

The Japanese have set apart 100,000,000 yen for war purposes. These figures seem stupendous. But "the man in the street," it may be suspected, has a very vague idea as to what a "yen" is. Although Japan has a gold standard, the yen is silver currency, and fluctuates with the price of silver. But, roughly, a "yen" equals 2/-; and any given quantity of yen must be divided by ten to bring it into pounds. At the present rates of silver 100,000,000 yen equals £10,000,000. But even this is an immense amount in a country in which the wages of a skillful artisan are often not more than three yen a week. The Japanese currency system is decimal. Thus the yen or dollar is divided into 100 sen or cents, the sen into ten rin, the rin into ten mo, the mo into ten shu, and the shu, finally, into ten kotsu. Government accounts do not take notice of any value smaller than a rin, but estimates by private tradesmen often descend to mo and shu, which are incredibly minute fractions of a farthing. No coins exist, however, to represent these microscopic sums.

It is proposed to abolish the existing system of franking letters, parcels, and telegrams on public service in New Zealand, and in lieu thereof such letters, parcels, and telegrams are to be paid for by means of official stamps, the cost of which will be charged to an amount to be appropriated. Each department is now being requested to furnish a statement giving the estimated cost of postage for next financial year, calculated on a postal rate for letters of one penny for each half ounce, and for book post matter (printed papers, etc.) of three pence per pound, and also the estimated cost of telegrams during next financial year, calculated on the rate charged to the public for ordinary and urgent telegrams.

At last there has emerged a competent critic who has the courage to prick the "Tolstoy myth, and to tell the plain truth about that windy sage. Says Mr. George Moore, in "Lippincott's": "Tolstoy's writings may be described as long-drawn out paradoxes, each uglier than the last, until he reaches the ultimate ugliness—'Resurrection.' This book is Tolstoy's worst book, and it is perhaps the ugliest book ever written. It is without truth or beauty; it is written like a scientific treatise." "A naked mountain lake reflecting a few birchen trees and morose, wind-driven clouds is, I think, a true picture of Tolstoy's mind, a mind from which all beautiful and sensuous images have been banished. His mind has become like a mountain waste, where nothing flourishes except theory—theories as harsh as the pines and birches that grow in the waste—an awful place, haunted by many spirits, and if he were asked the name of the spirits, he would answer, 'Their name is Legion.'" "Life."

The American "Bookman," it is alleged, has made a very curious discovery. It is that a well-known sketch of Charles Reade, and an estimate of his writings, which appeared in "Once a Week," in 1872, was written by Charles Reade himself! It is an essay in self-criticism. Charles Reade evidently thought that no one was so competent to pronounce on the merits and defects of a novel as its own author. Here is Charles Reade's criticism of his own works. He compares "Romola" with his own greatest work: "In 'The Cloister and the Hearth' you have the Middle Ages, long and broad. The story begins in Holland, and the quaint Dutch figures live; it goes through Germany, and Germany lives; it picks up a French arbalestrier, and the medieval French soldier is alive again. It goes to Rome, and the Roman men and women live again. Compare with this the narrow canvas of 'Romola,' and the faint colours. The petty politics of medieval Florence made to sit up in the grave, but not to come out of it. . . . There is a death of powerful incidents, though the time was full of them, as 'The Cloister and the Hearth' is full of them. There you have the broad features of that marvellous age, so full of grand anomalies; the fine arts and the spirit that fed them—the feasts—the shows—the domestic life—the laws—the customs—the religion—the roads and their perils—the wild beasts disputing the civilized continent with man, man uppermost by day, the beasts by night—the hostleries

—the robbers—the strange vows—the convents—shipwrecks, sieges, combats, escapes—a robber's slaughterhouse burnt, and the fire lighting up trees deep with snow. And through all this a deep current of true love—passionate, yet pure—ending in a medieval poem; the battle of ascetic religion against our duty to our neighbour, which was the great battle of the time that shook religious souls."

