

News, Notes and Notions.

Don't Get Excited.

EIGHT weeks one day. That is what we are coming to. Sir George Darwin, who knows all about these things, asserts that the action of the tides is operating as a brake on the earth's revolutions, and that every day our fussy little globe spins more slowly. Eventually, he predicts, the day will last fifty-five times as long as it does at present. And this, as he very justly observes, will make an immense difference to mankind. It will dispense with the necessity for the Day-light Saving Bill, for one thing, and it may have an important bearing on the eight hours day. There will be only six days and a half in the Darwin year, when it comes, and if the working man insisted on his eight hours charter he would only work fifty-two hours in a twelvemonth. We have just cause of complaint against our planet. What we want is a world that will do what is expected of it in the geography books, turn round on its own axis once every twenty-four hours. Six and a half revolutions in a year won't do. Nothing is said about that in the geography books, and even if there were it wouldn't make any difference to the principle. It's the law of life to keep moving. Every day civilised mankind has got to accelerate and put more time in. What is good for human beings ought to be good enough for the world we live on. We want no dawdling in our earth's diurnal duties, no snacking off, no marking time. What we want is hustle and plenty of it. It is a wonder our scientists don't apply themselves to the problem in real earnest. Why don't some of them discover something to make the earth go quicker? What is the good of their electricity, and their radium, and their X-rays, and all that stuff if they can't do something useful with it? Don't let us get in a panic but let us rather tackle the difficulty like men and boost the world round a little longer. Keep the ball rolling; that is the game.

Unfashionable.

France is trying an experiment, and the nations are looking on. France is keeping down her population, reducing her birth rate, considering the quality, as well as the number of her citizens. The experiment is with the third child. A third living child means a large increase in population; two living children merely replace their dying parents. In France less than a third of all families have a third child. The two-child system is a national institution. Paternity and maternity on a large scale have gone out of fashion. The appearance of the third child becomes yearly less frequent. From 1801 to 1895, 150 years, we have statistics of the number of children born in France. During all that period no year has produced so few children as the last.

A Long Eat.

Sir Robert Hart, the veteran Inspector-General of the Chinese Customs, says that he once, in Peking, sat out a banquet that lasted for 17 consecutive hours. There were 125 courses, and he tasted them all. This would seem, at first sight, to take a lot of beating. Yet Mr. Ward, the American envoy, who tried to interview the Emperor Hsing-Fung in 1859, tells how he was entertained to a dinner that lasted from noon one day until six o'clock on the evening of the day following. The total number of courses is not given, but Ward mentions that he had to give in after partaking of 138 different dishes. "whereupon his hosts wondered greatly"—presumably at his abstemiousness. Probably, however, the Eskimo banquets last longer than any others, and the quantity of food swallowed is also proportionately greater. Ross records that seven of his party of natives once ate continuously for 33 hours, during which time they consumed 200lb. of seal meat.

Virtue of the Dot.

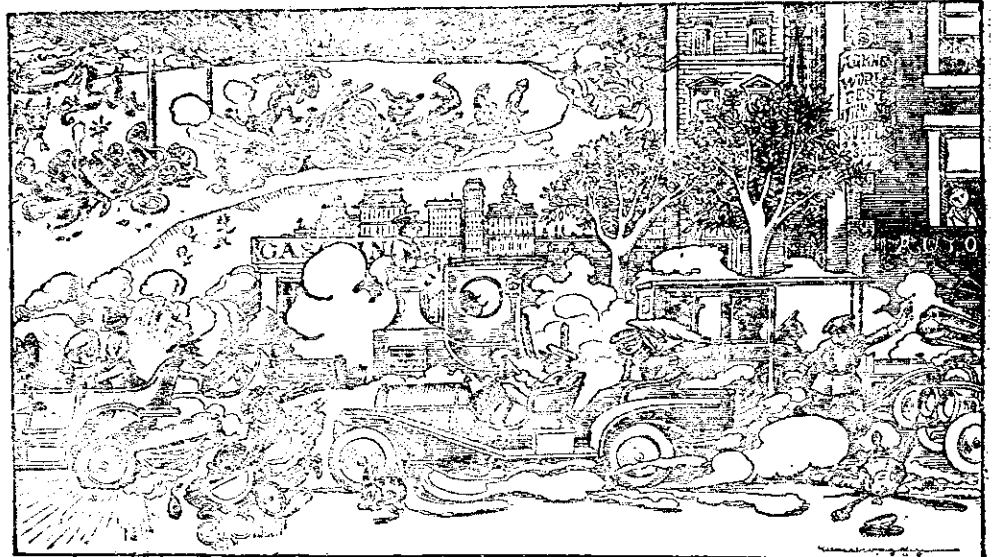
A French lady who is lecturing in London to large audiences deplored the other day the absence of a system of dowries for girls in England. As is well known, in France the system is one of the principal features of social life. Every girl, no matter how humble her station, brings her husband a "dot," and the provision of the dowry is a sacred duty incurred by the parents and built up week by week as soon as the child is born. She also, when she is old enough to earn money, puts by a certain sum regularly to this end, and when the parents of a young couple are arranging a match, the amount of a girl's dot is carefully taken into consideration. This may seem mercenary, and the matchmaking by parents would be resented as undue interference by our young people; but it must be admitted that the custom is eminently successful in France—notwithstanding the extraordinary ideas most British people have of Gallic married life. Another good result is that no country in the world shows such a huge proportion of elderly people who are living comfortably on their means.

