

THE :: PASSING :: SHOW

TOPICS OF THE WEEK, BY A CAUSTIC CRITIC.

Passing Show? (!) aroPHin (B :
At the time of writing Auckland is up against a pretty tough proposition. Last week a number of workers on the City drainage works unceremoniously dropped their picks and shovels and went on strike. Since then a handful of agitators have incited other labourers, employed by the municipal and suburban local bodies, to leave their regular work and swell the ranks of the malcontents. Now there are something like 750 men out on strike. The outlook is decidedly ominous.

This strike is remarkable in many respects, and differs from anything previous experienced in this country in the nature of an industrial dispute. The working classes can usually be relied on to play the game squarely with their employers. Before taking an extreme step they have in the past invariably made some attempt to have their grievances intelligently represented to their masters in the hope that an amicable settlement may be arrived at. In such cases both sides realise that if a satisfactory settlement is not reached a dead-lock will result, and probably a serious strike eventuate.

In the present strike, however, the men out have practically no legitimate grievance to justify their action. On the drainage works one contractor had let a sub-contract. This was made the excuse—the word is used advisedly—to strike. But no sooner had the men stated what their objection was than the contractor in question agreed to remove the grievance. Thus the cause of the trouble was at once removed.

The agitators, however, apparently, seeing a chance of gaining notoriety, incited labourers in no way connected with the drainage works to leave their work and inflict unnecessary inconvenience on the public.

The strikers have further alienated the sympathy of all fair-minded citizens by the attitude they have since adopted in forcing conscientious, hard-working and honest working men to leave their jobs. And this after the strike leaders had given a promise to the Mayor on Friday last that they would take no further action while negotiations for an amicable settlement were in progress. The agitators broke the truce in the interval and ordered other men out.

The seriousness of the outlook now is that if the vanity of a few labour leaders is not appeased by the city and suburban authorities eating humble pie a general industrial dislocation may eventuate. The agitators threaten to call out the tramway employees, and the members of other unions affiliated to the New Zealand Federation of Labour, despite the fact that the great majority of the members of these affiliated unions candidly admit that they have no grievance, but are compelled to obey the dictates of their leaders.

Surely such a state of affairs is a most humiliating reproach to the manhood of the workers, if they consent to submit like sheep to the dictates of men who have neither right nor reason on their side.

Possibly the more deplorable feature of this industrial upheaval is the fact that the "N.Z. Herald," has bowed down, and is grovelling, to the strike leaders. Had it not been for the way in which that paper had pandered to the agitators the strike would have fizzled out before this. To individuals such as Semple and Fraser, publicity and notoriety are merely an incentive to further action.

Had the Press of the city restricted their references to the strike to the barest detail, and refused the agitators unlimited space, Auckland would not now be in the throes, or what might easily be the most serious industrial war the Dominion has known. Fancy a self-respecting journal giving four and five columns daily to an embryo strike, and a whole column on "An Organiser of

Men," wherein it gives a "Who's Who" sketch of the prime mover in the strike. Never before did this individual gain such fame—the fame that makes agitators agitate.

We owe our readers an apology for using these columns at such length and on such an incongruous subject, but the occasion is one fraught with such regrettable possibilities that we consider it is up to us to treat the affair with some seriousness, in view of the fact that the daily press appear to have cast responsible journalism to the wind, and set about to fan the flames of strife. It is surely silly season in Auckland newspaperdom.

There is no telling, of course, where this strike is going to end. What demands may be made of employers. During the recent strikes in the Old Country, even office boys joined the malcontents, and one paper facetiously states that it will take months for the boys to recover their habitual industry. Owing to the strike strain many of them will require six months' holiday to recuperate.

The English office boys' terms of surrender are given as follows:—

1. Full pay.
2. No work.
3. Full allowance for spelling.
4. Errands to be abolished for the future, but last year's errands to be cleared off by 1st October.



PITY THE BLIND.

5. No compulsory washing and extra pay for soap.
6. Right to converse on general topics through the telephone.

Possibly our own office boys would not consider these terms altogether satisfactory, as there is no guarantee for the future that they will be relieved from labour, which our colonial-bred youth considers degrading, and which greatly interferes with their higher pursuits. Unless time is allowed for courtship and conversation, we are inclined to think that the New Zealand office boy will argue that marriage, home-building, and the future of the Empire will all be imperilled.

Since the above was written the strike has been settled. Thank goodness! But think of the cost. The agitators have scored a decisive victory, the contractors have had to submit to the dictates of the strike leaders, the Drainage Board have had to forfeit its future independence, and worst of all the unfortunate workers have lost a week's wages and gained nothing. The whole disturbance was quite an unnecessary and vindictive piece of intimidation for the glorification of one or two individuals.

