

LETTER FROM LONDON.

Two of the most interesting topics among Londoners this week are the railways and the weather. Politics, the East End distress and the baby farming horrors take a secondary position. Respecting the first named there can be no doubt of the thoroughness of the system of operating the metropolitan railways, except when frost and ice, and the invariable sleepiness of overworked employes, intervene. Then a crash is unavoidable, so quickly do trains follow each other.

Englishmen have long looked upon their railways as paragons of perfection in speed and safety, and have regarded those of America as a sort of public executioners. This idea was illustrated in a conversation which occurred a short time since. A number of natives were discussing the labor situation, and all agreed that over-population was the cause of the trouble. But how to change this was the question. Emigration bureaus had not been successful, and bade fair to be less effective in the future. An American (a resident of Logan, Utah, by the way, stood near and suggested that as a solution the Government grant a franchise to an American Company to build and operate a railway system in their own fashion. This proposition was accepted as a huge joke on Uncle Sam's railroad.

But jesting aside, Britons have a very serious question before them in the disastrous accidents that are happening, with serious loss of life. "Jumping the switch" is one cause of mishap. In a downtown station the other day one of these occurred in a way that is at all times liable in frosty weather. The switch rails here do not fit solidly end to end as in America, but a train is turned from one track to another by rails that taper down to a narrow point, and thus catch the wheel flanges. In the accident referred to, the ice prevented the switch rail from being drawn close up to its fellow, and the locomotive continued on the same track. The heavy engine wheels, however, had shaken the obstruction out, and the rails closing up, the passenger cars turned to the side track, while the locomotive crashed into a passenger train ahead, with fatal results.

Another source of accidents, and one that is likely to cause England great trouble in the near future, is the over-working of the men. When a disaster occurs, if the cause can be traced to an employe, he receives severe punishment. Recently it has developed that mistakes have been made by signalmen and others, because the long hours they have had to remain at work have exhausted them until they are incapacitated for a safe discharge of their duties. This was the cause of the Chalk Farm and a number of other fatal accidents. Tired and sleepy till they do not fully realize what they are doing, they have either misplaced switches (operated by wires from a signal house), or have failed to get all the signals properly set. A catastrophe is certain to result within five or ten minutes, so heavy is the traffic.

It is through this last feature that the strikes on the Scotch railways have received the support of public sympathy. They claim that fifteen to seventeen

hours work a day is too much for them, and "disqualifies them from being on the alert to an extent that is necessary under the circumstances. The directors, however, take the view that the machines they hire should never get out of order, at least till they are worn out and drop from the service. The managers don't complain of their business hours, and why should the drudges complain of theirs?

To talk of the weather may be tiresome, but one can hardly help it here. Besides, it brings changes. The Thames frozen over, people chilled to death, the water in pipes and sewers congealed to ice. Last week's record is "the coldest season since 1814." And yet the mercury did not get down to zero, Fahrenheit. It was at eight degrees above. But that was more piercing than twenty degrees below zero in the valley of the Great Salt Lake. The cold, clammy atmosphere penetrates inside and out, absorbing all heat and making one feel very much like an ice cream freezer might if it had the sense of feeling, with the frozen mass inside and the ice and coarse salt being turned and churned and rubbed against it outside. So everybody that hasn't to go out doesn't, unless there is a profusion of robes and shawls and rugs handy.

As the water pipes to the residences were frozen in many parts of the city, the municipal officers opened the pipes in the streets, and all these are temporary "spills"—half-inch pipes connecting with the mains—at which people are able to fill buckets for immediate use. While this is the case outside, in the houses the people cluster round the cheerful looking—not feeling—grates, and as one side is warmed turn the other to get the frost out. Added to all is the dense, heavy fog which seriously impedes traffic.

But there is one feature of the long-continued cold spell on which it would probably be not well to gaze at present, because of inability to change it; that is, the terrible sufferings of the tens of thousands of poor who have neither sufficient food, clothing, nor fuel, but must bear it on if they have strength enough to last or recuperate when warmer weather comes; if not, they must pass through the icy doors to the world beyond. Perhaps in many cases it is better thus than to live on in the sin and wretchedness of the poverty to which the avarice and passion of their fellow-beings have consigned them. These scenes of distress are not confined to the East End districts or to the haunts of "Jack the Ripper," but can be witnessed in every parish of the great metropolis, from Highgate to Herne Hill, from Blackwell to Hammersmith.

Reference to "the Ripper" reminds one of Whitechapel, which is pre-eminently the Jewish quarter, from Houndsditch to Sidney Street. There the sons and daughters of Judah engage in all manner of avocations, and hold their assemblies, sometimes in halls and sometimes on the streets, to give expression to their views on matters of interest to the Hebrew race. Speaking of Jews suggests the feeling that exists in the breasts of Londoners respecting the Czar of Russia, whose minions returned

unopened the Guildhall memorial for the amelioration of the condition of the Jews. The Londoner regards himself as the chief of Englishmen, and no one can blame him if he does not like the insolent attitude of Russia's ruling powers. The newspapers do not mince matters, and if the Russian autocrat would like the experience of being hooted at and hissed by the populace, he could get it quickly by trying a public entry into the city at the present time.

Last Sabbath witnessed a rather unusual event in this great city, in the fact that a "Mormon" missionary had been invited to deliver an address on the religious belief of the Latter-day Saints, before the South Place Ethical Society. The chapel is located just off Moorgate Street, near the Bank of England, and is a commodious building, well fitted up. There was a good attendance, and the Elder spoke for over an hour, giving a concise statement of the principles of the Gospel as revealed in this age, and showing by Scripture quotations its identity with the teachings of Christ. The Book of Mormon history and divine authority also received attention, and a short history of the Church was given; the speaker closing with a testimony of the Gospel restoration. Some of the audience expressed their surprise that the Latter-day Saints believed such doctrines; they thought the Bible was discarded. The purpose of the Ethical Society is to publish in a book the religious beliefs of various sects as stated by authorized representatives.

Before going to the lecture the Elders attended to the ordinance of baptism, by which five new members were initiated into the Church of Christ, in the London branch, on the second Sabbath of the new year, two having been baptized on the first Sabbath at the same place, and there are good prospects for more.

Probably one-half of the "merchants" of the metropolis sell their wares in the street. Of course all who can afford it have a "shop in the window" if they cannot fit up an entire establishment for the conducting of their business. But these street merchants have only so much stock as they can carry, and the thoroughfares are full of them, from the half starved and illy-clad child who shouts "Matches!" to the aged crone whose "Ginger beer and lemons!" causes a sensation much akin to that of drawing a file across a saw. Thus they make their living, and while some of them are such pests that one can scarce shake them off, yet it is evident from their famished appearance that they are generally very poor, and therefore they are borne with out of sympathy.

But one of the chief nuisances on the street are the "sandwich" men—not ham sandwiches, either. The boy who distributes dodgers, the man with an advertising transparency, the new-boys and the bootblacks, all combined cannot equal the "sandwich." The corporation restricts the men, but the evil will never be cured till advertisers are prohibited from sending out such guys. To make a "sandwich man" it is necessary to get two boards, each about two by three feet, ornament them with posters containing the