

rates. Lucky are those of us living in the metropolitan area who find our precepts for Poor and General District rates work out at much under 8/ in the £ on the rateable value of our houses, which is five-sixths of the computed rental value. In many parishes the rates run up to the neighbourhood of 10/ in the pound, and in one or two instances they have risen as high as 12/. Blame for these heavy rates is usually laid upon the London County Council, but though undoubtedly the Council has been in some measure to blame for the increase, and may not always have obtained for the ratepayers good value for money, the real cause of our present heavy burden of local taxation is undoubtedly to be directly traced to the reckless expenditure, wanton waste, and dishonest practices which obtain in connection with local dealings with the monies raised for poor law and municipal purposes.

The Local Government Board inquiry into the West Ham and Poplar scandals disclosed conditions of extravagance, corruption, laxity, and carelessness in the administration of poor law and municipal funds that were positively startling. Now the Board is inquiring into the administration of the Poor Law by the Mile End Board of Guardians, and we are getting more "revelations." Baths worth at the outside £6 apiece have been paid for at £11 or £12 each, drainage work that would have been "fat" for the contractor at £60, has cost £105, general painting and varnishing work worth, well done, £25 has been paid for at three times that rate though "scamped," and the carting of what could not have been at the utmost more than 8 loads of rubbish has been charged and paid for as 37 loads. On one job the contractor sent in a bill for hanging 201 pieces of paper, and such was the check kept on him that it was not until the auditor of the Local Government Board commenced to inquire within that it was discovered that 92 pieces only had been used. The same inquirer discovered that the contractor had charged for two men as working 8 hours fixing 6 tiles on a cottage, and for another energetic couple the time charged in the bill rendered to the guardians was 9 hours, in which time they had actually fixed 20 tiles. Another little job which should have been done in a few hours took, according to the contractor's charges, 37 hours work by a bricklayer and his labourer. In other instances the guardians were charged for five and six times as much material as could have been fairly used on jobs, work was grossly overmeasured, and approximately the charges for men's time were in most cases investigated, double what they should have been. Contractors, indeed, seem to have done what they liked, how they liked, and to have charged whatever seemed good to them. How long this sort of game has been going on no one knows. The L.G.B. inquiry apparently only covers the past 18 months or two years, and in that time the Mile End ratepayers have been robbed of thousands in the aggregate. And Mile End is not the only parish that has suffered through the carelessness and negligence of its elected guardians and paid officials. As an instance of the sort of money wasting that goes on in many unions, it may be mentioned that not long ago a newly-appointed, and "keen" young guardian discovered that though, on the average, there were between 70 and 80 unemployed paupers in the workhouse doing nothing eldly, the officials of the annexed infirmary found it necessary to employ outside labour at 25/ a week to keep the grounds tidy.

Another glaring instance of Poor Law extravagance came to light recently. The Hamersmith Workhouse was actually fitted up with electric appliances which were refused by the authorities for Buckingham Palace as being too costly.

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**THE WRIGHT BROS.' AERO-PLANE.**

The war correspondent of the "Daily Telegraph" has been having a talk in Paris with one of the famous Wright Brothers, of aeroplane celebrity, and has come to the conclusion that they have solved the problem of aerial flight. He says it is capable of abundant proof that the Wrights have for years been successful experimenters of "gliding" in the air, and that lately each in turn has driven a motor impelled aeroplane for miles in the air, wheeling and turning at will. The Wrights are described as "quiet, reserved young gentlemen, who

absolutely strive to avoid publicity and shun anything like notoriety, either for themselves or for their epoch-making invention." They began work as cycle-makers, but became interested in aerial problems, and took to experimenting, first with kites and then with "gliders." They studied the flight of various birds, from the buzzard to the gull, and made many types of "gliders," some like bird's wings of various shapes, and others like great box-kites. With great courage and skill they practised jumping off from heights on these gliders, and learned to balance and control them in the air. Gradually, and not without many minor mishaps, they evolved a type of glider with which they could obtain perfect control. They could make it turn to left or right, could raise or lower it at will, and could depend on its absolute stability.

Then they turned their attention to motor-engines, and after many experiments adapted one to suit their especial requirements. Every change that was made, either in the aeroplane or in the motor, was carried out with their own hands, so that their secret is still their own. The Wright aeroplane has a long, narrow framework, covered with a 20ft. web of cotton, a few feet above which a similar ship extends, both being held equidistant in a light frame, stiffened by supports. The Wrights declare that learning to control one of their aeroplanes can be accomplished by any person, and it can be acquired quicker than the art of riding a bicycle. Indeed, Mr. Wilbur Wright assured the "Telegraph" correspondent that a man could learn to drive his aeroplane "safely and securely" with less than half the effort that the novice puts forth in learning to ride a bicycle. Both of the Wrights have flown distances of over 24 miles with their small machines, at a speed greater than that attained by any dirigible balloon. They can stop and start their engine in the air, alight safely with the propellers at rest, and in a word, control their machine. They have found it advisable not to patent their invention, nor to disclose its details, but they are prepared to sell it to a Government that will pay their price, and they undertake to prove all that is claimed for their aeroplane. And if all that is claimed for it is true, then surely it is only a matter of time before hundreds of duplicates are manufactured, and mankind at last shares with the birds the dominion of the air.

