FIVE HUNDRED FETED.

BIRMINGHAM SANDWICHMEN ENTERTAINED.

PRACTICAL SYMPATHY FOR THE NEEDY.

The sandwichman is a peculiar product of civilisation.

What can be more ironical than to see a pale, lean, unshaved, cut-at-toe gutter-walker, slouching along under the weight of the sandwich boards, which tell the passers-by where to get a good lunch or see a new comedy?

But outside his boards the sandwichman is much as other men of his own level. So it would seem from the great gathering of those of that ilk in the Birmingham Town Hall last night. Three score of men and young men, and old-young men. There were those who had tried to give themselves an air of respectability by a wash and shave, and there were others who had evidently found any such preparation beyond them.

That 510 in the great, brightly-lit hall was a fraction of the flotsam and jetsam of humanity. All were sandwichmen. Some would that they were, for they were a part of the out-of-work army.

How and why were they assembled there?

Four years ago Mr. Archibald Fletcher conceived the idea of giving the sandwichmen of the city a tea and concert, and was not long in carrying the idea into execution. Two hundred men were fed in Bristol-street school. The next year the same thing happened, and last year 500 were treated in the Central Hall. On this occasion the number had so grown that a larger place was required, and the Lord Mayor this year let them have the Town Hall.

The tickets were distributed by Mr. Fletcher and the clergy and ministers and charitable organisations of the city. The proprietors of the various theatres and halls subscribed liberally, and many of the pantomime artists also gave donations. Members of Parliament for the city and many others also help Mr. Fletcher in his desire to give these unfortunates a glimpse of enjoyment.

This crowd thoroughly appreciate what is done for them, and if the sandwichmen are slow in the street they are surprisingly sharp when they get a plate of food in front of them, and they know a good song when they hear one. They were well looked after, for there was an army of seventy or eighty people tending to the wants of the inner man, and among those who amused them with song and music after were Mr. C. W. Perkins, Miss Ethel Lomax, Mr. Bernard Mills, Mr. George Fletcher, Miss E. Millard, Miss Susie Bird, Mr. Donald Harvey, Mr. Cuthbert Rose, Mr. Harold Jones, and the Cantor Glee Singers.

THE RECTOR'S CONGRATULATIONS.

The Rector of Birmingham (the Rev. Canon Denton Thompson), who smilingly presided, addressed the men. Not only had he to congratulate the guests upon their host, but the host upon his guests. The occasion afforded him the opportunity of expressing his admiration for the type of citizen represented by Mr. Fletcher, the citizen who lived not in pride and selfish isolation, but in noble and generous isolation, who lived not for himself but for others, and who worked for the good of the city.

Much as he thought of Birmingham—and no Birmingham man thought more of it—one of the best features of the city in his judgment was the number of influential men and women who devoted themselves and their goods to uplifting the down-trodden, to brightening the lives of the sorrowful, to strengthening the hands of the weak, and to rescuing the souls of the perishing.

The occasion also afforded him the opportunity of affirming his sympathy with the type of citizens represented in the guests. Some of them worked as sandwichmen, some that they might eat sandwiches, and others were out of work and were destitute. He had the deepest sympathy with those who were trying to make ends, and he hoped they would soon find work to do, and those who were working he hoped would do good work.

"Never lose hope in any way, never despair, but with clean hands, clean tongues, and clean hearts try day by day to do your daily duty, and if possible to rise more and more in the scale of workers," was the Rector's closing sentiment.

Then this telegram was despatched to the King:—"Five hundred sandwichmen and unemployed men assembled in the Town Hall, Birmingham, for annual dinner and entertainment, very respectfully tender heartfelt sympathy with your Majesty and her Majesty the Queen in sad bereavement, and sincere gratitude for her Majesty's great generosity towards unemployed."

Then the five hundred were given tobacco, and after cheering Mr. Fletcher and the Rector, went off to their lodging-houses in great glee.

COMMERCIAL EXCHANGE.

CANADA'S WANTS MAY BE SUPPLIED FROM BIRMINGHAM.

Every Saturday we publish an exclusive list of inquiries from Canadian merchants and manufacturers who are anxious to do business with this country. The information is supplied by Mr. P. B. Ball, the Dominion Government's Commercial Agent in the Midlands, whose address is Central House, New-street; telephone, 1562.

This week's list is as follows:—

A firm in Canada wishes to get in touch with buyers of chisel handles.

A Canadian firm is in a position to ship broom handles to buyers in the Midlands.

