

dismal failure of a career which, at one time, gave such brilliant promise, we cannot but recognise that Mr. Smyth had qualities which under happier circumstances might have raised him high in the list of men held in deserved honour by their country. The ideals painted by him in his oratory, if visionary and Utopian, were always inspiring and ennobling. His aim was to see Ireland a nation in the truest sense of the word, a nation such as Grattan created, but greater and nobler than the Ireland of '82, because freed from that sectarian ascendancy which was the weakness and eventually the destruction of the Constitution won for their country by the Volunteers. If we cannot hold up Mr. Smyth's career as one to be followed, we may, at least, point to many of his speeches as examples to be studied. If he himself has in his old age fallen so terribly short of the goal which at its outset he may have ambitioned, we believe that his fellow-countrymen will have for him quite as much commiseration as censure. In parting from him now, although he has said as hard things of us as of others who could not adopt his views, we take the opportunity of saying that we never had against himself personally any unkindly feeling and never did him any intentional injustice. We hope he may live long to enjoy the fruits of his appointment, and we venture to say that no man in Ireland will grudge him the poor salary the Government have given him for services which from them certainly should have had a larger reward. [Since the above was written the report of Mr. Smyth's death has reached us.—ED. N. Z. TABLET.]

THE LOSS OF THE BIRKENHEAD.

OF all the wonderful instances of human courage on record there is none more striking than that which is contained in the sad history of the loss of the Birkenhead troopship. The Birkenhead was an iron paddle-wheel steamer, one of the finest of her class. She sailed from Queenstown, Ireland, on the 7th of January, 1852, for the Cape of Good Hope, and took out a detachment of the 12th Lancers, and detachments of nine regiments of the line. She made a fair and prosperous voyage, sighted the Cape, and as she ran down the coast her passengers looked forward to a speedy release from the pleasant confinement of her decks. It was a fine afternoon, the 25th of February—

"The air was calm, and on the level brine

Sleek Panope and all her sisters play'd";

the Birkenhead was steaming at full speed towards her goal, not dreaming of harm, and unconscious of the proximity of danger. There were 638 persons on board, including the ship's company and the wives and children of the soldiers.

Suddenly there was a blow that shook every one of the ship's timbers, the Birkenhead trembled from stem to stern, stopped, and began to sink. A rock unknown to navigators had found her out; and having pierced her side, thrust up its pointed head into the engine-room. There was alarm, but no confusion. Instantly, as though they had been waiting for the accident, instead of waiting to go ashore, the ship's officers and the officers of the troops issued their necessary orders. The women and children were taken on the upper deck, and the soldiers were mustered there, while the sailors, in obedience to the captain's commands lowered the ship's boats and made ready to go.

The boats being manned alongside, the women and children were handed into them, with such of the crew as were necessary to take them to the shore. Few if any of the soldiers who saw their beloved ones departing were able to go in the boats, for it was found that the utmost the boats could accommodate without endangering the safety of their occupants, was but 184 out of the total number of 638 on board. The land was near, only a few miles distant; Simon's Bay, to which port the Birkenhead was bound, was close at hand; there was a chance that the boats might return before the final catastrophe came, or help might come at any moment from the port of destination. Some there might have been who indulged in this hope, and who were sustained by it till it was rudely dashed to pieces; but the majority of the men knew that escape was all but impossible; that before the boats could return from the first trip, to say nothing of a second, all would certainly be over. The force with which the ship struck had been so great as to drive the rock bodily into her; she was being pressed down by the weight of the water that had rushed in, and was showing signs of giving way amidships.

Not a murmur was heard from the soldiers as they stood at their death parade, no hint was there of unruliness, of selfishness, or complaint. With death staring them in the face, the men felt comfort in knowing that the women and children were beyond the reach of harm. Some few solemn words of consolation, but none of earthly hope, were spoken by the colonel in command of the troops, and the brave captain of the Birkenhead was not slow to second him in bidding the men resign themselves to their inevitable fate. Soon the fatal moment came. The good ship, which lay so badly wounded on the sharp spear that had pierced her, could last no longer; she gave a few convulsive throbs, there was a cracking and a rending and the Birkenhead parted in the middle, sinking in two pieces on either side of the rock. Long ere the boats could get back to her from the shore; long before the news of her disaster could be told at Simon's Bay, the 454 brave men who had been unavoidably left in her had given up the ghost, had been drowned in the sea or been devoured by sharks.—Cassell's "World of Wonders."

The fact that Carter and Co., of George Street are the only Drapers in Dunedin doing a strictly Cash Trade who import their own Goods direct from Home Markets, is the one cause of their being able to sell cheaper than any other firm. Carter and Co. have just opened, ex S.S. Coptic and Kaikoura, 16 cases Men's and Boys' Clothing, and in consequence of the desperate scarcity of Ready Money, they have decided to offer the whole lot, for a few weeks, at Landed Cost. Therefore, call, inspect, and judge for your self. Carter's, 60, 62, George Street, Dunedin.

FRENCH DUELLING.

