

WELLINGTONIA.

CHIT-CHAT FROM THE EMPIRE CITY.

(BY OUR WELLINGTON BENTINEL.)

FAREWELL to the Session! at last it is ended, and Mr Seddon and his colleagues have reached the asylum which a Parliamentary joke of obscure origin has christened 'Chicago.' I believe this joke originated some ten years ago, and was made at the expense of the Stout-Vogel Ministry. Though its meaning has been explained to me several times, I have either forgotten, or never could grasp it, but be the jest good or bad, it has added an expression to our political vocabulary, and, so long as the New Zealand Parliament lasts, 'Chicago' will probably be the name given to that haven of rest which Ministers are supposed to reach at the end of the Session. By the bye, how few political phrases there are, coined and current in New Zealand public life, as compared with the ample slang terminology of American politics. I can only recall four or five. Sir George Grey was, of course, the author of the famous 'unborn millions'; and of the complimentary 'my talented young friend.' Sir Harry Atkinson was the parent of 'political rest.' It was the Hon. Mr Ollivier, I think, who once cautiously promised concerning some request that he would 'keep it steadily in view.' Mr Ballance brought into proverbial use the words 'men of the right colour.' The Minister of Education is, of course, responsible for 'Social Pest.' So long as Sir Harry Atkinson lived, the words 'hoop nailed boots' were in daily use amongst his enemies; but one seldom, or never hears them now. On the whole our New Zealand political vocabulary seems to me to be as sadly wanting in copiousness and contour as in popularity. New Zealand political partisans do not hurl at each other such picturesque and vivid terms as 'Mugwump,' 'Copper-head,' 'Stalwart,' and so forth. In this respect we certainly lack the felicitous inventiveness of the Yankee mud-slinger.

Some of the Auckland members have had to prolong their stay in the South two or three days, through the inability of the Government Printing Office to strike off, on Tuesday night, those mysterious but doubtless all important documents to which His Excellency the Governor has to append his vice regal signature, before Parliament can be legally sent about its business. The result was that after waiting till nearly midnight, the degusted M.H.R.'s, found that their release had to be postponed till noon on the following day. The fault did not lie with His Excellency this time, but with the printing office. Far different was it on a certain occasion in bygone years, when both Houses of Parliament were kept kicking their heels about the lobbies, because Her Majesty's Representative of that date chose to betake himself in the last hours of the Session to a secluded valley to fish for trout. Great was the confusion and irritation caused thereby. The only way to cut the knot was to turn one of the Minister's secretaries into a Queen's messenger, and despatch him at full gallop on a good horse to get the Governor's signature. His Excellency had to lay down his fishing rod and sign the papers, and the temporary Queen's messenger, whose horse was bespattered with mud and sweat, got safely back to Wellington, having done some 25 miles of posting in what he claimed to be the quickest time on record.

Mr Watson, the new President of the Bank of New Zealand, is now settled here, having taken up his quarters for the present at the Wellington Club. Report says of him that he has not only a thorough grip of banking business, but is a man possessed of that highly necessary part of a banker's anatomy—a good backbone. Also a willingness to stiffen the said vertebrae when required. While perfectly willing to believe that Mr Watson possesses as much firmness of character and resolution as the best friends of the Bank of New Zealand could wish, I am bound to say that at first sight he does not strike one as a particularly merciless or terrific personage. For the benefit of those of your readers who have not seen the new President I may say that he strikes me as bearing rather a strong likeness to Lord Oslow, though somewhat more strongly built, and less obtrusively bald than that noble lord. I daresay, however, that like Bret Harte's Jack Hamlyn and many other famous characters, both of fiction and real life, Mr Watson's quiet and rather mild manner conceals an adequate amount of determination and fighting power.