A Canadian firm would like to hear from Midland users of hammer handles.

A large firm in Canada would like to hear from handlers of cedar canoes, which they are in a position to ship to Great Britain.

A commission agent in Canada would like to hear from firms in a position to sell battledores and all other kindred novelties.

A commission agent in Canada would like to represent a large firm in the tobacco line.

A Canadian commission agent inquires for a good house requiring a representative in whiskies, etc.

LABOUR M.P.'S GRIEVOUS TRIALS.

Mr. W. C. Steadman, Labour M.P. for Central Finsbury, tells his life story in the current number of "Pearson's Weekly." The article is one of a unique series, in which the various members of the new Labour party tell the stories of their lives.

One of the first things I remember is being taken to the workhouse, says Mr. Steadman. Fortunately, I got no farther than the door.

It happened in this way. My father was a thirty-eight earning good wages, until the Crimean War and the slump in the shipping trade threw him out of work, and obliged him to join the Navy as a gunner.

I was sent up from Portsmouth, where we had gone temporarily, for I was born and brought up in East London, to the care of a relative, who was to receive a certain weekly sum for my keep. After a time, however, remittances stopped, and one morning, in a fit of anger, my relative took me to the "House," but relented on the doorstep.

The incident made a great impression upon my mind, and filled me with a lasting horror of war and the sufferings it causes to the innocent and helpless.

Later on my mother came up to London, and another vivid memory of my boyhood is of how cruelly hard she had to work. My father could only allow her a pound a month, and there were three of us to keep. She toiled late and early, but, despite her exertions, we suffered much, and were often hungry.

When I grew up and married, I remember I prayed to God that if I had children of my own they might not suffer as I had suffered, and one of the first convictions I formed when I arrived at a reasoning age was that God did not send children into the world to be wretched and unhappy. That in this great and wealthy country there should be half-starved, half-naked children, is to my mind a foul stain upon our national honour.

I had some schooling at a National school, but I learnt my most useful lessons in the school of adversity and hard work.

HAULED BY A LION.

SENSATIONAL INCIDENT AT A MUSIC-HALL.

The "turn" at the Canterbury Music Hall, London, by Herr Prinz's lions, in which two ladies enter the cage and remain there while the animals go through their tricks, resulted last night in an attack by a lion upon one of the ladies.

The "turn," which begins at about a quarter to eleven, was taking its usual course, when one of the beasts suddenly leaping upon the younger of the two ladies in the cage, and struck her to the ground.

The lion was at once driven off, but before the victim could be rescued she was badly hurt, and sustained serious flesh wounds.

The aid of Dr. Brooks, whose surgery is quite close to the Canterbury, was called in, and after the lady's arm—where the injuries were inflicted—had been surgically attended to, she was able to be taken home by cab to her residence in the Lambeth-road, accompanied by her friends.

Though suffering from wounds and shock the lady is, happily, progressing favourably, and no danger is apprehended.

The audience witnessed the whole of the incident; and no little sensation was created as the curtain was wrung down.

ALLEGED ABDUCTION.

SEQUEL TO A SCOTTISH DIVORCE ACTION.

A sensational case was heard at Dumfries Police Court, when Agnes Dawson, of Glasgow, who had been acting the part of a female detective in connection with the recent unsuccessful divorce proceedings brought by her employer, Mitchell Strauch, was charged with having stolen from the house of the wife, at Dumfries, a good wardrobe and four uncut rubies.

It appeared from the evidence that the prisoner, acting as detective for the relatives of the husband, obtained employment in the wife's house as a lodger. She shared the wife's bed, and took whatever opportunities offered to search the house for any letters or incriminating documents that could be used against the wife.

Witnesses proved that she had no intention of theft, but had been taking the watch and other things out of a box when Mrs. Mitchell suddenly came in, and she slipped them into her pocket in a hurry, and had had no chance to return them. She was found guilty, and a small fine was imposed.

Last night there was a further development, and it is alleged that simultaneously with the disappearance of the husband, who had come south as a witness on behalf of the female detective, his girl, whom the Divorce Court had given into the custody of the mother, disappeared.

The mother, suspecting that the abduction of her child had been carried out as she left school, gave information to the police, and then took the night train to Glasgow, with the intention of taking steps to prevent the conveyance of the child by boat to Tighnabruaich, where the husband lives.

MOROCCAN PRETENDER'S ARMY

CONTEMPTUOUS DISREGARD OF ALGECIRAS CONFERENCE.

