

Topics of the Week.

A Steward's Lot.

While I have sympathy with the principle of unionism, its incarnated manifestations here are not altogether beautiful. Vested with their new powers, the unions are apt to be impatient of minor grievances and quick in quarrel. Seldom, indeed, does it happen nowadays that these grievances have attracted the attention of the world before the unions have ventilated them. Long before they have assumed the seriousness of crying evils they are before the Boards of Conciliation. I had not conceived there was such a thing as a long-suffering union till I read the other day that the stewards and cooks had filed an application for the hearing of their grievances in the matter of hours of labour, wages, etc. Then I recognised that the body who could have so long delayed to complain of the undoubtedly hard and tedious labour its members go through deserved the epithet most entirely. One marvels that ships' stewards have not rebelled long ago against their lot, which is perhaps the most unenviable among workers. Still beginning, never ending, the tedious routine goes on day in, day out. If passengers are not eating—the chief recreation on shipboard—they are ill. It is the steward's duty to wait on them assiduously in both cases, and in both they are apt to be particularly exacting. The holiday-maker, with a sea-sharpened appetite, is a selfish animal; the seasick passenger has no bowels of mercy save for himself. The poor steward is between the upper and the nether millstones of the hale and the sick. However, he has struck at last, and it will be a marvel if the Conciliation Board does not extend to him a full measure of their sympathy. One sincerely hopes that their attitude may not beget in him that Oliver Twist like spirit it has done in other unions, whom success has made arrogant, for where should we be without his kindly ministry? The tedium of a sea voyage and the horrors of sea-sickness, which at table or by the bunk-side the steward does so much to alleviate, would be unbearable were he to labour only by the hard and fast laws prescribed by a union.

Sunken Treasure.

There must be a lot of careless folks in this world, is the mental comment one makes on reading of the collection of articles which find their way into the dead letter office through being incorrectly or inadequately addressed. It is a long list, even in such a comparatively small place as New Zealand, and a valuable one, too. This last year the postal authorities had to take into their possession gold and silver watches, chains, gold and silver rings, post office orders, bank drafts, and notes, cheques, and gold to the total value of £4174, and a miscellaneous collection of things too numerous to particularise. What an amount of disappointment must surely be associated with the failure of these articles to reach their destination; what remorse may not be connected with them. These ten gentlemen's gold rings, and three ladies' ditto—what may not their loss have occasioned to the sender, or the individual for whom they were destined? They may easily have been pledges of plighted affection, and their non-arrival may have wrecked the loves and lives of more than one poor mortal. The presence of seven pawn tickets and twenty-seven share certificates among the unclaimed articles is more easily explained. These as the property of the improvident or the speculative, had less chance of reaching their proper destination, yet the fate of the former affords ample ground for romantic speculation. A pawn ticket is a most significant document, and one can imagine the perplexity of mind, body, and estate which might even now be

relieved if the post office authorities could convey them to their rightful owners. Useless to the authorities, how exceedingly precious to the latter would they be?

The Art of Walking.

An American lady doctor who has come to settle in New Zealand, complains our colonial maidens on their complexion, but finds fault with their feet and style of walking. The latter, she says, is radically bad, and bad shoes, she thinks, may be the cause. To be frank, I had not thought that New Zealand girls were either distinguished by their fine complexions or by their bad walking; but everything is comparative, and judging by the American standard which our visitor has brought with her, it may be Zealandia's daughters are fair of face and of graceless carriage. The difference between the two perfections is largely a difference of nature and art. Good health and a healthy life are the main secrets of a good complexion, while to walk well is rather an acquired than a natural accomplishment. When the American ladies do not invoke the aid of cosmetics they tend to grow pale and parchmenty; but even when they have lost the brilliancy of brow and cheek they retain a grace of figure that is not less "fetching," to use their own term. So far as their manner of walking adds to that quality, it is due, I have been given to understand, to the fact that American girls are taught to walk. Colonial girls are not. In fact, the "deportment" which used to figure so largely in the curriculum of the schools our grandmothers attended is not known here. The New Zealand maiden emerges from childhood into girlhood, and passes from girlhood into womanhood without anyone to guide her faltering footsteps. No watchful eye is there to detect the turning toe or the shuffling heel before the lengthened dress conceals them altogether. No wonder, then, if, as our American critic observes, the carriage and mode of perambulation of the Maori girl leaves a good deal to be desired. However, the evil is one that is not difficult to remedy, if parents will only take the trouble, and if they understood how much the attractiveness of their daughters depends on an elegant deportment they should require little persuasion to see to the matter at once.

