

ences to signalling Mars, and by a somewhat curious coincidence it now appears that Nikola Tesla is preparing a new surprise for the scientific world on the same lines, being aided by trusted workmen sworn to secrecy, and is putting the finishing touches on an untried instrument for flashing signals to Mars. An American visitor reported that he found his way unannounced to the laboratory, and this is what he saw: 'From a stout beam in the centre of the rough-hewn ceiling hung three dazzling, pulsating clots of purple violet light. The room glowed with the warmth of color. The hue was indescribably brilliant. The three centres of light sent out wave after wave of a strange, unearthly, rich color—a hue that is not listed in the spectrum. Above and below the beams twisted long glass spirals, closely coiled—snakes of beating, violet flame. There was no snapping spark now and then to indicate the touch of electric current. The centres of light seemed more like the illumination from a half-opaque gas mantle, but beating like a pulse. Those who know say this violet light is wizard Tesla's new flash signal to the Martians. He will reveal it to the world soon.'

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The quasi-scientific American variety of story is well known, and sometimes the scientific illusion is well maintained. There is that story of the electrified cat, for example, which is excruciatingly funny. It will probably be found that Tesla is experimenting with a new illuminant from electricity, and that when his prying visitor concluded he was trying to communicate with the Martians he was simply experimenting with an improved Röntgen ray.

The Use of Firearms.

Easter fell unusually early this year, and probably because the opening of the shooting season did not take place until Tuesday last a good number were probably debarred from taking part in the slaughter which annually marks the day. Hence the number of accidents from firearms which have been reported is mercifully small. It would appear that familiarity with the handling of firearms is as dangerous as complete ignorance of their peculiarities. A young man named Raymond was killed in Southland last week by an accident most unaccountable in one who from his pursuits was probably acquainted with the use of firearms from his childhood. While getting through a wire fence he seems to have drawn the loaded rifle after him, muzzle first. The trigger must have caught on a loose piece of wire, and the consequent explosion resulted fatally. This method of handling guns is one that learners are specially warned against, and it is very likely that the victim himself must have been one of the loudest in condemnation of it. Yet a momentary inadvertence of the kind caused his own death. The perfection to which firearms are now brought greatly increases the danger. The old and now almost obsolete muzzle-loader was slow in its manipulation, but it was much safer, because greater deliberation was necessary. The condition of the weapon was also more easily discerned. There was the further consideration that the price was higher, and consequently firearms usually fell into skilled hands. But nowadays firearms are cheap, and consequently plentiful, and nearly all country youths, with many in the towns, own guns, and sometimes revolvers, and use them with all the confidence begotten of their inexperience.

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How far a person is justified in carrying a weapon for the purpose of self-defence is an ethical as well as legal question that is far from definitely settled. Some dozen years ago an emigrant who had been laying in an outfit for use in foreign lands included a revolver among his purchases. Just prior to his departure from London he was assailed by two footpads, both of whom he promptly shot dead. For this, though clearly acting in defence of his property, he was sentenced to 20 years' imprisonment, which, however, was afterwards reduced to 18 months after a storm of public indignation and an appeal to the Home Secretary. In Victoria, only a few weeks ago, a volunteer, returning from shooting practice, encountered a burglar flying from pursuit. He raised his rifle and shot the fugitive dead. But it transpired that he had no homicidal intention, and that he merely fired the rifle from his hip in order to cause the runaway to stop. These are instances of undesirable promptness. There are others in which what might be considered culpable neglect of defensive measures has been shown. A certain class of robbery under arms has been frequent in Australia of late. It is that of robbing managers who are conveying from the bank large sums in wages. Notwithstanding several recent cases, which must have been fresh in public memory, the manager of a mine near Bendigo permitted himself and a companion to be 'bailed up' and robbed of a considerable sum of money by two armed men. If he had gone armed and allowed it to be made known that he was so, it is highly probable that the robbers would have been deterred. This was an example of over confidence that might be recommended to Mr. Dooley as the basis of a new chapter on the use of firearms in Kentucky.

Labor and Drink.

One of the healthiest signs of the Labor movement in a lands is the insistence with which the Labor organs and leaders discountenance drinking. One of the most prominent Labor men in Britain recently said: 'If you workmen will take as keen an interest in politics as in feeding the publican, . . . then you will assuredly have a clearer apprehension of your political destinies.' In speaking thus the leader referred to was merely emphasising the fact that a man who wastes his time, health, and means in drinking is injuring his own value to himself, and consequently to the State. Liquor never yet made a more efficient workman nor a clearer thinker. On the contrary, it is alleged on good grounds that a man's efficiency as a machine is reduced by the use of liquor, and that the deterioration begins with the first glass. If we consider this question merely from the temporal point of view it might be urged that the habitual use of liquor is not only unnecessary but harmful, inasmuch as it lessens the amount and debases the quality of production. The result is injury to the producer, and when, as is frequently the case, the injury rebounds on the heads of the innocent, the evil effect is multiplied. The mental and moral injury also inflicted correspond in magnitude, but these are not insisted upon so strongly by labor leaders as the evil effects from a disciplinary point of view.

In Lighter Vein

(By 'QUIP.')

* Correspondence, newspaper cuttings, etc., intended for this department should be addressed 'QUIP,' N.Z. TABLET Office, Dunedin, and should reach this office on or before Monday morning.

'THERE's nothing like a little judicious levity.'

R. L. STEVENSON.

The Passing of the Flies.

The house flies are beginning to disappear. You may have noticed this yourself, but it is a pleasure to mention it. They have finished inspecting the bumps of the bald-headed men, and I am pleased to say that they find them up to the average. They go away happy in the thought that they have left their foot prints on every pat of butter and plate of jam they could see—where, perhaps, the foot of a fly had never trod before. They rejoice that they have had swimming tournaments in every vessel that contained enough milk to preclude the possibility of any 'fly' fly swimming with one leg on the bottom. They know that they have never found a hot and perspiring man that they didn't make hit himself ten times on the back of his neck with his open hand, and they are going away to that place where flies go to every year, with the small still voice of conscious rectitude simply singing comic songs inside their little vests. There, until next spring, each fly will rest in smug contentment, hugging himself around the neck with his two front legs or patting himself on the back with his two hind ones, just as he does when he lands on the collar of the man who kneels in front of you in church. It is some consolation to know the scientific fact that all these little creatures which are so 'aggravating' have their own little worries. A poet, writing of a first cousin by marriage of the fly, sawed this scientific fact into lengths and built this verse with the pieces.

'Big fleas have little fleas
Upon their backs to bite 'em;
And even these have smaller fleas
And so *ad infinitum*.'

'The Light Fantastic.'

When you see that the fly is passing away, you know that winter is nigh and you renovate your dancing-pumps. It has always seemed strange to me how it is that young men and women, who know for certain that they would drop dead in their tracks if they attempted to walk two miles to Mass on a Sunday, can worry through a whole evening's dances without even feeling tired. An expert tells us that an average waltz takes a dancer over something like three-quarters of a mile, and a square 'dawnce' makes him cover about half a mile. I don't know where the expert got his information. I fancy he tied a cyclometer or a theodolite to his leg and tried it himself. A girl, then, with a well-filled programme, travels thus in one evening: Twelve waltzes, nine miles; four polkas and two quadrilles at half a mile apiece, three miles; total, twelve miles. To this we should add, for the ladies, two miles, representing the intermission strolls and the trips to the dressing room to renovate the complexion and jab in some extra hair-pins. Grand total, fourteen miles. No wonder the Indian potentate in London asked why on earth the dancers didn't get their servants to do all that for them.