The special correspondent of the Paris "Eclair" telegraphs an interview with the Moroccan pretender Rogesi. The pretender stated that he only believed in God, and ignored the conference. From what he knew of European diplomacy, the conference would come to no good. Germany was prepared to fight France.

He also stated that it was his intention to attack Saidi after the feast of El Kebir, which would take place in 4th or 5th March, about a month's time he would have an army of 30,000 infantry and 10,000 cavalry.

The correspondent adds that there are about 18,000 men in the Pretender's camp, but this is no real indication of the strength of his Pretendership, as, in the event of a holy war, 200 tribes would respond to his call, and furnish more than 100,000 combatants.

If the Pretender's troops are not sufficient in the use of modern arms they are very brave, and are held in hand by iron discipline. The Pretender has bought large quantities of arms and ammunition.

£70 A SPECK.

PROHIBITIVE PRICES ASKED FOR RADIUM.

The supply of radium has practically ceased, and the price of this wonderful substance has risen enormously. Professor

"We would very much like to obtain more for our experiments, but we cannot afford it," a consulting surgeon at a large hospital told an "Evening Despatch" representative yesterday. "The discovery of radium is so important and revolutionary that efforts are being made both in America and this country to obtain efficient radio-active substances from other sources than pitch-blende."

A physicist who has provided many institutions with radium of various qualities said that he was now unable to obtain any more from the great centre in Brunswick.

"It was from the Brunswick centre that Professor Giesel's pure preparation was obtained," he said. "There were, in fact, only two centres—Paris, where the discoverer's preparation, the Curie radium, was obtained, and Brunswick.

"The fact that the Austrian Government prohibited the export of radium is, of course, the reason of its present price.

"About three years ago it was possible to obtain the highly active radium at £5 for ten milligrammes, or one fifty thousandth part of a pound.

"Then the price crept up to £7, £11, £13, £35, and now a fair price for this mere speck of the element would be £70.

"The process of extracting these specks or radium from tons of ore is so costly and tedious that it only pays to extract it in its highest and most active form. In this form it is found only in Bohemia. Hence the present difficulty."

WARFARE ON TRUSTS.

U.S. PRESIDENT'S POLICY AND THE SENATE.

Senator Patterson's speech in support of the President's policy in reference to the Morocco Conference and Santo Domingo gives the current to the President's policy, five, perhaps six, Democrats are prepared to vote for ratification of the Santo Domingo treaty (states a Washington telegram).

They, with the united Republican vote, will constitute the necessary two-thirds. So much alarmed are the Democrat leaders in the Senate at these defections that they propose to summon a party caucus to make opposition to the treaty a test of Democ loyalty. But party discipline in the Senate is difficult to enforce. The Committee on Foreign Relations, which has once reported the treaty to the Senate and then, fearing defeat, reclaimed it, now expects to report it again, and hopes to obtain action at an early day.

Even Mr. Morgan, of Alabama, is likely to support the treaty. He is one of several Democratic Senators of great authority who, but for party reasons, would rejoice to support the President in his warfare on trusts, on rebates given by railways, and on the swollen power of corporations generally.

Nothing definite can yet be said concerning the prospect of a tariff war between Germany and the United States. Germany has relinquished the hope of an agreement. There is, perhaps, a real desire of agreement, but not yet on either side, so far as is known, that spirit of concession from which alone agreement can come.

The German Embassy has allowed one of its staff to put forth views and opinions which in form are his private opinions but in fact must represent what the Ambassador desires and what Berlin directs. Mr. Foot is not the man to despair, and his diplomatic resources are such that if he had not to deal both with Congress and Germany he would soon make a solution.

But the House and its Speaker are on all tariff questions all-powerful and disposed to use their power.

BLASTFURNACEMEN'S WAGES.

Ironworkers' wages having been advanced 2½ per cent., the wages of blastfurnacemen will be advanced 2½ per cent. after the next making-up day in February.

THE LADY AND THE BROOCH.

BOND-STREET JEWELLER'S BARGAIN WITH CUSTOMER.

(BY OUR PRIVATE WIRE.)

In the King's Bench Division to-day Mr. Justice Sutton had before him the adjourned case of Benson, Ltd., v. Singer, which was an action brought by J. W. Benson, Ltd., Bond-street, jewellers, against Adam Mortimer Singer, of Hove, to recover £280, the agreed price of a narcissus brooch. The defence was that the brooch was only bought subject to the approval of Mrs. Singer.