WHEN it ceased to be the fashion to wear swords in the last century, pistols were soon substituted for personal encounters. This made duelling far less amusing, more dangerous, and proportionately less popular. The duel in England received practically its *coup de grace* with the new Articles of War of 1844, which discredited the practice in the army by offering gentlemen facilities for public explanation, apology, or arbitration in the presence of their commanding officer. But previous to this "the duel of satisfaction" had assumed the most preposterous forms. Parties agreed to draw lots for pistols and to fight, the one with a loaded the other with an unloaded weapon. This affair of honour was always at short distances and "point-blank," and the loser was usually killed. Another plan was to go into a dark room together and commence firing. There is a beautiful and pathetic story told of two men, the one a "kind" man and the other a "timid" man, who found themselves unhappily bound to fight, and chose the dark-room duel. The kind man had to fire first, and, not wishing to hurt his adversary, groped his way to the chimney-piece, and placing the muzzle of his pistol straight up the chimney, pulled the trigger, when to his consternation, with a frightful yell down came his adversary the "timid" man, who had selected that fatal hiding-place. Another grotesque form was the "medical duel," one swallowing a pill made of bread, the other swallowing one made of poison. When matters had reached this point, public opinion not unaturally took a turn for the better, and resolved to stand by the old obsolete law against duelling, whilst enacting new bye-laws for the army, which, of course, reacted powerfully, with a sort of professional authority, upon the practice of bellicose civilians. The duel was originally a mere trial of might, like our prize fight; it was so used by armies and nations as in the case of David and Goliath, or as when Charles V. challenged Charlemagne to single combat. But in mediæval times it got to be also used as a test of right, the feeling of a judicial trial by ordeal entering into the struggle between two persons, each claiming right on his side. The judicial trial by ordeal was abandoned in the reign of Elizabeth, but the practice of private duelling has survived in spite of adverse legislation, and is exceedingly popular in France down to the present day. The law of civilised nations has, however, always been dead against it. In 1699 the Parliament of Paris went so far as to declare every duellist a rebel to his Majesty; nevertheless, in the first eighteen years of Henri Quatre's reign no fewer than four thousand gentlemen are said to have perished in duels, and Henri himself remarked, when Creyin challenged Don Philip of Savoy, "If I had not been the king I would have been your second." Our ambassador, Lord Herbert, at the Court of Louis XIII., wrote home that he hardly ever met a French gentleman of repute who had not either killed his man or meant to do so! and this in spite of laws so severe that the two greatest duellists of the age, the Count de Bouteville and the Marquis de Beuron, were both beheaded, being taken *in flagrante delicto*. Louis XIV. published another severe edict in 1679, and had the courage to enforce it. The practice was checked for a time, but it received a new impulse after the close of the Napoleonic wars. The dullness of Louis Philippe's reign and the dissoluteness of Louis Napoleon's both fostered duelling. The present "opportunist" Republic bids fair to out-bid both. You can hardly take up a French newspaper without reading an account of various duels. Like the suicides in Paris, and the railway assaults in England, duels form a regular and much-appreciated item of French daily news. It is difficult to think of M. de Girardin's shooting dead poor Armand Carell—the most brilliant young journalist in France—without impatience and disgust, or to read L. Rochefort's exploit the other day without a smile. The shaking hands in the most cordial way with M. d Rochefort, the compliments on his swordsmanship, what time the blood flowed from an ugly wound, inflicted by him as he was mopping his own neck, are all so many little points (of honour) which we are sure his challenger, Captain Fournier, was delighted to see noticed in the papers. No doubt every billiard-room and cafe in Paris gloated over the details, and the heroes, Rochefort and Fournier, were duly feted and dined together as soon as their respective wounds were sufficiently healed. Meanwhile John Bull reads the tale and grunts out loud, "The whole thing is a brutal farce, and the 'principals' are no better than a couple of asses."—*Balgavia*.

Young and feeble mothers with frail children will both become strong by the use of Hop Bitters. Read.

A few weeks since, at the Armagh Protestant Young Men's Association a local J.P. was in the chair, and a paper on "Irish Politics" was read by a local solicitor of high standing, in which he advocated Home Rule in its broadest aspect. He also expresses satisfaction at the disestablishment of the Church; and in the midst of rabid Orangeism his ideas were concurred in by a majority of the meeting.

On the night of Nov. 11, Patrick Gill, day labourer, of the lockhouse, Lisconnor, County Leitrim, rescued at the imminent peril of his own life an old woman who, missing her way in the darkness, fell into the canal opposite Gill's door. The descent from the embankment from which the woman fell to the surface of the water is about thirteen feet. Gill hearing the screams of the woman, and suspecting their cause, rushed in the direction whence the sounds proceeded. With admirable presence of mind he let himself down over the ruins of what was once a flood-gate, which spanned the canal over a weir a little to the right of the lockhouse. Having descended sufficiently low to ascertain on which side of the weir his aid was needed, Gill jumped into the water, caught hold of the poor woman, and gallantly bearing her through the seething foam, swam with her down the canal until he reached a part of the embankment low enough to admit of his drawing her on land. Alone, unassisted and unavailingly crying for help, Gill performed this heroic and hazardous feat. Surely such brave conduct will not be allowed to go unrewarded.