

Worrying with the Workmen's Act. The month of August is 'tween sea-sons, in London as elsewhere, and possibly the dearth of news, parliamentary or otherwise, may bother even financial papers and account for the recurrence to Russian designs and the Workmen's Compensation Act for matter wherewith to satisfy the cry for "copy." Recalling the complaint that certain employers have been accused of exhibiting a preference for the services of unmarried and young men since the operation of the Act, it is not surprising to find one manufacturer at least who finds diverse and manifold other difficulties arising from the liability thrust upon him by a paternal government.

A factory surgeon asks the following question of the *British Medical Journal*:

"A manufacturer in my district has a very competent workman who is subject to epileptic fits. He asks me if, under these circumstances, he can make any special arrangement with him in regard to compensation for any accident that may occur to him as the result of one of those fits."

The reply of the *Journal* was as follows:—

"If a manufacturer decides upon retaining in his service a workman whom he knows to be the subject of epileptic fits, he should enter into an agreement with the workman whereby, should an injury be received, say by falling upon machinery in motion during one of the fits and death follow such an accident, the extent of his liability would be known beforehand. Where no such an arrangement is made and a fatal accident has occurred, the employer is liable to the extent of full compensation under the Act, since, while epilepsy was the cause of the workman falling upon the machinery, it is the machinery which has caused the injury or the death."

The interested manufacturer may well be excused if under the given circumstances he desires to be relieved of liability under the new Act for what may happen to a victim of the falling sickness, the convulsive motions of whose muscles might mix him up with a rotary saw or precipitate him into a vat of boiling oil.

Meanwhile, an amendment to the Workmen's Compensation Act is being drafted by the Parliamentary Committee of the Trade Union Congress. The measure of amendment is reported to include all workers on land and sea, provides for payment for the first fortnight's injury, abolishes the doctrine of common employment, provides against contracting-out, makes owners of real property—even the owners of mining royalties—partially responsible, abolishes the principle of contributory negligence, and provides for injuries to health. The Bill will form a subject of discussion at the Trade Union Congress. We have read somewhere that the world, while it had scarcity of people, underwent no other dominion than paternity and eldership. The recent parliamentary efforts to protect British workmen and provide pensions for the aged is fast making the state sustain the relation of a father to his offspring, of an elder to the members of a synagogue. Although the common sense of British

law-makers will soon grapple with the difficulties presenting themselves and rectify what is wrong with the Workmen's Compensation Act, employers of labour and owners of real property are, in the meantime troubled about many things.

Something about Sugar. We would have preferred to find in the pages of some insurance paper, and from the pen of some famous physician, the tribute published in the *London News* to the virtue of sugar. We dislike to think that the paper in question is interested in any sugar plantation in the disturbed British West Indies, although such testimony to the extraordinary virtue of sugar is certainly calculated to increase the consumption thereof. Read this:—

"Children all over the world, and all the keepers of "sweet-stuff" shops, ought to join in a testimonial to the learned though anonymous scientist who publishes in the *Allgemeine Zeitung* an enthusiastic glorification of sugar. Not only as a "genussmittel," but much more as a "nahrungsmittel," sugar is almost the most valuable thing which enters the mouth of man, woman or child."

How the perusal of this convincing because confusing account of the sustaining and stimulating power of saccharic nourishment will decrease respect for grandmothers who preserved the contents of their sugar bowls from childish fingers, by base fibbing, by frequent avowals that the white lumps of crystal loaf sugar were bad for the teeth.

Let us read further what this learned scientist (whose anonymity we regret, but, for the sake of delighted children and girlish lovers of caramels, we will not try to pierce) has to say about sugar:—

"There is scarcely any other equally important feeder of muscle power. The laborer can do nothing better than keep a few lumps of sugar in his pocket. The negroes in sugar plantations renew and quicken their weary bodies by sucking the sugar canes. Sugar is a fine restorative for soldiers. A Dutch army surgeon asserts that during an expedition in Sumatra he found that the best means to maintain the soldiers in vigor and freshness, not only during the march, but during the fight, was a generous allowance of sugar. Each man was served with a handful at a time."

During the fight! Now we have nothing to say against the claim, made towards the close of this scientist's remarks, for sugar as a "genussmittel," a "nahrungsmittel," and a "rapid, portable, and innocent stimulant;" but the statement that soldiers were served with sugar during the fight must surely be taken with a grain of salt and considerable mistrust. Even the proverbial Dutch courage was never sustained by a handful of sugar. However, because of the children and those who love "goodies," we will try to believe all that this unknown scientist has said about sugar, and we incline to his belief the more readily by reason of his reminder that "negroes, who devour sugar in so huge a quantity, have the best teeth in the world." Yet, when we read: "The poor hardly realize as yet, or only realize unconsciously, what a treasure they possess in cheap sugar," there really appears to be some design in this sudden exploiting of sugar as an article of food.