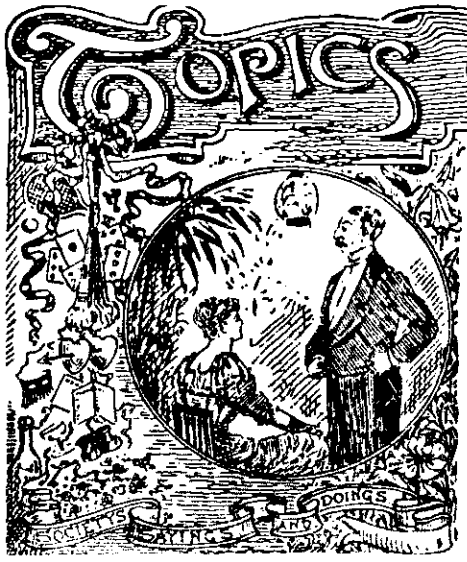

THE mining fever has now spread fairly through the colony, and in Auckland, at any rate, each succeeding day only seems to add to the excitement. Land is being pegged out, and Companies are being 'promoted' and floated in the meanest fashion—a fashion which will in a month or so seem as lunatic and as inexplicable as the South Sea boom seems to us now. There can be no doubt that there are numerous valuable properties on the market, and numerous speculations which hold out reasonable prospects of success. But, and it is a very big 'but' indeed, these are as the single grain of corn in the huge and ever increasing heap of rubbish. Three quarters of the claims now being floated are rank and absolute 'duffers.' What will be the end of the present wild and unreasoning rush it is impossible to say. On more than one occasion during the past week it has been almost impossible to get into the Exchange. On Friday last a man dropped down in a fit just at the entrance, and almost immediately expired. The occurence created but the most momentary interest. People rushed away from the price lists for a moment, but returned to them with something of impatience at having wasted time over such a trifle as death.

IN the meantime the tradesman is feeling one of the places where the shoe will pinch very badly by and bye. His customers, even those who are usually most regular, put him off week after week, and there can be but little doubt it will be he who will have to suffer when the bottom drops out of the wild cat boom. At present absolutely everyone appears to be making money. One never comes across a man who confesses to having lost any, and the mystery of mysteries is to find where the money is coming from. The end of the 'promoting' mania cannot be far off. Indeed, it must be the beginning of the end now. There cannot be much more ready money left, and the English capital, on which all hopes are built, cannot affect this branch of the business for some considerable time. There is, by the way, altogether too much reliance placed on this much-talked-of English capital. 'To be floated on the London market' is appended to half the wild cat prospectuses now crowding the advertising columns of the paper. London will not, and cannot, take mines at the rate we are sending them Home, and moreover, save in one or two cases, where a clever city gang are sufficiently subsidised, London will not be satisfied without more *proofs* of the existence of reefs and gold than the majority of the properties sent Home will be able to show.

ONE reads in one of the recently-arrived London weeklies that the latest invention is a patent American door-nob which renders a latch-key superfluous. It is after the fashion of a certain combination padlock very popular when the writer was a boy—a lock of cylindrical shape with numerous letters on revolving cylinders, the lock opening only on the formation of some set word, usually, by the way, a most absurd one. The new door-nob is fashioned in like manner. It is set in the morning to a certain combination of letters, and cannot possibly be opened until that combination of letters is produced by the person desiring an entrance. The idea is ingenious enough, but as is pointed out by one critic, it will never become popular until the Prohibitionists have gained the day. To insert the latch key in the door after dinner—at least after dining not wisely but too well, has always (according to the comic papers) proved a stumbling-block to the convivally inclined.

BUT fancy a man not entirely competent to say 'truly rural' endeavouring to set up a word combination. As the paragraphist who drew my attention to the matter remarks, 'Until Local Option, at all events, has become law there will be a little difficulty with some people about remembering a combination of figures after dinner. When a prudent man gets into a growler he looks up at its number with the intention of recollecting it, but when he gets out without the bag he has left on the seat, he finds in nine cases out of ten that his executor Memory has refused to act; he knows that there were five figures, and that there was a two and a four among them, but that is all. If he fails in this, how much more likely is he to fail in recollecting a number which for safety's sake must be continually changed! He is not the only person in the house, and everyone else in it must possess the secret, and it is ten to one that one of them discloses it. It must therefore be like a watchword, continually being altered. Think of a gentleman in evening clothes in a heavy snowstorm turning the door-knob a hundred thousand times before he obtains the right combination! Most of us, as children, have possessed a "letter lock" to our money-box, and found it an indissoluble bar to expenditure; but a money-box can be broken open and a front door cannot.'