What stands out most clearly in regard to the recent strike is the power that the labourers are placing in the hands of an executive, consisting of a few men whose very existence as bread-winners rests on their ability to handle the labouring classes as a mob of sheep—to be driven hither and thither as the caprice of

these leaders. And this quite irrespective of the hardships that may be forced on the deluded workers, or the loss that employers may make, or yet again the general inconvenience of the community at large.

The Talking Shop has closed its doors, and the Jaded Talkers are making for their constituencies to tell their good people what good fellows they have been. That is all very well in its way; but when these voluble legislators are confined in a chamber in Wellington's defunct Government House, they do no one any harm. Now, however, that they have been released and are scattering all over the country they are likely to become troublesome, especially when in a week or two they will have to shed their tail initials and free passes.

Of course it is very sad such estimable men should have to be put to the necessity of telling their electors what really splendid men they are; but if the electors were not told these things, how would they know? Besides there are lots of other men anxious to impress on us that they are the very paragon of wisdom, and should replace those who have for the last three years drawn close on £1000 apiece from our pockets in the shape of honorariums. What is a man to do? He is asked to vote, but why should he be put to this great inconvenience? What good does it do? Goodness knows!

Napoleon Napier states that Waitemata is the Cinderella among the Northern constituencies. The gallant Napier is out to win the fair Cinderella and promises her a pumpkin carriage when he gets the ear of the good Fairy. Not only this, for the enterprising candidate pledges himself to provide Cinderella with a fairy bower fitted with all modern conveniences. What a transformation for Waitemata. Here is Napier's word-picture of the Cinderella constituency to-day—"The bridges over the rivers and streams were practically all rotten and dangerous to human life. Culverts were broken down and useless; seas of mud existed until the summer was well advanced; and the suffering, especially of the wives of the remoter settlers, was intense."

What we like most about Napoleon Napier as a candidate is his stumpy declaration that if elected he would go down to the Empire City as an "unmuzzled Liberal." This certainly is most reassuring, but surely somewhat superfluous, because who could imagine our game little man muzzled? Besides, who have they got in the South that could muzzle Napier?

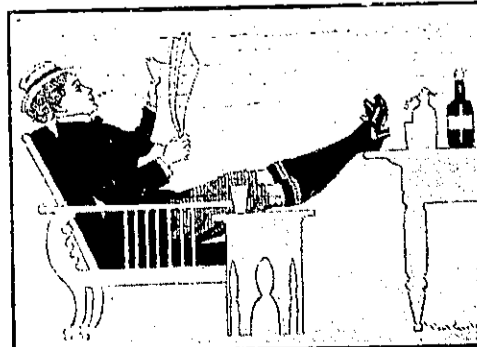
Why not run a national sweep-stake and kill two birds with one stone. We could elect our members and knock out George Adams' sweeps in one smack, besides saving the country many thousands of pounds that might be profitably used to establish an asylum for indigent strike agitators down in the Auckland Islands.

A certain lady, who is a regular attendant at St. Mary's, the hub of fashionable Remuera, and the Seatless Knight's prospective seat, is in the habit of always bowing her head in church at the mention of the name of his Satanic Majesty, and being asked for an explanation by a visiting curate, while the recent Anglican Synod was in session, replied: "Politeness costs nothing—and you never can tell."

There is to be a rise in the wages of ready-to-wear-clothing factory hands, says a Christchurch exchange. So far as skirts are concerned they already show a tendency for them to go up in Auckland. Doubtless as a result of the craze for gay hosiery.

"Women are discarding their petticoats!" This is the latest intelligence from Australia. A Melbourne exchange states that on the shelves of the soft goods' warehouses in that city the petticoats have accumulated in hundreds of dozens, and the fair ones do not care a button for them now, even though they be quite the sweetest things in pink or pale blue silk, or dreams of foaming white lace. They are not wanted. The sheath skirt is the nearest approach to the nether habiliments of men that has received general acceptance, rendering the petticoat a wasteful and ridiculous excess.

This marvellous sheath skirt is extremely like trousers—not a pair of trousers, but one "trous." It looks trousers, but one "trous." It looks as if the fair sex had gone so far as to collar one leg, anyhow. How long will it be before the daughters of Eve go the whole hog and annex the knickerbockers? Does our sketch anticipate too much?



I DARE DO ALL THAT MAY BECOME A MAN.

Should it prove true, as I've heard said,
That ere the summer days are sped
One General Election more
Will rend the land from shore to shore;
However fierce the fight may be
'Twill not shake my tranquility.

For I am old enough to see
It makes no difference to me;
Both Parties are, in fact, the same
In all essentials but in name—
Both out to see what they can get,
And plunge us deeper into debt.

Why, then, should I myself concern
As to which Party may return?
It may important seem to some—
To me 'tis Tweedle dee or dum;
For, furthermore I'd have you note,
I am not qualified to vote.