with an income an average barrister would covet, or he may be the youth with just enough education to address a letter. The difficulty of getting the clerks to combine is the same as confronts those who try to gather the domestic servants into one camp. For there are no such snobs as these. The bank clerk regards himself as the head of the list, a little above the insurance clerk; and neither of them would have anything to say to the bookmaker's clerk except in the way of business. Indeed, a bank clerk would arm in social arm with the bookmaker's clerk would sacrifice his future. So there can be no clerks' union, because there are, generically speaking, no clerks.

Passing Hence.

A once familiar feature of the London daily papers—the "Agony Column"—bids fair soon to disappear. Rarely now do we come across any of those strange and cryptic messages which sometimes concealed unfathomable mysteries. Many were communications more than suspected of being messages from one criminal to another. There is still an officer at Scotland Yard whose duty is to scan the newspapers for all such matter, and to whom the most complicated cypher is as easy as a b. c. Perhaps the most pathetic message that ever appeared in the Agony Column was that inserted for Mrs. Pearcey after she was executed

party it answered. "It will go to anybody," remarked the other in profound gloom; and if this may have been an aspersion on the particular dog, it is undoubtedly true of many others of its race. With the exception of a good hard bite, few things in connection with his pet are more distressing to the dog-owner than a disposition to make friends with everybody, and not to exercise that wise discretion that appreciates the distinction between the demeanour that should be presented to the gentleman who comes after the spoons and to the wealthy maiden aunt. Something, however, is to be said on the dog's behalf. Whether it is from too deep reading of dog stories, or from too innocent belief in the doings of other people's dogs, too much has come to be expected of the average dog. Dogs, for example, that are born with a "Woodman-spare-that-tree!" expression go through life with the nature which that expression advertises, and should not be expected to burst themselves with delight over the pursuits that most people appear to imagine a dog should enjoy merely because it is a dog. Irritation should not be felt because the cry of "Cats!" does not produce a pricking of the ears and prancing of the legs in dogs of this kind. They do not play cats. It is not their game. All the prancing they wish to do when the ery rings out is to prance out of the way and keep there. Dog-owners should make a point of studying these little characteristics in



THE MOTOR CRAZE.

The Charlots shall rage in the streets, they shall jostle one against another in the broad ways: They shall seem like torches, they shall run like the Lightnings.—Nahum, Chap. II, v. 4.

Of course, every race has the customs best suited to its temperament, and it is no doubt a fine thing that our men and girls should have the courage and confidence to face a future together with the week's rent in their pockets and a cottage full of time-payment furniture. One admires their brave hearts, but a bad balance would not detract from their happiness, and French custom sees to the latter. Such innovations in social usage are, however, extremely difficult to implant in a nation, and it is unlikely that cold reason will affect it. The practically unfettered choice allowed Anglo-Saxon men and maidens is unknown among foreigners, and it is probable we will continue to take each other for better or for worse without tender inquiries after the ladies' banking account.

A Unicorn Class.

"I have almost de-paired of the clerk," writes Mr. Philip Snowden, M.P., in reference to the deputation that recently demanded from the Prime Minister the establishment of a minimum wage of thirty-five shillings a week for the clerk. Mr. Snowden's despair, the "Westminster Gazette" comments, arises from the impossibility of getting all clerks to combine. Which leads us to the impossibility of defining a clerk in terms of financial and social value. He is as elusive as the domestic servant, who ranges from the scullery-maid to the butler. For he may be the clerk of a eminent K.C.,

for what was known as the Hampstead murder. Its four words—"Have not betrayed. — Eleanor," speaks volumes of a woman's devotion in screening an unworthy partner in crime.

Related Diagnosis.

Some of the researches of surgical science are distinctly of a retrospective character. It is not so long since that the curious surgeons who unwound the mummy of an Egyptian Princess were enabled to diagnose with tolerable certainty that the lady had died from appendicitis. Now the mummy of the great Pharaoh himself has come in for the attention of the Royal College of Physicians. Meneptah is the reputed Pharaoh, and his aorta was so far calcified that a few thousand years had not impaired its structure, and the microscope has revealed that senile degeneration of the organ undoubtedly caused the Egyptian King's death. It would not be surprising if, in due time, it were established that Adam's apple was formed by an imperfect operation for tracheotomy performed by Tubal Cain.

Canine Sagacity.

The disputed ownership of a dog was decided last month—to the satisfaction of the East Ham Magistrates—by each claimant calling it in open Court, and the sagacious creature being adjudged to the

their pet, and they would not then suffer vexation at moments when their dog falls short of the ideal standard.



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