The session concluded, as usual, with a mock Parliament. But though some of the jokes were not altogether bad, there was nothing overpoweringly brilliant. Most of the fun turned upon travesties of Parliamentary rules or little personal points, or peculiarities with plenty of meaning in them for the M.H.R. concerned, but not much significance for the outside public. For instance, a statement made as a burlesque Ministerial announcement, to the effect that the Honourable Sir Robert Stout had been prevailed upon to put an end to a certain difficult position by accepting the office of Sergeant at Arms, though laughable enough to Honourable members, who have listened hour after hour to Sir Robert thundering in denunciation

of the Fraser appointment, would seem pointless enough to any but *habitues* of the House of Reps. Perhaps the best joke of the evening was perpetrated by Mr Hall-Jones, who took up Mr Collins very neatly when the latter solemnly gave notice that he would introduce a Lunacy Act. Mr Hall Jones promptly raised a point of order as to whether an Hon. member could introduce a Bill in which he was personally interested. The mock Speaker, of course, sustained the point, and Mr Collins collapsed. One of the best mock Parliaments I ever saw was held in England by one of the University Debating Unions. On that occasion one of the members persisted in walking in and sitting down in his seat, while holding an open umbrella over his head. A point of order raised as to whether a member could sit in Parliament with an umbrella over his head instead of with his hat on was raised, and debated with a wonderful deal of sprit and fun on both sides.

With the session the Wellington season comes to an end. As I have before told you, it has been rather a bright and gay time here than otherwise. Wellington people still show a good deal of hospitality while Parliament is sitting, though the same reason does not exist for entertaining nowadays as once upon a time. Twenty years ago, before King Demos had come to the throne and placed the crown upon his royal brow, most of the members of both Houses of Parliament either belonged to what is called 'society,' or at any rate were anxious to do so. In these democratic days three-fourths of the Lower House and some members of the Council as well, are so far from being society men that they would be horrified at the bare idea of such a thing. I don't say that they are any the worse or any the better on this account, I merely note the change which has come over the *personnel* of our Parliament. One of the results of it is certainly good. It used to be alleged in old days that doubtful members were often captured by social attentions paid to them or—more effectual means still—to their wives. Ministers were accused of keeping themselves in office by balls and dinner parties. In particular it used to be said of Sir Julius Vogel that his most persuasive arguments were addressed not to the brains of wavering members but to their stomachs. I daresay it was true that Lady Vogel's tact and success as a hostess were politically valuable to her husband. These were the reasons why the brutal nickname of the 'Casino' was applied to the Ministerial residence in the Tinakori Road. Now 'The Casino' stands empty and desolate. The Ministerial house in Molesworth-street is in the like dismal case; the two other residences are let to private tenants. Two Ministers live during the session in a hotel, three more in lodgings, two more at a club. So utterly have the champagne days of New Zealand's short boom passed away.

LOOSE-LIPPED FOLK.

THE PEOPLE WHO MUST AND WILL TALK

BY MRS LYNN LYNTON.

THEIR power of honourable reticence is on a par with that of a sieve to carry water from the well to the house. Whatever they hear they retail to the next comer, and their promises of secrecy are as likely to hold as one of Michael Scott's ropes of sand. Even when the confidence tells against themselves, they must make it under pain of worse to follow; as, when a man betrays his married mistress, with an angry husband, the divorce court, and exemplary damages to follow—when a woman betrays herself, and gives to her friend to keep for her the story of her own dishonouring affair. The secrets of others confided to them are safe no longer than it takes a piece of touchwood to burn. Within the four walls they have vowed the fidelity of silence to the grave. When the street-door has closed behind them, the thing they have promised to keep buried in their heart flutters to their lips and escapes to the ears of the first friend they meet. Like that hole which money burns in a spendthrift's pocket,

SO DOES A CONFIDENCE BURN THE TONGUE OF THE LOOSE-LIPPED.

Not that they are ill-natured, as a class distinction accounting for, and the reason why. They are often the best-hearted people in the world—genial, generous, sympathetic, and all the rest of it. But they are hopelessly incontinent of speech; and their generosity leads them to share and share alike with all the world indiscriminately that dangerous bit of knowledge just confided to them.

Most people who know anything of the best rules of society and how to get along in life with least friction to

themselves and least damage to others, observe that imperative law of good-breeding as well as of right feeling, forbearing to repeat conversations, even without the presence of a promise—giving no voice to private suspicions—making public no fortuitous discoveries—and, above all, refraining from passing on scandalous stories about people unknown;—stories impossible to verify and more likely to be false than true. They will not run off to make a present of all you have been saying, to Tom, Dick, and Harry—lamenting your 'dangerous opinions'—criticising your 'queer notions'—scattering your intellectual confidences as so many members of a slaughtered personality, no two of which join to make a coherent whole. They observe that unwritten law, and hold to the 'calm sough.' Bas

THE LOOSE LIPPED FOLK CAN KEEP NOTHING TO THEMSELVES.