A SHAM viscount has been sentenced to penal servitude for bigamy of a very complicated character; he found it possible in a Christian country to make himself the husband of eleven wives. This is (says Mr James Payn in his weekly notes for the *News*) a 'record,' and beyond doubt owing to his assumed title. Under these circumstances, it seems essential for those who are for ending the House of Lords to oppose themselves to female suffrage. There are many males, and even Radical males, who 'dearly love a lord,' but their love is 'as moonlight unto sunlight and as water unto wine' compared with the adoration of the female for the same object. There is, of course, a leaven of patriotic women who despise the gaud and tinsel of a title, but they are not typical of the sex like those eleven who wanted to be viscountesses. A male recipient of a Birthday honour will never admit he cares about it; he says, 'A title is nothing to me, but my wife is very pleased.' When we reply, 'Just so,' we refer to the latter half of his statement. We have little doubt that he is pleased too, but we are sure his wife is. Among the lower middle class this feeling amounts to idolatry. A nephew who knew of this weakness in an aunt from whom he had expectations very nearly lost them in consequence of it. She was a little deaf, and when he put her into the London express at Swindon he whispered in her ear, with what she thought malicious exultation, 'You have got a maniac in the carriage with you.' This person was the only passenger, and all the way to the metropolis she suffered tortures of apprehension. He committed no acts of eccentricity, but she credited him with half a dozen. At Paddington she fell almost fainting into her sister's arms, and with many sobs described what misery that wicked Tom had caused her. 'The idea of my being shut up with a maniac for an hour and a half; it has seemed a year!' 'But, my dear sister, I know the gentleman who got out of your carriage to-night; it was Sir William Wooton. Tom must have said "a baronet," not "a maniac."' 'Then I wish he wouldn't mumble so,' said the aggrieved lady. She had lost a chance of ingratiating herself with a member of the aristocracy, and was almost as angry with her nephew as she had been before.

PARLIAMENT have formally recognised the services rendered by Sir George Grey to the colony. This is satisfactory, and the aged statesman will doubtless feel deeply gratified by the reports of the numerous complimentary speeches made on the occasion by men of all shades of political opinion. But it seems to me the House might go a little further. Sir George was not merely a great political leader in this colony; he was an autocrat, a statesman—our only real statesman—a diplomatist and a courtier. As was remarked by one of the speakers—Captain Russell, if memory serves—Sir George played in his time an extraordinary number of parts. His versatility and adaptiveness as a politician is only excelled by that of the great man whom he so closely resembles—Mr W. E. Gladstone. Recognition of the talents and services of such a man should take a more tangible form than mere words. There should be a statue, or at least an oil painting, of Sir George placed in the lobby of the House, and the cost should be defrayed by the colony. Auckland, one is glad to see, intends to render honour where honour is due. It is most earnestly to be desired that subscriptions towards the proposed statue—to be erected in Albert Park, one hopes—will be numerous and substantial. The Continental custom of erecting statues in public streets and squares to men who in peace or war have served the commonwealth has never been sufficiently followed in England or her colonies. Of late years, however, the usefulness as well as the justice of such recognition has been increasingly recognised.

NOTHING is more stimulating to ambition, nothing more encouraging to young men, the material from which our leaders and great men must be drawn, than national and official recognition of services rendered, and these services can be in no way more fittingly recognized than by the erection of a statue in a place where it may be seen by all sorts and conditions of men in the midst of their struggles in business, and in the stress of everyday life. It is, then, to be hoped that not only will Auckland have its statue of the great statesman who has left us, but that there will be voted by Parliament a sum sufficient to place in the lobby either another statue, or at least a bust or an oil painting by a competent artist.

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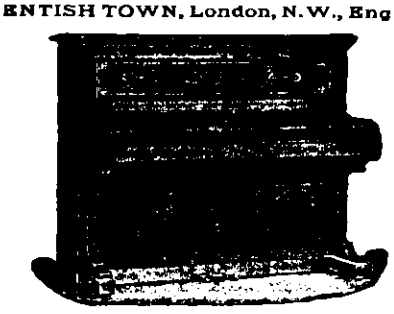

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