

WELLINGTON JOTTINGS.

(BY OUR PARLIAMENTARY SENTINEL.)

It is not often that a Lawn Tennis Club makes its appearance before the House of Representatives. When youth and beauty devote themselves to chasing the hours with flying feet within the chalk lines which mark the mysterious boundaries of lawn tennis courts, they are generally about as far as possible from wishing ever to come into contact with anything so hopelessly heavy as politics. Last week, however, a humble petition of the Picton Lawn Tennis Club came before a committee of the House.

The Pictonian petitioners, it appeared, had been for some years playing their little games upon a piece of land belonging to Her Majesty the Queen. They were allowed to do this on her grace, on certain conditions, with which, so it was alleged, they had not complied. Therefore an inexorable Minister of Lands had descended upon them, and caring nought for the prayers of youth and the tears of beauty had evicted them. It was a pitiful tale. But alas! the Petitions Committee was as hard-hearted as the Hon. John McKenzie. It cared nought for the sorrows of Pictonians, and curtly 'equalched' their petition.

A bouquet of flowers is almost as uncommon an apparition in Parliament as a lawn tennis club. I think I remember Sir John Hall proudly displaying one or two floral trophies last year, tokens of gratitude for his feats for Female Franchise. Last year, too, those Legislative Councillors, who supported the ladies on that great question, were decorated with white camellia button holes, sent them by enthusiastic feminine admirers. Not to be outdone the ladies, who did not want the Franchise, procured a basketful of red camellias and promptly employed them to adorn those senators who opposed the entry of women into politics. Thus for some days was the Legislative Council divided into parties of the White and the Red, as in the days of the Wars of the Roses. This week the Hon. Richard Seddon was the recipient of a tribute of gratitude from the ladies of the Wellington Telephone Exchange. It was something more than a button hole, being, in fact, a bouquet of the very largest size. As it was slowly brought in through a side door and carried across the floor of the Chamber during the progress of an exceedingly dull debate, it became the cynosure of every eye. A murmur of laughter swelled into a round of applause, as it was solemnly deposited in a large vase in front of the Premier. King Richard likes bouquets, and has—more power to him—no dislike to the ladies. With the broadest of smiles, therefore, he rose, and expanding the broadest of chests, informed the House in a resonant voice that it was a gift from the telephone ladies. The House treated the incident with befitting good-nature.

Not so that implacably Oppositionist organ, the *Evening Post*. Either the editor of that vigorously conducted journal must have been suffering from a bilious attack, or else his hatred for the Premier must have deprived him of any sense of humour that he ever had. Certain it is that a solemn and ponderously written article appeared in the *Post* the day after the bouquet incident, couched in terms of scorn and sarcasm withering enough to have blighted the petals of the fairest flowers in the bouquet. In the most serious and inexorably logical fashion the *Post* set itself to show that if the telephone ladies were to be permitted to express their approval of one public man, the next thing that might be expected would be that they would express their disapproval of someone else. Indeed, the article went on to hint at the horrible fate of some intrepid but unpopular politician, pelted with eggs, thrown by the fair hands of the telephone ladies. Why the writer did not go a step further and recall the sad fate of Orpheus, torn into fragments by the furious hands of the Mænads and Bacchantes, I hardly know? Such a classic allusion would have adorned his article and could not have made it more absurd. Meanwhile, the Editor of the *Post* has deprived Mr Flatman, M.H.K., of the proud position of being the slowest man in Wellington to see a joke. It was Mr Flatman, you will remember, who took so seriously the story that the Premier's boisterous speech on the Budget had actually cracked the plaster on the ceiling of the cellar over which he was standing when he spoke with such stentorian force. Good Mr Flatman actually paid the cellar a visit to ascertain the truth of this story, and on his return gravely assured a convulsed House that the plaster was entirely uninjured. Very earnestly did he deprecate the circulation of such improper and untruthful stories. 'Why, an elephant could not have cracked it, sir, much less the Hon. Premier!'

I cannot say that I am an enthusiastic believer in the entry of ladies into Parliament. Dr. Newman is. But then the little doctor, as his name would imply, has always a strong craving for the latest novelty. Yet, listening last night to the House plunging headlong into the mysteries of

the baking trade, and laying down the law with the most magnificent and dogmatic ignorance on the subject of tin-loaves, cottage-loaves, breakfast rolls, cakes, and confectionery, I was almost tempted to wish that one or two practical house-wives had been present on the floor of the House, to tell hon. members what was what. How the ladies in the Gallery—and they were there in strong force—must have chuckled to themselves as they listened to the husbands and fathers dilating upon crust and crumb, bread and bakera. Not that the discussion was confined to husbands and fathers by any means. Some of the bachelor members of the House were in evidence, and seemed to know all about it, or at any rate to think they did. Nearly everyone made a speech, and the discussion occupied several hours. The great, momentous, and tremendous question at issue was as to whether fancy bread was, or was not, to be sold by weight. Members for Auckland were of course to the fore. Mr Bolton exclaimed with Shakespeare: 'Tell me where is fancy bred?' and got no answer. Mr Crowther spread himself upon jam tarts and hot cross buns with a zest that showed that, old as he is, he has not forgotten the delights of boyhood. He saw in the Bill a fell purpose on the part of the Premier to suppress these delicacies. 'Hot cross buns were born before the Premier, and will live after he is dead,' said Mr Crowther, in that forcible if not exact language which enchants all listeners. Very impressive and indignant was the second member for Auckland, so much so that he must have exhausted himself; for I noticed when I left the gallery after midnight that he had fallen asleep in the arm-chair belonging to the Sergeant at-Arms, and was reposing there, with his white beard spread into the precise shape of a small ivory fan.

