

COMMERCIAL SUMMARY.

The property vote is abolished in Western Australia.

The gross cost of all the railway lines in New Zealand, opened and unopened, up to March 31, 1892, is \$77,188,915.

It has been definitely announced that the crack steamers of the Guion line, the Alaska and Arizona, the former of 6,932 tons burthen and the latter of 5,161 tons, have been leased to the Northern Pacific Oriental Steamship Company and will be brought across almost immediately. A similar report obtained currency some time since but was discredited. The announcement, however, is said to have come from the best possible sources.

One hundred and nine thousand locomotives are at present running on the earth. Europe has 66,000, America 40,000, Asia 3,300, Australia 2,000, and Africa 700. In Europe, Great Britain and Ireland take premier position with 17,000 engines, Germany has 15,000, France 11,000, Austria-Hungary, the second largest continental country, has 5,000, Italy 4,000, Russia 3,500, Belgium 2,000, Holland and Spain 1,000 each, Switzerland 900, and the remaining European States, 2,000.

The British man-of-war Curacoa has returned to Sydney after a six months' cruise. She has declared a British protectorate over several groups of islands in the Western Pacific. For the most part these islands have been annexed by Great Britain, says an exchange, in order to prevent them falling into the hands of other nations. From a commercial point of view, the value of some of the islands is nil, but so much trouble has in the past arisen in consequence of divided interests in the islands, as in the case of Samoa, that the annexation of the Gilbert group, the Ellice group, Nassau, Danger and Gardner islands was undertaken with a view to render trouble in the future, with respect to these places at all events, impossible. In some instances the islands visited by the Curacoa were uninhabited, in other instances, five natives were found in possession, and at others there were ten dark-skinned occupants of the coral islets. In the Ellice group, there are several European resident traders.

The blacksmiths of Western Kings County, Nova Scotia, have associated for the purpose of compelling the payment of spot cash for all work done after the first of the year. And the Berwick Register publishes a list of twenty-six of the craft who have subscribed themselves as determined to work on the cash basis only. This is a move in the right direction, for many of the farmers of the Eastern Provinces are the meanest of the customers with whom the trades people have to deal. As much as possible they dispose of their products to the agents of city dealers for spot cash, which it is their practice to bank, and then it is their habit to run up a long bill with the village trader, whom they keep for as long a time as possible out of his money, while they work off on him as much as they can of their farm stuff, which the agents of the city firms refuse to take. If there were more people who would insist on doing a cash business

it would be much better for themselves and every one else.

An American railroad company admitted its liability to an employe for a personal injury, and verbally agreed to pay him a certain sum and give him steady and remunerative employment in consideration of a written release from him discharging the company from liability for the injury. The appellate court of Indiana held (Pennsylvania company vs. Dolan) that such written release was not the foundation of an action by the employe to recover for a breach of the agreement, and need not be filed with his complaint; that an agreement to give such employe "steady and permanent employment" was not void for uncertainty; that, reasonably construed, it was an agreement to furnish the employe employment as long as he was able, ready and willing to perform such services as the company might have for him to perform; that such contract was not void as against public policy in restricting a quasi public servant in its duties to the public; that it was not objectionable for want of mutuality, and that, though verbal, it was not rendered void by the statute of frauds.

AN INTERESTING PRECEDENT

Patent medicine advertisers who offer to bank on the virtues of their remedies can be compelled to redeem their promises in the English courts. A test case decided last week by the Court of Appeals establishes an interesting precedent. A year ago, when the influenza was prevalent, the Carbolic Smoke Ball Company in an advertisement guaranteed immunity from the disease to everybody who used the remedy three times daily for two weeks, £100 to be the forfeit. Mrs. Carlill used the smoke ball faithfully for three weeks, and then the epidemic seized her. She sent in her claim for £100, but the money wasn't paid. All sorts of excuses were offered. It was argued that the offer was a mere device to attract attention, a wager vague in its terms, that there was not a complete contract, because Mrs. Carlill did not notify the company of her acceptance of the offer. All these excuses have been brushed aside by the courts in which Mrs. Carlill brought suit. Lord Justice Bowen, in the decision, likens the case to the offer of a reward for a lost dog. People do not write letters to the advertiser accepting his offer, but they look for the dog. It is safe to say that the decision will work a sweeping modification of the claims made on behalf of the thousand and one curealls in the public prints.

DISINFECTING FOOD.

Disinfection has been used recently for an unusual, if not novel, purpose in Russia. Owing to the need for food for the starving peasantry, committees were appointed for the purpose of organizing a collection of scraps left after meals in the large cities. Many such scraps were collected from hospitals as well as from social gatherings. Thus arose the alternative of conveying contagious diseases to the peasants whom it was intended to benefit or of destroying the food. In the face of the terrible scarcity in the country, the latter alternative was clearly to be

avoided if possible, so the question was referred to the Bacteriological Institution of Odessa for solution, which came to the rescue with the suggestion that morsels of bread left over by persons infected with contagious diseases should be dried at a temperature of 250 degrees Fahrenheit or be submitted to a current of steam of similar temperature for at least one hour, when they would be thoroughly disinfected.

RUSSIAN FEMALE SPIES.

Females play an important, if not predominant, part in the army of Russian spies, all of them belonging to the so-called educated classes.

The way in which they are recruited is very simple and ingenious; the method was described to me once by one of the pillars of the secret section, and was confirmed later on by a lady spy with whom I had a conversation on the subject, writes a correspondent.

An official dies (99 out of 100 Russians are officials) before he has served long enough to entitle him to a pension. His young widow petitions the Ministry for an allowance, and she receives a sum varying from 100 to 500 roubles.

After the lapse of some months, she petitions again, and is told to call at the police office, where about one fifth of the former sum is given to her, and she is encouraged to hope that in two months time something may be done for her again.

When she next returns she is informed that, as her husband did not earn a pension, she cannot expect to receive any further assistance; that the authorities, in fact, possess no funds for the purpose, but that they are willing to give her a little employment which will entitle her to a monthly allowance, sufficient to save her from social shipwreck.

She generally catches at the straw, and seldom has leisure or calmness enough to discover that it is not even a straw, but a golden chain that drags her down to unfathomable depths.

She is then introduced into various families, visits semi-public halls and places of amusements, and forwards regular reports to the third section, and visits the department periodically to answer questions and take fresh orders.

RUSSIAN WHEAT SHIPMENTS.

The London Mark Lane Express says: From Russia large shipments of wheat continue to be made, the State railways reducing the inconvenience of certain ports being ice-blockaded to a minimum. The Government having to keep the railways running for postal, military, and diplomatic purposes, can afford to carry the grain at freights which would make the English farmer wonder. The stock of wheat remaining to export from Russia after the end of 1892, is not expected to exceed 8,000,000 quarters, but this is quite enough to cause apprehension as regards prices in Western Europe. Cheap silver and a rouble depressed 30 per cent. below par are great incentives to the Russian producer to exchange wheat for English, French, and Italian gold.