

Rubs by Rambler.

The following paragraph was intended for last issue, but was crowded out. The moral may still be applicable:—The Sydney Town Council professes to be nigh heartbroken over the increased cost of living to the workmen. The poor workmen these days are the white-headed boys, whether it be with town councillors, local politicians or federal statesmen. All other classes have only to stand aside and look on. That is there place in the procession—I am not saying this is ill or well. I am merely stating what any one with his eyes open must recognize as a fact. I can only hope that all the potting he is receiving at the hands of the politicians, great and small, will not have the effect of making the workman a spoiled boy. It is perhaps excusable that the Sydney Town Councillors should desire to be in the swim, but it is scarcely excusable their desire to enter with a borrowed bathing suit. They are grieved about the workmen—perhaps—and are surprised that others should impose upon them. That they as a body should help is not in their programme. Let me give one of the "whereases" of a resolution the Council passed lately. "Whereas the cost of living in Sydney has been greatly increased by material advances in the cost of the necessities of life." Are not butter, eggs, potatoes, etc., etc., among the necessities of life. Some innocent ones think they are and important ones too. Not so, evidently, the Sydney Town Council, for while bemoaning the high price of the necessities, they take precious good care to mulct the enterprising P. E. Islander, who brings his shallop or his schooner laden with the necessities required by workmen, in a license fee of fifty dollars before permitting him to exchange his produce for cash. Who actually pays this fifty dollars. The average P. E. Islander is not a fool, and if he in the first place is compelled to pay this tax, he will take good care to advance prices so that the tax will be more than covered. In short if he pays fifty dollars for the privilege of selling, he will charge that and more to the buyers. He knows how to transfer this "burden of taxation" from his own to the shoulders of others and never fails to do so, and the others, it should not be forgotten, are the very workmen whose hard lot shadows the life of the Sydney councillor. The Sydney Council might resolve in favor of free trade till the prices of produce ease off a bit.

When the Grand Council of the P. W. A. made it obligatory on lodges that the vote on any motion the object of which was to 'strike' or suspend work, should be by ballot, it took a step in the right direction. In this same point it might well take a further step and require that no strike could be sanctioned, the motion for which was not supported by a majority of the members—the voting to be by ballot. To this several objections may be urged. For instance it may be said that the will of a majority of members present at lodge should carry, and that if many members are ab-

sent when so important a ballot is taken it is their own fault. And further, it may be urged, to obtain a ballot of all the members, or nearly all, might prove cumbersome. To the first objection it can be replied that many members do not attend lodge when important questions are up, either from a desire to shirk responsibility or from hesitation to take the perhaps unpopular side. Many are content to let things drift. All such should be forced to shoulder their share of the responsibility and be compelled under penalty to vote. To the last named objection it may be replied that voting by ballot on a "strike" motion would be no more cumbersome than a vote for checkweighman, and if opportunity is given to all to vote on so comparatively an unimportant question, the like facility should be afforded when a strike is talked of. If this had been done previous to the declaration of the strike at Springhill one of two things would have happened, either there would have been no strike, or the opposition would not have been given to float in the tunity of Pioneer that some 120 men decided the face of action of ten times that number. A course of action of ten times that number. A strike is so serious an affair that any movement in that direction should be hedged about by preventives to hasty action.

Some years ago it was customary on the occasion of a fatal accident at a colliery for the men to stop work for a day or perhaps two out of sympathy, as it was said. I had been under the impression that this questionable way of expressing sympathy had fallen into disuse and a better way had been substituted. I had been told at a mine that I was visiting, that the men only stopped work for a half a day or if a whole day then half of the wages went to the widow. Old customs die hard, and this old way of expressing sympathy is still in vogue. At times, though the sympathy is still in vogue, I have spoken my mind, and at this time on this subject I mean to speak and at this time regardless of consequences. I have no plainly regardless of consequences. I have no sympathy with the stoppage of work way of showing sympathy. It has its root, I believe, in superstition. When a fatal accident occurs in a section of a mine it can be well understood how men working in that section may be disinclined for further work that day. The shock is great and they are nervous. But why should the workers in remote sections cease work? What good can thereby be effected? At times it is possible that stoppage of work may cause suffering instead of affording sympathy. The Drummound colliery was idle on the 12th, and the 14th, inst., 'out of sympathy'—a fatal accident having occurred in the mine on the 11th. What possible good was effected by this stoppage; what tangible proof of sympathy was bestowed. We have been told, in the press, that the nature of his employment and insufficiency of wages, debars the miner from the opportunity of saving money for 'contingencies'. If that be so then the dependents, of any one who meets with a fatal accident, have not been left well provided for. Let me accept that as, in the main, correct. Would it not then be far more commendable that, instead of lying idle for two days after an accident, the men should continue at work, and devote one day's pay toward a money testimonial to the widow. I do not mean that this would have been the better