

The Active Service Brigade in Sydney, a combination of cranks, more or less of Anarchistic ideas, is said to be the invention of Desmond, who was once well-known in New Zealand. Desmond—which his name isn't Desmond at all, at all—used to go about shearing on the Hawke's Bay stations and ran against Captain Russell on one occasion, getting a terrible licking. After that he was very prominent during the Te Kooti scare at Gisborne, and was accused by some of the Poverty Bay people of sending information to Te Kooti respecting the movements of the Armed Constabulary. He was pelted off a Gisborne platform about this time. Afterwards he appeared in Auckland where he ran a little red-hot republican "rag," which lasted just as long as the patience of its printer and then bust, busting Desmond at the same time. Just about then, too, Desmond was bowled out in "conveying" as original a set of Socialistic verses from an American author and passing himself off as their author. Finally, he turned up in Wellington and used to spout silly shrieky stuff about the wickedness of the gory capitalist and the virtues of the 'orny-anded, on the wharf on Sunday afternoons. It was a sad sight. Desmond would get a fair crowd together—people thought it was a dog-fight or a new sort of Salvation Army dodge, or something of that sort—and they'd stroll up in their Sunday clothes, fat and happy, and look on for a while in wonder at a redheaded man howling out something about "the poor down-trodden workers, my friends; these poor people ground down in misery under the iron-heel of the wicked merchants and bankers," or words to that effect. A few minutes of this sort of muck satisfied the average listener, and he would go on his way muttering "Come on, Joe, this 'aint good enough, he's a bit balmy, I reckon." Poor Desmond, he didn't catch on at all. And now he is in Sydney organizing the Active Service Brigade, and if he doesn't get shot—or five years—will probably wear out what small brain he has got left in pondering over his cranky schemes, and end as "found drowned" in the harbour. Poor devil!

The *Bulletin* of December 2nd, has as an article on New Zealand Cheap Money Schemes, of which, by the way, we are likely to hear a good deal next session. On the whole, the *Bulletin* approves of the scheme, but points out how a somewhat similar scheme—in bad hands nearly smashed up the finances of the Argentine Republic.

An Auckland paper gives an alleged portrait of Mrs. Yates, the now famous Mayor of Onehunga. She is a stern-faced woman, the sort of woman, to judge by her looks, to give "hubby particular Hades if he came home late from the lodge, my dear." Already, we hear the Onehunga females, who are not lady Mayors or Mayoresses—or whatever you like to call her—are simply dying with jealousy, and when they meet to sip their Souchong and wolf the innocent-looking but indigestion-resulting cake at their afternoon teas, the conversation has but one subject—the airs which the newly-elected one will put on when she has to receive the Governor, my dear. By the way, is there a Mister Yates? If so, how he *must* be enjoying life just now!

As an outcome of the "revelations of Dunedin immorality," recently raked up by two local parsons, and delivered by them to crowded houses—we beg pardon, crowded congregations—a Social Reform Association has been formed in the Southern City. The alleged "hobjecks" of the Society are to put down gambling, and the sale of liquor, and to promote social purity, but it needs no spirit of prophecy to foretell the fate of the society. A few unsexed females will go sniffing about the places where beer is sold at five bob a bottle, and will ferret out enough nastiness to float over for a month of Sundays. The male members will assist them in the godly work, and will do great things in the Social Gimlet line. As for putting down gambling, they can no more do that than they can put up the light of the sun. Social reform work—as regards the brothels—is best done by the Salvation Army, who do it earnestly, quietly, thoroughly, and well; but for a lot of smell-funguses to go trooping about the dirty places of the city more for the sake of self-glorification, and a great pretence at virtue, will do more harm than good. The female visitors who call on the "perfect lydies" will most probably get a bottle thrown at them, and the male visitors, alas, may be led astray.

It is *not* true that Dick Seddon has kicked up a row with the directors of the *New Zealand Times* Company for not having their new building put up on the co-operative system, nor is it true that every man on the job had to be guaranteed of the "right colour" before he made a start. Joking apart, the *Times* building is going up very quickly, and the reporters hope to be in their new sanctum before the end of February. Meanwhile they concoct their pars in Sharland's old buildings, amidst an ancient and potent smell of decayed pills and ancient assafœtida which is said by them to outrival any of the far-famed stinks of the *Times* building. Good old *New Zealand Times*, the shades of past generations of New Zealand pressmen ought to start from their Plutonian chambers, and be present when the new building is opened. Let us hope that with the new building, the old lady will brighten up a little, and give us something more lively and up-to-date in New Zealand morning journalism. Here's luck to her, any how!

Auckland *Observer* stands aghast at the audacity of FAIR PLAY saying that the Grey Grand Old Man "lays superfluous on the stage," but he does, for all that. Grey will do his old wheezes in the new Parliament as he did in the last, about the "unborn millions," and the "hundreds of thousands of acres of the lands this colony, Sir," being given away to "foreign syndicates," but he is an exploded volcano, as dead, politically, as Julius Cæsar. He may make a spasmodic feeble attempt to fasten the labour members on to his coat tails, but they have "sized him" up already for what he is, a benevolent old gentleman, who has done great things in the past but who is a political force no longer.

A. LAWSON,
94, CUBA STREET,
Wellington.

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