Mr. Peter Hewitt, a fairly well-known American inventor, claims to have designed and built a boat, or gliding craft, which will solve the problem of going sixty miles an hour at sea, and bring New York, when the model is perfected, within thirty hours of Liverpool. In appearance Mr. Hewitt's rough model, which is capable of holding two men, hardly looks like a boat, but it is a water-borne structure nevertheless, and is propelled by a gasoline motor, working a screw. It is really a development of the well-known catamaran type of boat of the Fiji Islanders, but instead of parallel logs of smooth timber, cigar-shaped arrangements are attached to the hull of the vessel, by means of which the catamaran glides over the water. They are well-constructed steel planes, taking the place of the logs of timber in the catamaran, and these planes are attached to the craft by steel arms. Many people may refuse to take his idea seriously, but he claims to have gone 38 miles an hour at sea with one man aboard, and with a two hundred feet model he guarantees a mile a minute. Some American experts in marine propulsion say that Mr. Hewitt has hit the ball's-eye this time, and should be encouraged to continue his experiments. If he cannot apply the idea to big liners, he may, it is said, construct a craft of lightning speed which would be snapped up by the Navy for war purposes.

Justin McCarthy tells a reminiscent story of the late Henry Ward Beecher. Mr. Beecher entered Plymouth Church one Sunday and found several letters awaiting him. He opened one and found it contained the single word "Fool." Quietly and with becoming seriousness he announced to the congregation the fact in these words, "I have known many an instance of a man writing a letter and forgetting to sign his name, but this is the only instance I have ever known of a man signing his name and forgetting to write the letter."

**The Braemar Gathering.**

The Braemar gathering marks the zenith of the Scotch season, but this year, owing to the absence of the King and Queen, it will again be shorn of some of its brilliancy, writes "A Society But-terfly" in "M.A.P."

The Princess Royal Park, where the sports are now held, is a flat, twelve-acre field, and from the players' point of view may no doubt be better than the wild piece of ground formerly lent by Colonel Farquharson. But we onlookers miss the broad green strath, the rushing waters of the Dee, and the sight of Invercauld Castle—in fact, the whole scene has become more conventional. The show begins about noon, but smart society does not arrive till two, and Royalty seldom appears before 3.30. As soon as the Royal party are settled in their heater-decked pavilion, the procession is led off by the Balmoral Highlanders. History repeats itself in these feudal gatherings, Michie is in command, the King's pipe, Campbell, leads the fife and drum band, and Charles Macintosh acts as standard-bearer. The men are mostly young, strong, strapping fellows, and they wear the full-dress kilt and plaid of royal red tartan, with buttons and brooches of solid silver. Amethysts and topazes are profusely used as ornaments, and in the bonnets appear as a badge the oak leaf and thistle. Each man swings a Lochaber axe on his shoulder. A complete uniform is said to cost over £20. Then follow the Duff men, and the rear is brought up by the Farquharsons. The Duff Highlanders swing past with their badge, a holly sprig, dressed in red tartans, and with savage-looking pipes in their hands. Their pipes play "The Duke of Fife's March," and they carry a green silk banner, with the Duke's arms, which are supported by two nude figures.

Next march the Farquharson men, in dark green tartan, with the spruce badge in their bonnets, and the claymore, "the great sword of Scotland," in their hand, led by their chief himself, Colonel Farquharson of Invercauld. Once upon a time Balmoral was the home of the Farquharsons, and the clan's old motto ran: "We force nae friend, we fear nae foe." The sports consist of wrestling, running, high leaps, dancing, hammer-throwing, caber-tossing—or "throwing the stick," as it is described by southern trippers—and also piping, this last presumably first-rate, as tradition declares that each performer must belong to the sixth generation of pipe-players.

On these occasions the Prince of Wales usually wears the Balmoral tartan, now rather darker than when it was designed by the Prince Consort. The Princess Royal and the Duke of Fife are wont to drive up in fine style, in a big barouche, drawn by four horses, ridden by postillions, and preceded by an outrider, all the servants wearing the dark green ducal liveries. The Royalties present seem always to take keen interest in the proceedings. The Prince of Wales converses with some of the older clansmen, and the Royal children, especially Princess Mary, laugh heartily at the amusing incidents, which seem safe to occur in the course of the competitions. A ball or two is usually held in honour of the Braemar gathering. Then may be seen a brilliant sight, the men wearing full-dressed Highland costume, with gay kilts, richly mounted sporrans, the glimmer of silver on brooch and dirk, and, here and there, an eagle's feather, which is worn only by the chieftain. The women appear in lovely frocks—often white or black—with perhaps a silk scarf in clan tartan.

