

The Ant.

"Go to the Ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways and be wise."—Solomon.



PUBLISHED EVERY THURSDAY.

JUNE 11, 1891.

THE ANT OFFICE,
POST OFFICE PLACK W., MELBOURNE

TERMS OF SUBSCRIPTION
(In Advance):

Per Annum	£0 15 0
Half Year	0 7 6
Quarter	0 3 9

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Literary communications to be addressed to the Editor.

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Comments

THE POLITICAL PROGRESSIVE LEAGUE.

THE Political labour party have published their programme, and an admirable and comprehensive programme it is. Let the working men of this country paste it in their hats, and stand by it at election time, and the ambitious designs of the monopolists will go much higher than a kite. "One man one vote" is the war whoop of the party just now. It will not do for the workers to let the politicians toy with this reform, and put it aside with cheerful but flattering assurances that it is a political dead bird. We have not got a ministry in which it is safe to repose too much childlike confidence. We can be sure of a democratic concession from them just when we get it, and when the electoral reform is consummated it will be early enough to take up the other ideas. It is essential that after the next general election there be in the House no members for bricks and mortar, small clubs, and corner blocks, but representatives of men only. Bluestone stores have no political privileges, no grievances, and no ambitions, and the man "with a stake in the country" has too long been afforded every means and opportunity of securing a second and a third stake, to the misfortune of his poor relation who has no stake but only the privilege of occupying a very small portion of the earth, and working hard for a bare living, if capital has not been "shocked" into refusing to provide

work for him. The privilege of going hungry and being insulted by the authorities if he grows about it. Reform of our absurd labor laws must follow to give the worker equal rights and liberties with his employer, and that the masters may not be enabled to further enrich themselves by deliberately robbing men of their meagre wages under the shield of the outrageously unjust Masters and Servants Act. The repudiation of the antiquated laws of dead kings brought out from England in the spirit along with the chain gauge, and incorporated in our laws amongst a job lot of enactments that nobody appears to have sorted over or to have taken the trouble to examine and understand, is another Democratic long-felt want. The capitalist party in Queensland have availed themselves of these fossil laws to uphold them in their war of oppression, and it is degrading to Australian manhood that men should be lying in our prisons for having offended against a law breathing the intolerant, brutal, ignorant and unscrupulous spirit of the tools and panderers of that bigamous, lustful and luxurious royal beast, George IV. The infusion of our liberal sentiments into the laws regarding Sabbath observance and the control of State institutions like the libraries, picture galleries, and museums, reasonable land and income taxes, and the instant stoppage of the pernicious system of land alienation, are all matters of great importance for the consideration of the people. The Progressive Political League has a magnificent field before it. The recent big labor struggles have been moral victories for the producers—they have taught them in which direction their power lies, and it remains for the League and that section of the press that is true to Democracy to keep the people alive to their duties and to guide the forces.

THE DIVORCE LAW IN OPERATION.

THE most respectable portion of the press and the clerical party that flatters the devil by ascribing all advanced legislation and liberal ideas to his agency are just now betraying unwonted jubilation over what they choose to regard as the pernicious effects of the Shiels' Divorce Bill. There has been a great pressure of applications for divorce on our courts of law of late, and this is accepted as proof positive that the new Act has paved the way for the weak and the wicked to shirk their conjugal responsibilities, and put asunder those whom the church has joined together at the usual rates for cash. The sensible view of the case is, that the many who were constrained for years to wear the chains of unhappy unions by the costliness and difficulty of obtaining redress under the absurd old law have availed themselves of the favorable opportunity offered by the Shiels measure to be rid of their galling bonds. The utter un-Godliness of enforcing the continuation of a union between two people who are to each other a source of the keenest misery has been pointed out to the goodie goodie contingent so often, that its reiteration becomes wearisome, but the portly and extremely self-satisfied gentlemen of that eminently conservative aggregation are never susceptible to new impressions—they are born in the faiths, religious, political, and social, in which they are determined to die, and neither justice nor reason can shift them a hair's breadth from those cherished native principles. The recent rush for divorces is simply a proof of the urgent need that existed for rational laws to put those asunder who have been united under a mistaken impression. The pet wail of the clerics was:—"For the love of heaven don't widen the opportunities for divorces! Consider the number of unhappy marriages that exist, and refrain, oh, brethren! from throwing open the gates of the law to a matrimonial revolution. These people are miserable now, let them be—they will get used to their misery, and perhaps come to like it in time."

the existing law is difficult to comprehend; the objection are nearly all based on false sentiments and ancient prejudices. The numbers of murders, and suicides, and lesser crimes, the untold misery, and the reckless iniquities, resulting from ill-assorted marriages, alone are enough to justify a much more liberal measure of divorce in the eyes of the great reasoning majority that does not permit the theological cranks and conservative fossils to blind them to the advantages of some measure of happiness in this life, whilst pointing out the glories of the life to come.

THAT MILITARY CRISIS.

THERE has been a military crisis at Ballarat.—The Third Regiment has displayed insubordination by metaphorically putting its finger to its nose at a cold and awing its officer, and implying that it would see him hanged first, and our martial grandees have assumed an air of consternation, and rushed about a great deal flourishing documents in an ominous way, and endeavouring to convey an impression that the Empire is in danger, and a spirit of irreverence for pale proud officers in glorious clothes is undermining our institutions and inducing early decay. It would seem that the Third Regiment, animated with a sentiment of manliness that is foreign to your model soldier, resented the domineering manner and extreme hauteur of an unpopular officer, and organised what was very like a regimental strike—they refused to parade when called upon, and furthermore upset all the traditions and created the wildest consternation by ridiculing the objectionable martinet. It is undeniable that the business of soldier making will never be a thorough success here when conducted on Old World lines. In Europe, the man who joins the ranks abandons his personality and becomes the slave of a hard and fast system of discipline, and a mere automaton, coming and going at the bidding of his superiors, who are invariably men of the so called higher classes, whose eminence is due to influence, privilege, and hard cash, and whose lofty contempt for the masses becomes simple tyranny when their social advantages are backed up by military powers. There it is the first principle of militarism that the utter subjection of the individual is the only means of controlling a regiment. That will not be found to wash here. In Victoria, joining the militia is a matter of choice; the young man joins because he thinks it is rather pleasant—disillusion him and lose him. The high and mighty warrior who tries to perpetuate those hoary, Imperial traditions and pose before our men as a martinet is half egotist, half humbug, and will get neither respect nor obedience from his regiment. The disposition to resent any extravagant assumption of superiority is strong in the Australian mind, and is bound to make itself felt when any ambitious and disingenuous officer tries to emulate the fearfully and wonderfully stern and proud commander of the cheap story book.

ST. VARLEY AGAIN.

That eccentric apostle, St. Varley, in his hunger for notoriety has struck another patch, and will be rewarded with a fourth spell of fleeting publicity. He has exploited our alums, our racing carnival, and Dr. L. L. Smith, and now Madame Sarah Bernhardt has incurred his pious indignation, and he is prancing violently on public platforms and elevated places, pointing out with breathless agitation and frantic gesticulation that eternal condemnation lurks in Madame's plays, and that the bald-headed party, the robust matron, the frosh maiden, and the glad young men who visit the Princess's, go to worship at the shrine of Flatan Rex, and possess their souls