Ultimately a settlement was arrived at between parties, Mr. Bankes announcing that Mr. McCall and he had arranged that defendant pay £280 and return the brooch to plaintiffs, and they would allow him to select from the stock in their shop any article or articles marked up to £3500.

"WILD JOY OF LIVING."

WOMAN PRESCRIBES OPEN - AIR SLEEP.

"Sleep out of doors if you want to know the wild joy of living," was the advice given by Mrs. Blanche Martin, an apostle of outdoor life, to a New York audience, writes the New York correspondent of the "Evening Despatch."

"Have a little corner of doors in a corner of my piazza summer and winter for five years," she said, "and in that time I have never had a cold or even the early occasions it was twenty degrees below zero.

"I believe that it is a cure for nervous ness and many kinds of pulmonary troubles. From experience I know that a few hours spent in sleep out of doors is far more beneficial than a refreshing nap twice the time in a bedroom, even with the windows open.

"The buoyant feeling in the morning following a sleep out of doors is one that surpasses description.

"A tent properly constructed and let down when it rains will be sufficient guard against getting wet.

"I am strongly of advise any of you to begin sleeping out on a very cold night. Have plenty of warm bedding and good blankets, and you'll be comfortable on the coldest kind of nights.

"I would suggest for an outdoor sleeping room a second-hand covered wagon, where the cot can be placed in a sheltered nook; but if this is not possible, then fix up a room on the roof, with a tent, and have the sides ready to be let down in a storm."

INGENIOUS INVENTION.

NEW RIFLE WHICH MAY BENEFIT BIRMINGHAM TRADE.

An invention of much ingenuity which is about to be placed on the market promises to benefit the city Birmingham gun trade. That there is behind it a determination to make it a success is shown by the fact that special machinery for its construction, value over £21,000, has been placed in selected workshops.

The invention is a repeating magazine rifle, of which the inventor is Mr. John William Esser, who has been engaged in the gun-making trade in England and America for many years, and the rifle which it is proposed to exploit is claimed to have qualities and capabilities which have been possessed by no gun previously invented.

The new weapon has been turned out in Birmingham, at 42 and 44, New Summer-street, which is being rebuilt for the purpose of the making of the article.

The main objects achieved by this invention are to furnish a small arm which will be of three-quarter bore (.22 calibre 30in.), and complete with bayonet-holder and strap; holders, weights under 8lb.; it can be fired at the rate of 25 rounds, without being taken down from the shoulder, and this rate of firing is which more rapid than is possible with any military rifle in existence.

It is very simple in make and without complications, and can, therefore, be produced to compete favorably in price with any other rifle.

The magazine can be put out of action with the greatest facility at any moment, which renders it into an ordinary single shot rifle, and there is no possibility of accidental or premature explosion, which makes it a perfectly safe weapon for the user.

It is claimed that this gun enables the operator to fire more shots in one minute than can be fired in 24 minutes with the best known gun at present in use. The weapon will be introduced to the War Office with a view to the British Army having the first claim on it.

The arm is also intended for sporting and big game shooting, and shoots away with the necessity of a double-barrel, as three or four cartridges can be fired in rapid succession from the single barrel.

The inventor claims to have put 35 shots on a five-inch circle in 42½ seconds.

He has a range up to 2,000 yards. A representative of the "Evening Despatch" yesterday saw the gun tested. At 100 yards a bullet will pierce a 12-inch oak board, and also penetrate a ¼-inch iron-plate.

The rifle is being put on the market by the Esser-Barratt Repeating Arms Co., Ltd., which, according to the prospectus, has a capital of £75,000, and it has been patented in England, Belgium, and Spain, and similar rights have been applied for throughout Europe, in the United States, South Africa, Japan, Mexico, India, Canada, Australia, and Brazil.

RIOT IN A THEATRE.

EXCITED AUDIENCE STORM THE PLATFORM.

Great excitement prevailed last night at the Belfast Palace Theatre of Varieties when a hypnotic performance by Professor Mayer, the cowboy hypnotist. When he called for volunteers to be hypnotised the members of the audience disputed the genuineness of the performance, forced their way on the platform, and objected.

Abremsmayer's attendants attempted to persuade them to go back to their seats. The invaders, however, objected strenuously. Blows were exchanged, chairs were thrown, and a number of men who had got on the stage made a vicious rush at the hypnotist. But the manager fled from them, and with a few well-planted blows sent them reeling back into the orchestra seats, from which the musicians had fled.

The curtain was lowered, and the manager of the theatre made his appearance before it. He attempted to address the excited crowd, but was forced to retire. The fireproof curtain was then lowered, thus completely cutting off the stage from the rest of the house.