Gentle Woman Again.

The woman who, according to the French proverb, is supposed to be at the bottom of every trouble, has not had to be searched for in the case of the Anarchist outrage in America. Czolgosz, the watched assassin of the President, declared at once that what first put it into his head to commit the deed was a lecture by Miss Goldman, in which the lady declared that all rulers should be exterminated; and Miss Goldman is now in gaol. It would be a nice point to decide to what extent this interesting lady is a participator with Czolgosz in his crime. It would be impossible, I am afraid, to prove her legally responsible in the matter, and therefore she cannot be held legally guilty. As to her moral responsibility or guilt, if the position is as Czolgosz states, she certainly stands condemned by the voice of the world. Her hand it was that, in this case, sowed the seed of murder, and she seems to have been sowing it so broadcast that there is not so much to be wondered at that some fell on fruitful soil. Yet the authorities in America do not contemplate any wholesale measure against Anarchists, we are told. They are to be left in peace, one infers, to spread their doctrine of destruction abroad through the States. Miss Goldman will emerge from prison clothed with a greater authority than ever to preach the word of death, and more than ever emboldened to preach it with no uncertain meaning. As propagandists generally, women have not been very prominent, but perhaps

there is no cause in which they might figure as such more successfully than in spreading the doctrine of Anarchy. The less logic the teacher has in such cases the better, and a woman has this great advantage over a man that she can give murderous counsel without being expected to practise what she preaches. We know how the burghers in South Africa have been kept in the field by the taunts of their women folk. The female Anarchist is more to be dreaded than her brother of the terrible creed. If she is silent she can the better work unsuspected because she is a woman. If she speaks it is with a greater freedom, for her sex protects her. She can carry persuasion nearer to the point of a command than she would be thought to lag behind a woman. What she is bold enough to suggest they must be bold enough to do. No doubt Czolgosz had listened to many Anarchist lecturers of his own sex, who failed to rouse him to action, but Miss Goldman found him a willing disciple, quick to apply the general principles which she propounded. Who knows how soon she may find others. As a fact Czolgosz is an excellent advertisement for her, and will give to her lectures in future a new charm and force. And America will still allow it apparently.

On the Rack.

"Save us from our friends" may well be the cry of those unlucky burghers whose lot it will henceforth be to ride in the South African trains as a precaution against the train wrecker. Only when one is very young indeed does the life of the ordinary railway guard commend itself as a particularly desirable occupation, but these gentlemen who are to act as guards in another sense over the Transvaal and Orange State lines hold a billet infinitely less enviable. The uneasiness of the head that wears a crown can be nothing to the discomfort of the unfortunate who are selected for this dangerous sinecure. Not the softest of air cushioned chairs or spring back lounge can afford rest to their apprehensive frames, while such diversions as novel reading or light conversation will be quite out of the question. If Dante had lived in these days I feel sure he would have regarded as an inspiration this device for euebrating the train wrecker, and probably would have added it to the list of the tortures in the nether world. Surely the suspense of Damocles from the danger that threatened him from above would be less than that of the travelling burghers will experience. What an interesting book he could write under the title "Impressions of a Traveller."

Mightier Than the Pom-pom.

