same country, where an offender has been detected, arrested, tried, and hanged to the nearest tree, within the space of a few brief minutes. This is in the more striking contrast to the authorised process, because an American criminal under sentence of death is not executed for several months after his condemnation, during which time he is apparently allowed to live with every comfort, and some measure of liberty—a system which excites Mr. Ballantine's warmest approval.

While the Americans received Serjeant Ballantine with honour, and even, as has been seen, sent reporters to describe his person, it may be doubted whether there is a single American lawyer whose name is familiar to the English public. One very fine specimen Mr. Ballantine describes who, at the age of ninety-nine, was "still an active practising lawyer." Is this gentleman still alive? If so, he has, by this time, cer-

tainly completed his hundredth year, and perhaps begun to think of retiring from practice.

Mr. Ballantine, who has seen an English judge in a moment of leisure singing a comic song called "The Dog and the Duck," is, of course, too experienced a person to believe that anything more than mere mortal wisdom reposes under a judge's wig. He therefore found no difficulty in believing that American judges are as good as ours, though they are generally elected by the public vote, and, as it seems, do not wear wigs. Still, his English readers will perhaps be a little scandalised at the latter revelation.

Mr. Ballantine covered a good deal of ground in America, travelling westward as far as the Salt Lake, where, as everywhere else, he found old acquaintances and very pleasant new friends, and where he "remembers with gratitude one good meal." Here he came into contact with some of the wilder representatives of American civilisation, and was, on one occasion, warned not to venture into the streets, as there would be a large irruption of miners from some neighbouring works. Mr. Ballantine, however, was not to be daunted. He wandered about among the miners and found them a race of giants, but apparently not ferocious. He was able to do one of them a service—not, indeed, of a professional kind—for in a society addicted by preference to lynch law, counsel's opinion is probably not much valued—but perhaps as welcome. The miner, though himself a cultivated man well able to read, had, unfortunately, a correspondent only imperfectly able to write, and could not persuade the post-office authorities to give him a letter from this untutored friend, as the address was so written that no one but the miner himself pretended to be able to read it, and nobody else would believe that he could. Mr. Ballantine, however, came to the rescue, and successfully deciphered the inscription in the same sense as the miner, who received his letter and, it is to be hoped, a favourable impression of Old-World culture therewith.

Mr. Ballantine seems to regret, not without wonder, that though he certainly once did dine at the famous Fifth Avenue Hotel in New York, he has totally forgotten what he had for dinner. Most of us, perhaps, would be surprised at ourselves if we recollected such a thing, but in Mr. Ballantine's case the lapse of memory is probably a blessing.

Except, however, for the meals and the railway carriages, Mr. Ballantine had a "good time" in America. In every corner of the New World that he visited, he seems to have encountered old friends, some of whom, it is true, he did not recollect to have seen before; but in his case this is, perhaps, not surprising. He might have defended them from charges which, after long lapse of time, they thought it unnecessary to recall to his mind. Mr. Ballantine liked the Americans, and it seems probable, though he is too modest to say so, that they liked him. At any rate, they seemed ready enough to like England and the English. When he visited the New York Stock Exchange, a crowd gathered round him and sang "God save the Queen."