In the meantime a large force of police had been called for by telephone, and on their arrival they commenced to clear the theatre. Considerable damage has been done to the seats, while the decorations were also damaged.

The excited people began rushing wildly from the building, and in the melee which ensued a labourer named Henry Ginn was knocked down and so seriously injured that he had to be taken to the hospital. This morning his condition was critical.

Great commotion prevailed for some time outside the building, but ultimately the crowd was dispersed by the police.

NOTABLE BENEFIT AT THE GRAND.

It was an inspiriting evening at the Grand Theatre, last night.

Miss Maude Mortimer has been a winning personality in her first Birmingham appearance as a principal boy in pantomime, and she has made many friends, and gathered about her many admirers of her excellent work.

The desire to rally round her on the occasion of her benefit was strengthened by the knowledge that latterly the clouds had been indisposed. A warm enthusiasm pervaded a crowded audience, therefore, and the performance of "The Sleeping Beauty"—the run of which ends tonight in consequence of an engagement at Sunderland—went with an exceptional swing.

A number of extra turns were interpolated, these including contributions from Ada Reeve, George Lashwood, Harry Tate, and Gladys Mavius. Handsome bouquets of flowers and other gifts were passed across the footlights, and the curtain fell to enthusiastic applause as Miss Mortimer, the centre figure of the gay throng, bowed her greetings and thanks to the cheering audience.

SPECIAL LATE NEWS.

Important General and Sporting News received after going to press will be found below.

TO-DAY'S FOOTBALL

HALF-TIMES:—

F.A. CUP.—2ND ROUND.

VILLA 0, PLYMOUTH 0
STOKE 0, BIRMINGHAM 0
BRADFORD CITY 3, WOLVES 0
TOTTENHAM 1, READING 0
NEW BROMPTON 0, S'HAMPTON 0
BRENTFORD 2, LINCOLN CITY 0
NOTTS FOREST 2, FULHAM 0
ARSENAL 1, WATFORD 0
DERBY COUNTY 0, NEWCASTLE 0
MILLWALL 1, SHEFFIELD WED 0
LIVERPOOL 1, BARNSLEY 0
MANCHESTER U. 1, NORWICH 0
EVERTON 0, CHESTERFIELD 0
GAINSBORO 1, SUNDERLAND 0
SHEFF. U. 1, BLACKPOOL 0

THE LEAGUE.—Division I.

BLACKBURN R. 1, PRESTON 0

THE LEAGUE.—Division II.

Glossop 0, Stockport 0
Burnley 1, Leeds 0

BIRMINGHAM LEAGUE.

B'ham Res. 3, Stafford 0

OTHER MATCHES.

Oxford U. 4, Old Reptonians 0

FACTS FOR COUNTRY FOLKS.

OBTAINING THE BEST RESULTS FROM FRUIT TREES.

PRACTICAL HINTS FOR AMATEUR GARDENERS.

A correspondent requests that I will give some notes on stocks, having been much interested in my short accounts of different flowering annuals.

The group of plants known as stocks offers many desirable qualities. They are vigorous plants, have a good habit of growth, fragrant flowers in a variety of colours, the season of bloom extends over a considerable period, and they are adapted to a wide range of cultural conditions. They are suitable for bedding, edgings, pot culture, house or conservatory use, and for cutting. For bouquets and floral work generally they lend themselves admirably, especially the double varieties.

To secure early flowers, seeds should be sown under glass in March or April, and the young seedlings transplanted when an inch high into other pots or boxes, or into fine soil of a spent hotbed.

Advantage should be taken of a showery day towards the end of May to transfer the plants to the open ground. Prepare the soil, setting them about a foot apart each way. As with other plants, frequent transplantings during the early stage of growth, and occasions it was twenty degrees below zero.

"I believe that it is a cure for nervous ness and many kinds of pulmonary troubles. From experience I know that a few hours spent in sleep out of doors is far more beneficial than a refreshing nap twice the time in a bedroom, even with the windows open.

Under the sowing of seeds, care should be taken to have a good supply of well-rotted manure, and a fair amount of bone meal. Unless the soil is fairly rich, the flowers will be small and wanting in vigour. Stocks are greedy feeders, and should be well supplied with manure, and the soil should be well stirred and made fine. Stocks are subject to the attacks of the flea beetle, which may be checked by dusting the plants with powdered lime, or by dusting with powdered lime, or by dusting with powdered lime, or by dusting