It is estimated that the fertile lands of the globe amount to 28,000,000 square miles, the steppes to 14,000,000, and the deserts to 1,000,000. Fixing 207 persons to the square mile for fertile lands, 10 for steppes and 1 for deserts as the greatest population that the earth could properly nourish, Professor Ravenstein arrives at the conclusion that when the number of inhabitants reaches about 6,000,000,000 the earth will be peopled to its full capacity. At present it contains somewhat more than one-quarter of that number. If the rate of increase shown by the latest census statistics should be uniformly maintained, Professor Ravenstein shows that the globe would be fully peopled about the year 2072—about a century and a half hence.

**"ROARING RAILS."**

One of the subjects discussed at a recent Engineering Congress had reference to what may be termed a railway phenomenon, the explanation and surmounting of which has baffled most experienced experimentalists and engineers. It touches the comfort of railway travellers closely, as it affects the quiet running of trains or tramway cars over steel rails. All countries are affected. Nearly all lines suffer in varied degree. The trouble arises from roaring rails. This picturesque euphemism has the merit of descriptive accuracy. The rails affected when trains pass over them set up a noise like the chattering of teeth. It can be detected at once by the trained ear. The ordinary traveller simply complains of a noisy train. This noise arises from the fact that on some rails there develops in time a series of irregular knobs or projections, which, although they are only a quarter of a millimetre in height, cause all the noise. They are not due to wear. They extend sometimes above the original surface of the rail like warts on the fingers of a hand. They have long been known to railway engineers, but when power tramways were commenced the electricians, with that calm assumption of originality even in difficulties, thought they had hit upon something new and traceable to the power used. But the roaring rail was so named in India, and occurs equally on railways on icy mountains and on sunny plains, worked with steam engines and with very varied density of traffic.

The only result of very extensive experiment and investigation is to suggest rather than to prove that the knobs are due to pounding consequent on vibration caused by the passage of wheels over them. But this does not go far.

An Irishman named Hickey, who was killed by a blow on the head recently, was found, on surgical examination, to have had a skull no thicker in some places than blotting paper. This recalls a story of an altercation between two natives of Dublin at Donnybrook Fair. There was the usual exchange of shillelah compliments, and the skull of one was smashed. At the trial of the victorious youth, a surgeon testified that the victim's temporal bone was as thin almost as an egg-shell. Nevertheless, O'Sullivan was convicted of homicide, and when asked if he had anything to say before sentence, he simply remarked to the judge, "Yer honour, I'm sorry about this thing, but you heerd what the doctor said about the unfortunate young man, an' I leave it to yer honour, now, if you any kind of a head to go to a fair with in Ireland."



**NEW ZEALAND RAILWAYS.**

**AUCKLAND AGRICULTURAL SHOW.**

NOVEMBER 28th and 30th, 1907.  
Holiday Excursion Tickets will be issued from any station to Auckland on November 28th and 29th, and by trains arriving Auckland not later than 1.10 p.m. on November 30th, available for return up to and including FRIDAY, December 6th.

**THURSDAY, 28th NOVEMBER, 1907.**

Special trains to convey live stock and exhibits, with car attached, will leave Cambridge and Te Awamutu for Auckland at 7.25 a.m.; Frankton 8.55 a.m., arriving Remuera about 3.15 p.m.

**FRIDAY, 30th NOVEMBER, 1907.**

Special trains will leave Cambridge at 6 a.m., Hamilton 7 a.m., Te Awamutu 8.10 a.m., Frankton 7.15 a.m., Mercer 9.17, arriving Auckland 11.42 a.m.

The usual 4.15 p.m. train will leave Auckland at 4 p.m., Remuera 6.25 p.m., and will run through to Te Awamutu and Cambridge.

The usual 6.50 a.m. train Mercer to Auckland will start from Drury at 8.7 a.m., arriving Auckland 9.30 a.m.

A special train will leave Mercer at 7 a.m., Takanu 7.30, Eruakere 7.50 a.m. This train will not stop after leaving Paeraia except to allow passengers to alight. A special train will leave Auckland for Mercer at 5 p.m., Remuera 5.15 p.m., arriving Mercer 7.45 p.m.

The usual 4.40 p.m. Kaipara train, will leave Auckland at 5.10 p.m., and will run through to Tuhono.

EXHIBITS for South will be returned by trains leaving Remuera at 3.15 p.m. on SATURDAY, 29th November, and 4.30 a.m. and 5.55 a.m. on MONDAY, 2nd December.

For full particulars, see Posters and Handbills.

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