

ARMCHAIR REFLECTIONS.

By THE DREAMER.

"They Wept like anything to see such quantities
of Sand."

I KNOW I am by way of being kind-hearted; whether I also look benevolent I cannot say, but there must be something in the composition of my physiognomy which points me out to the unscrupulous as fair prey, and I doubt not that I am frequently had. Tears copiously shed by either sex, especially if the shedder be very young or very old, is sufficient to touch me down for the price of the requisite by the instantaneous drop-shutter process.

By way of illustration, on Sunday night last I was at Liverpool Street Station, when I saw four poor little boys, dirty little boys they were too, all crying in silent chorus. On enquiry I found that one of them had lost his return ticket to Edmonton, and the other three, although they had their tickets all right were standing by their pal like little men, and helping with their share of briny tears, to call attention to the downfall of their comrade. My commercial mind quickly worked out the fact that the single fare to Edmonton could not be more than about sixpence, and that this poor dirty little boy being under twelve years of age, could be restored to his no doubt anxious parents, four poor little weeping hearts made happy, and one more good act placed to my credit, all for the small sum of three pence, and I was moving off, followed by the quartette of dirt and misery, when a porter touched me on the shoulder. "Excuse me, are you going to buy that boy a ticket? 'cause if so, don't. They play this game every Sunday; he's got his ticket all right, he wants the money."

I have told you all this, not to show what a nice man I am, but because before I write any more I want to impress it upon your mind that a fellow feeling makes us wondrous kind, and I have a feeling—a very fellow feeling for poor Col. Seely and his colleagues at the War Office: it seems to me that they have been imposed upon; they ought really to engage my porter to look after them. I have been looking over some back numbers (none but a "fool" writer would do that), and I find that I have sometimes said things not altogether complimentary about them (the colleagues I mean, not the back numbers), and I am sorry, and hold out the glad hand; we are brothers under the same banner, and the pass-word is—touch wood and whistle: and as a brother it is my duty to defend another brother, or brothers in adversity. It is all very well for you to laugh at the downfall of others, but place yourself in their position.

Suppose you had sat there as they may have done (when I say they, I mean the department as a department, and for years past) and had all sorts of "fool" inventions brought up before you; from a pneumatic shrapnel pumped up during low tide at Barking Creek, and warranted on bursting to kill every living thing within miles; to a patent collapsible Field Marshal's baton, to be carried in the knapsack of every private; which on being opened out is found to be a complete set for that old English game known as "Codem"; and all these fine things got sold to other countries, and all the people kept grumbling—well, there you are, one must buy something sometime, even as the little joke of the man in the street is sometimes "bought" by his trusting friend.

Mr. James Douglas Gray is a great inventor; everybody who knew him as Mr. McCallum Mhor would be

ready to testify to that. What Mr. Mhor can't invent isn't worth troubling about. He it was who first brought "motoring for the million" within reasonable distance of being an accomplished fact. In spite of the price of cars; in spite of the price of petrol; Mr. Mhor, working on his own system, could run a slap-up-to-date car at a monetary cost well within the reach of the thirty-shilling clerk; nothing but police traps worried him. To cut off the ignition of an aerial engine on the ground is easy enough—then why not in the air? True, Mr. Gray intended to work from the earth, but wireless has created many sensations in unexpected quarters; why not in this? Isn't it well known that a choking-coil placed even within feet of an arc light, will deflect the arc? Whether he intended to send up a choking coil by wireless, or how he intended to proceed is, of course, not known—they did not give the poor man time, and time is what he really wants, and plenty of it. Give him time, and I am sure he will come out all right at the end of it. At the present moment, if any of you happen to know of a deserving golf course in the neighbourhood of Salisbury whose bunkers need refilling I believe there is a nice box of sand to be had for the carting.

The Aerial Derby.

So the Aerial Derby is to take place after all: this is indeed good news. When I remember the tremendous amount of interest this event created last year amongst the people of Greater London, who by reason of the distance they live from an established aerodrome do not often get the chance of the sight of an aeroplane, I am assured that many thousands will be as pleased as I am at the news that the ban has been removed, or so modified as to permit of the event taking place. Last year, the country roads round about the whole course were simply packed with people, who had, in many instances travelled long distances to view the sight, and there is not much doubt that many then had their first sight of a machine actually in flight. I have never yet been able to see sufficient reason for the authorities prohibiting the race taking place at the time when it was intended that it should have been flown, but I don't profess to understand everything they do.

The idea of prohibited areas is all right in its way, if there were but a little reason with it in the matter of administration, and an exception on occasions such as these would but go to prove the rule. Well anyway, the race is going to take place after all, that is the main thing; and I must congratulate those who have stuck to it and fought and argued till they have been successful. The start and finish is again to be at Hendon, and I am pleased that the regulations have been so modified as to allow this to be. A race of this description is not organized without a deal of trouble and expense, and I hope that Hendon will have a good "gate" in return for their trouble, and for the fact that unless it could be flown from there it probably would not be flown at all. Luckily the postponement to September is not likely to make much difference to the entries, as it is not necessary to build special machines for this, as it is for the Circuit of Britain, which, owing to the delay and uncertainty as to whether it would really ever take place at all, has no doubt restricted the entries to four. I should like to see a fine day, plenty of machines and a tight finish; not forgetting tens of thousands of visitors.