RHYMES FOR THE TIMES.

CASUAL LINES ON COLONIAL LIONS.

OUR VAGRANT VERSIFIER.

I.—THE RAILWAY FADDIST.

To MR SAMUEL VAILE: Dear Sir.—Here's wishing you success,
There's more than me would like to see your rippin' cheap express;
We'd like to take a daily jaunt along the iron track,
Or ramp the Misus and the kids to Morrinsville and back.

But, sir, I cannot understand those arbitrary blokes
Who keep a shovin' in your wheels unnecessary spokes,
For nothing could show fairer to a man of commonsense
Than to travel on the railroad at another chap's expense.

They say, sir, if you had your way the cunning cent. per cent.
Who owns the land outside the town would go and raise the rent;
And they ask you where the joke comes in in travelling at your ease,
Though it is done for nothin', through a land of absentees.

I do not hold with stuff like that, but, sir, I'd like to know
If you couldn't add a sandwich and a glass of beer or so;
It's precious dry upon the line, and when the thing got stale
You could boom it, take my tip, sir, with a glass of Hancock's ale.

And I hope, sir, you'll remember when you've got the railway through,
That the 'busses and the tramways need a sight o' mendin' too,
For once you've set us movin' 't would be cowardice to shirk,
Just because the man who pays the rates must stop at home and work.

So here's wishin' you success, sir, and I'd like you for to
That I'm with you while the lines is free as far as you may go.
We're Liberals, Sam, the pair of us, and shan't we just have scored,
When we've made the bloomin' country one big Charitable Board!

TIME'S UP.

Time's up for love and laughter;
We drained the banquet cup;
But now the dark comes after
And light's are out: Time's up!

O, lovers in sweet places,
With lips of songs and sigh;
Come forth with pallid faces,
And kiss your last good bye!

O, statesman, crowned and splendid,
The laurel leaves your brow—
Th' long debate is ended,
The halls are voiceless now.

Time's up for wooing, winning,
For doubt and dream and strife;
For sighing and for slinging—
For love, for hate, for life!

Time's up! The dial's mark is
On the last hour—complete;
Lies down there, where the dark is,
And dream that time was e'er!

FRANK L. STANTON.

DOMESTIC ROWS.

VERY often domestic rows are caused by one member only. In all large households is sure to be found one uneasy temper—one cantankerous, cross-grained disposition—one spiteful tongue and as malevolent a heart; and with this element of strife ever at hand peace and happiness are non-existent. The caldron is always bubbling—to boil over on the slightest provocation. Those airy trifles, which no one of a perfectly sane mind cares two straws about, or thinks of a second after they have been blown by the wind across his face—those airy trifles are to these ill-conditioned creatures causes of quarrel for which blood itself might be shed, and worthily. They fly 'if touched ever so lightly—' fly 'as the seed of the pelitory along the wall when touched by a pin—as those queer bits of glass, Prince Rupert's drops, when the tip of the shank is broken off. They are in perpetual hot water, and that caldron is always at boiling point. And when they are domestic rows abound and domestic peace is not to be found. How can there be peace when there is this incessant travesty of facts and exaggeration of words? That wholesome art of Give and Take does not exist with them, and they know nothing of that sweet surrender of self by which alone home happiness is secured. It is always, on the contrary, themselves—themselves—themselves; their fine feelings which have been outraged—their interests that have been neglected or haply assailed—their rights have been disregarded. It is one long litany of Self on which they found the war-cry of retaliation.

Love, politics, religion, and the choice of a profession desired by the boy and disliked by the parents—those are the graver causes of those domestic rows which banish peace and attract sorrow. Our girl who will marry that Undesirable—our boy who makes haste to rush into responsibilities he cannot rightly fulfil when he has undertaken them: what troubles spring up round these events, thick as nettles round the base of a broken and desecrated statue. And then that matter of religion—the fanatic who affronts his father's faith by going to the diametrically opposite—the agnostic who derides his mother's religion by which she has been supported in all her trials. Can we wonder if, with this burning coal beneath, the domestic caldron boils over? As little as with the congenial question of politics where the younger members of the family go one way, while the head of the house and the traditions of the past all go the other. These rows are fierce indeed when discussion begins and passions run high. They are often as grave as they are fierce, as more than one disinherited recalcitrant knows when that paternal will is read, and the bitterness of the living row translates itself into the irremediable vengeance of the dead parent. It would have been better, perhaps, all things considered, if young Hasty had held his tongue, and kept the peace, and not thought it incumbent on him to try and convert that dear parental fossil who had lived for all his life in one mental groove, and found it impossible to make a vault over into another. Had he done so there would have been fewer rows and a bigger legacy—less strife and more solid satisfaction.

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