It was decided at last week's meeting of the Auckland University Council to make representation to the Cabinet regarding the establishment of a School of Mines in Auckland. The subject was raised by the Hon. J. A. Tole, who referred to the Premier's reply to Southern deputations that he would have the question laid before the Cabinet. He thought the Council should follow up the matter, for there was every possibility, in face of the impetuosity of the Otago authorities, that the school would be located in Auckland. Sir Maurice O'Rourke promised to make the necessary representations to the Cabinet.

Writing on the question of animals committing suicide, a correspondent of the "Sydney Bulletin" says: "I travelled from Walthalla to Aberfeldy (on a 3ft track cut round the Gippsland mountains) with a packer and 13 pack-horses. One old horse was in a terrible state after the heavy, cold winter, and when we got to the half-way house he, with the rest, laid down for a spell, and couldn't get up again without help. He lagged much behind during the afternoon, and had several whip-thrasings (in spite of my intercessions). At last about sunset he stopped short, looked back towards the dreaded whip, then wheeled suddenly across the track, and, with a horrible scream, threw himself over the side of the mountain. We found him at the butt of a big gum with hardly an unbroken bone in his body. The packer told me that was the third horse he had seen suicide thus in two years' packing. I have seen horses go out of Walthalla with their tails almost cut through by cruppers, holes on their backs stuffed with wool or hair, and a raw half circle in front of them from the shoulder-straps; but the police only see them with their harness on. Harness covers a multitude of sores."

In passing out of existence the London School Board leaves behind a record of which any representative body might well feel proud. During the 34 years of its existence, though it has made mistakes, it has done a mighty work. In 1870 there were 574,693 children of school age in London, with only 201,158 places in school for them. Today, there are in round numbers 990,000 children of the elementary school class for whom 789,649 are provided, while in a short time there will be provision for 831,842 scholars. There are already 599 schools open under the control of the Board, 45 more are in course of erection, and sites for 17 others secured. In addition to this vast army of children, the old Board will hand over to the new authority the control of 3760 masters, 7832 mistresses, and 3019 pupil teachers, besides 350 instructors in manual training, 370 instructresses in cookery, laundry and domestic economy, and a clerical staff of 827, the whole involving an annual outlay of upwards of a million sterling.

Why should a small, lean man pay as much to ride in the train as the bulky individual of large girth and weight? The man of much adipose not only takes up more room, but it certainly costs more in coal to haul him. Then why not make him pay by the pound? The innovation would be warmly welcomed by thin suburbanites in these days of "six a side." These questions have been asked since the beginning of railway development. The unfairness of making the lean man pay as much as the fat man is readily conceded, but railway companies have been slow in evincing a willingness to correct the inequality. But at last we have a railway manager who is willing to put his beliefs into practice, and to set the pace for the timorous ones who adhere to the old practice of hauling sheep and cattle by the pound and human beings by the piece. The president of the new Pueblo and Beulah Valley Electric Railway, in Colorado, announces that when

the road is completed each person will be required to step on an automatic registering scale at the ticket-office; and the clerk will charge for transportation at the rate of three farthings a pound. The decision is a hopeful augury of the good time coming when there will be a "levelling-up" of all the inequalities and unjust discriminations from which man suffers, when the man who has a chin beard or side-whiskers will not pay as much for a shave as the man with a smooth face, and the man with a No. 7 foot will not pay as much for shoes as the man with a No. 19 foot.

More than once the meaning and origin of the often used word "viking" has been the subject of newspaper correspondence. Mr. Karl Blind, of the Society for Northern Research, writes to the "Times" as under: "For many years, since the foundation of our Viking Club (Society for Northern Research), I have endeavoured to make the meaning better known, and to have the proper pronunciation (veiking) adopted; but I regret to say that the error still generally prevails. The simple fact is this. The 'vikings' have their name from the word 'vik,' which means a bay, a creek, an inlet from the sea. 'Ings' signifies the sib, the clan, the band of men. Vik-ings are bay-men. They lie in a creek with their ships, until they rush out for adventures. Among all Germanic nations, Scandinavian as well as Teutonic, vik, wick, or wick, sometimes also written wyk, means a bay. The name is found also on the German coasts of the Baltic and of the German Ocean. I will only mention the Tromper Wick, the Swan Wick, and so forth. People, thinking that in the word viking 'king' means a Royal personage, vaguely assume that 'vi' has something to do with water, the sea. It is very difficult to root out this error in England; but writers and poets might at least be expected to steer clear of so amazing a mistake. Among the vikings there were, no doubt, often aristocratic chieftains, but the mass were simple freemen."