The capture of ex-President Steyn's printing press at Paarlserberg must count for more than the taking of many pom-poms and waggons of ammunition, for it has certainly been much more productive of harm than any engine of war in the Boer ranks. Probably a worn out font of type and an antiquated Minerva press comprised the whole extent of that printing establishment, but one feels safe in saying that never in the annals of the gutter press of any country was there ever printed by any machine the same amount of unadulterated lies as has issued from that press. I think I can see it grown shaky in the service of falsehood, with its battered types, which have spelt out treason in every conceivable form. In a way it was almost a pity that the British should have destroyed it, as the cable says they did. Surely it would have been an object of much greater interest than the captured guns, which will adorn the cities of the Empire when the struggle is over and done. Yet you can understand how our men, regarding it as an instrument of the devil, which it no doubt was, thought best to wreath it in gun-cotton and blow it to the moon. With its disappearance Steyn has lost his most useful ally, presuming he has no other printing contrivance to take its place. No longer can he sow falsehood on every wind and exhort the burgher wavering towards surrender to continue the hopeless fight. No hand that ever welded pen can do what the press did in the way of disseminating treason. The pen may be might-

ier than the sword, but in this instance it would be a poor mechanical substitute for the printing press; and did Steyn and his friends renounce the lethal weapon for the moment and scribble proclamations till their fingers were palsied they could never make good their loss. What written document could exercise the same influence on the burghers as the little leaflet which proclaimed in all the black strength of broad capitals that there could be no peace without independence. The Chinese, we are told, have such a reverence for the written word that men are employed going round the streets to pick up all the waste pieces of paper on which any characters have been written. There is among ignorant people something of the same regard for printed matter. Tell a man anything and he may doubt you. Write it to him and he may still question the correctness of your statement. Show it him in print and he accepts it at once. Even we in these days who cannot open our eyes without encountering printed matter, we who are accustomed from our cradles to the morning and evening newspapers, have we lost our respect for print? We may pretend we have, but it is only pretence. What, then, must it be in the case of the untaught burgher, who, having no book, in many cases, but his Bible, was wont to attribute to any printed document some of the infallibility of Holy Writ. And I fancy that it was much more from the secular than the sacred source that he drew justification for the struggle and hope in the issue. Deprived of the first, the chances are that he will act as mercy and common sense and his own interest all prompt him to do.

The Language Test.

Our legislative efforts to exclude undesirable immigrants from our shores have come in for a good deal of condemnation, but judging by the proposals for the same end which the Commonwealth Parliament are considering, this colony was moderation itself. Australia aims at a standard of exclusiveness we never dreamt of. Not merely is her door to be shut against Chinamen and the low-grade population of Europe, but she means to set an entrance examination which is calculated to floor decent folks. The Bill before the Parliament proposes that immigrants must be able to write intelligently from dictation a passage in their own tongue, and further they will be required to show an acquaintance in writing with fifty words in the English language. It is this second demand that presents the chief obstacle, but the Australian statesmen argue that if foreigners intend to settle among us they should at least have taken the trouble beforehand to acquire a slight knowledge of our tongue. Fortunate it is for we Britons as a people that such restrictions did not interfere with our entry into foreign countries when we spread ourselves over the face of the earth, for we are very far from a nation of linguists. I can think how it would fare with the stream of English tourists who visit the Continent yearly if they had, as a condition of their getting into the country, to write fifty words in the language. Ninety-nine per cent. would go down before such an ordeal. Fancy the consternation of the Briton on arrival at a French, German or Italian frontier to be confronted by some pedagogic official, who demands from the unprepared traveller the Gallic or Teutonic equivalent of such absurd propositions as "is it your father who has the red coat?" or "The Dalmatian dog is playing with the Welch rabbit in the green field." Beaten by such pitfalls continental travel would become a burden instead of a pleasure to the poor Englishman. Gay Paris would be gay no longer, and the mellifluous voice of the cheap tripper would no more resound through the Champs Elysees.

Consumption's often caused by cold,
Neglected in its early stage,
And once it gets a good firm hold,
It hasn't much respect for age.
Now when a man's so near the grave,
When hope is dead and death seems sure,
Oh! what can ease him, what can save?
W.E. Woods' Great Peppermint Cure.