What they see they detail, what they hear they repeat; and in their disregard for all confidential sacredness in talk they go far beyond the traditional tapper.

It is they who set the snowball rolling, and once set rolling, that snowball of gossip increases daily and hourly. Accretions of suspicion, excrecences of exaggeration, distort the original nucleus of what was perhaps an insignificant little fact into a monstrous formation. The game of 'Kassian Scandal' is repeated in grave and tragic earnest, and, by the mindless chatter of the loose lipped, the old dogma is proved wrong, for something is made out of nothing. In the ear of Dionysius at Syracuse, the tearing of a piece of paper reverberates like thunder. Very few people have

THAT ABSOLUTE PROBITY OF SILENCE

which will bear any kind of strain and come triumphant out of any kind of ordeal. Unassailable by fear many yield to favour, and give to love the infraction of confidence they deny to authority. Thus one they love comes into a different category from the rest of the world. To share with a second self is not breaking faith with a confidant. Even Horace himself, erasewise so strict and strong on the need of keeping sacred all the secrets confided to one's ear, makes an exception in the case of the friend, with whom to share is not to divulge. In like manner, many men and most women think themselves free to pass on confidences—the one to the wife, the other to the husband. And this with a perfectly clear conscience will certain worthy folk do, who would rather pierce their tongues with a bodkin than basely betray the secret confided to them. With love is no baseness; and with love as the solvent, secrecy may honourably melt as wax in the purifying flame. This is one reason why it would never be safe to trust women with political secrets dangerous to impart to husbands or lovers. They would carry them safely enough against foes or strangers; but she would be a rare exception out of whom the lover could not coax or kiss the pass word on which depended the safety of the camp! For the matter of that, indeed, some men are no stronger to resist the blandishment of a mistress than is the average woman with her lover. Statecraft understands this—has always understood it—and practises to-day what it practised thousands of years ago. Those keen and facile *mauricières* exist now in London as they existed in Paris in Fouché's time; and if the secret history of certain concessions and unpatriotic truckings; to foreign Powers could be written, it would be found to reside in the fine eyes of a clever and unscrupulous monsetrap—with a susceptible Minister frisking around and finally caught and held. And when caught, and when held, the good of an alien and inimical country is squeezed out of him, and the interests of his own lie like dead flies on the floor.

It is curious how TALKING ON A THING SOMETIMES SEEMS TO EXHAUST ITS VITALITY.

Sometimes, of course, talking out a thought helps it better moulding; and the analogy of the flint and the steel holds good for the striking out of sparks and conversations. But more often, to detail the plan of a book—to discuss the characters and incidents it is intended to describe—drains the brain of its creative faculty, and speech remains the only vehicle of the idea. Had we kept silent, imitating Nature in this dumb shaping of our thought—letting it silently grow from thought to image, and then striking that image into the crystallization of words—had we done this we should have achieved a success. Carrying water in a sieve we let it all run through, and the tangible beauty of crystallization was lost for ever. No wise like artist talks of his intended work. No capable projector confides the details of his scheme while yet those details are incomplete and the scheme itself is not assured.

THE LOOSE-LIPPED FOLK WHO TALK BIG OF THEIR PLANS AND INTENTIONS ARE THE FAILURES

who never accomplish, building, as they do, all their castles in the air and fashioning the caryatides of their temple out of clouds. In a word, the loose-lipped are both dangerous folk for others to know and unsatisfactory in their own lives from end to end. However good-natured they may be they are gossips and scandal mongers; and, however noble in other things, like Daniel of the Crossways they will betray the most important secret without turning a hair or suffering one pang of conscience. To themselves they are traitors, and of their own interests the worst betrayers. Wherefore he is wisest who gives them the widest berth and who has least social 'truck' with them anyhow.—St. James' Budget.