Horsley, in his "Recollections," thus describes Huxley, and the dread his rejection of the Christian faith awakened in him. "No more devoted husband, father, or friend than Huxley ever lived, I believe, but, notwithstanding my admiration for him, I could never feel quite at ease in discussion with him, dreading always an explosion upon questions I hold most dear and vital; but I look back with devout gratitude to the fact that, though we have walked together over moor and fell for miles and miles, and have had days and nights of talk, we never once drifted into subjects upon which we should have so widely differed, and upon which I could not have kept silence when my heart was 'hot within me.' But I thank God that the need of fighting for the faith that is in me never arose, and I had hours of supreme enjoyment of his really splendid talk and facile speech in pure and eloquent English. He was the object of endless adulation from adulators of both sexes. I remember a scene at the Athenaeum, where, at the opposite end of the room in which I was dining, I saw Huxley and a party of

eminent scientific men seated at their 'repat.' The animated conversation was interspersed with words of ringing laughter, evidently raised by Huxley's wit. Another important scientist came bustling in, and, failing to find a seat at the table, already crowded, he eventually squatted down on the carpet at Huxley's feet, where he remained worshipping his idol, and joining in the general conversation as best he could from his 'leggy position!'"

The death of the nonagenarian Earl of Devon, which deprives the House of Lords of one more of its fast-diminishing band of clerical peers, suggests a reflection on the curious circumstance of an earl and a duke both taking their title from the same county (says "M.A.P."). The explanation is found in the extraordinary vicissitudes of the earldom of Devon, which has been extinct at least five times since its creation, and was finally dormant for nearly three centuries—from 1566 to 1824. During this long period of slumber, the earldom and dukedom of Devonshire were conferred on the Cavendish family. Exactly the same thing happened in the case of the title of Stafford, which became dormant in 1762, and was recreated (as a marquise in favour of the Leveson-Gowers in 1786. Some thirty years later the original barony was revived, the result being that there are now two Lords Stafford, just as there is both an Earl of Devon and a Duke of Devonshire. Curious as it is that the Duke of Devonshire should derive his title from a county with which neither he nor his ancestors have ever had the remotest connection, he is far from singular in this respect among his brother-peers. Taking the dukes of England alone, a full half of them—it is sufficient to mention Manchester, Richmond, Newcastle, Marlborough, and Fife—have no connection at all, either territorial or residential, with the place titularly associated with them. More singular still, there are Scottish peers, even representative peers for Scotland in Parliament—for example, Viscount Falkland—who are of purely English descent, and own not a single acre north of the Tweed; while there are Irish peers, such as Viscount Valentia, quite unconnected with Ireland, and sitting in the House of Commons for English constituencies. The aged peer just deceased, though well over ninety, was not, as has been said, the oldest member of the Upper House, for Lord Gwydyr is his senior by nearly a year and a-half. Lord Devon did not succeed to the family honours until he was past eighty, and he continued to live at the rectory of Ponderham, hard by his ancestral castle, and to discharge the duties of parish priest with the unpretending zeal which had always characterised him. The castle, with its long stately front, six towers, and park adorned with oak woods growing down to the very edge of the estuary of the Exe, has been let for many years. The rent-roll of the earldom, once a very large one, had been greatly reduced, and a considerable portion of the extensive estates sold, at different periods, to the late Mr. W. H. Smith. Lord Devon's grandson succeeds him as fourteenth earl.

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