

TOPICS OF THE WEEK.

MUNICIPAL elections are in the air, and the men who would be kings over their own little community are to the front. It is said you can distinguish a man who aims at Mayoral honours at a glance. He wears a self-conscious air as if the shadow of the civic crown was already on his forehead; and if there are two aspirants for the office, in addition to the self-conscious air there is a strained conciliatory look in their eyes and a fixed smile on their lips that is painful. They appear to walk the streets in perpetual fear of not having been sufficiently affable to Tom, of having neglected Dick's nod in a moment of abstraction, or of having omitted to ask after Harry's grand uncle. I have heard of a short-sighted candidate who made it a point of bowing to everything over three feet high he met in the street and saluting it with a most expansive smile. This excessive desire to please actually lost the poor man the honour he coveted, for when it got noised abroad that he had been seen making himself agreeable to pillar boxes and St. Bernards, the citizens decided they could not put a lunatic, however affable, in the Mayoral chair. Short-sighted men should be careful and confine themselves to discovering Chattertons and John Stuart Mills among the families they visit in quest of suffrages. It is an old Parliamentary dodge, but it never fails, for kind nature has ordained it—with no thought for the Parliamentarian perhaps—that every goose or gander of a parent should think their offspring swans. As to whether the game is worth the candle we must leave the candidates themselves to judge. You and I, gentle reader, might not think it so, but then no one has ever asked us to stand. We might probably take a totally different view of the honour were it offered to us.

IT is well-known that a very small matter may decide a candidate's fate at a general election, and it is no less remarkable on how very slight a point the winning of a mayoral seat may hang. We are told that at Hamilton, that thriving town of the Waikato, the question of who is to be the mayor rests on a matter that may to some appear to be of a little moment as that which gave rise to the famous controversy between the Big Endians and the Little Endians. It appears that the town is divided on the question of cattle's rights. A little while back we used to hear of nothing but women's rights, but they have apparently got them in Hamilton now, or they would never bother about cattle. Of course no one denies that cattle have rights, and that these should be respected, but when it comes to a Mayoral election hinging on them it seems carrying the thing a little too far. The 'rights' claimed for the bovines in this instance is the permission to perambulate the streets day and night. This is what the big Endians want. The little Endians, on the other hand, think it quite sufficient that the animals should be allowed to wander at large by day only. Of the two candidates for the Mayoralty, one holds, I understand, the broad big Endian views, while the other believes the little Endians have justice on their side. The matter is not one that can be hastily decided. Apart from the convenience or inconvenience to the public—a subsidiary affair—there is the great question of bovine rights involved. Further, the moral influence on the cattle themselves of being allowed to be abroad when all respectable people are in bed has to be considered. There are a hundred points which are open to discussion, and I should suggest a postponement of the Mayoral election until some clear legal judgment had been obtained.

WAS the New Secretary for the colonies, Joe Chamberlain, talking for effect when, at the banquet to Governor Smith, of Western Australia, he rolled forth that grandiloquent sentence which the cableman despatched in its precious entirety? 'He hoped that the Australian colonies would bury petty jealousies and ambitions, and found a commonwealth which he foresaw would be destined to outstrip the waning greatness of older Europe in a time that was historically visible.' We can, even at this distance, hear the applause which greeted this 'important' utterance, and likewise the popping of champagne corks which followed. There is little doubt that we have a friend in Westminster if Joe was sincere and the champagne was not chargeable with his gratifying remarks. And now what did he mean by 'a time that was historically visible?' There's the question which Australasia, with its youthful impetuosity, is demanding to know. It seems that it might mean anything. The landing of William the Conqueror is historically visible—painfully so to most schoolboys, who have often reason to wish the whole incident forgotten—and so is the landing of Caesar. But if we have to wait as many years as have elapsed since those events took place before we begin to 'outstrip the waning greatness of older

Europe,' we are not very greatly concerned about the business at all, and Mr Chamberlain's very flattering foresight can scarcely excite our enthusiasm or increase our respect for his shrewdness. Although he is Secretary for the colonies he is very evidently very much out of his ideas regarding the hopes and visions we cherish. To some of us the time when we shall outstrip the waning greatness of older Europe is not only historically visible, but visible to the naked eye. Many of our Australian legislators require no telescope to see it. Mr E. M. Smith, of Taranaki, and Mr Riccarton Russell could, if they were allowed a free hand hasten the glorious period very materially, and we hope that Mr Smith will impart his views on this important matter as well as on iron-sand when he reaches England.

THERE is a surprising amount of interest manifested by Aucklanders in the present Turkish crisis. I have never seen such an interest taken in European politics before, and it is of such a peculiar character that at first I was somewhat puzzled to understand it. Even in this remote corner of the world we heard with indignation of the outrages inflicted on the Armenian Christians, and it might have been expected that our generous blood would not cease to boil till the *Porte* had been brought to book. But it is astonishing how rapidly the public who croaked for revenge have turned round now that there is a prospect of real war. I never knew that there were such a community of philanthropists in Auckland till I heard the fervent hope expressed by dozens of individuals that there would be no war. It was only when I came to remember that every one of these gentlemen was a holder of mining scrip, and read in the cables that the European bourses and the South African mining market had grown weak in view of an impending crisis, that I grasped the situation and understood the philanthropy, and the intense interest Auckland has developed in European affairs. The prayer of a righteous man avaleth much. I do not know the exact value of the prayers of the average mining speculator, but if they are worth anything at all there is a very strong probability we shall have peace. The Sultan little knows what forces are working in his favour. In his palace by the Bosphorus it is very doubtful if he has ever bestowed a thought on the city by the Waitemata, least of all did he look for help from this quarter of the globe. Yet here are we, good, honest, civilised Christians, actually playing into the hands of a despotic old villain of a Turk who has flayed alive our co-religionists. Verily the ways of this world are strange!

THE season of agricultural shows has ended, the one at Wellington being the last of the big affairs, and the fat oxen—the admired of all admirers—have fulfilled their destiny, which was 'beef.' These bucolic carnivals do an immense amount of good to the town as well as to the country. They teach the former the valuable lesson of how very much it is dependent on the bounty of the rural districts for its very existence. We dwellers in cities are foolishly apt to forget this great debt, and sometimes we are stupid enough to look down on our country cousins because, forsooth, their faces are tanned and their hands rough with honest toil. Silly young ladies and equally silly young gentlemen cannot understand 'how anyone can endure the country.' These are not the only things they do not understand, I am afraid. I should be sorry to have to undertake the tuition of these poor, weak 'artificials'; but one thing I would like them to remember is, that it is not they but the country cousins who are building up this colony, and whose labours will remain indelibly impressed on it when the townsmen and townswomen have vanished, leaving not a track behind them.

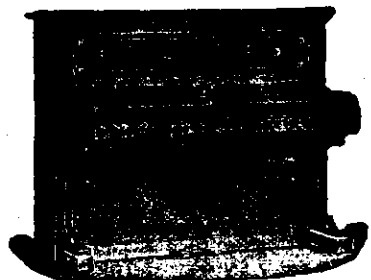
THE Auckland Ladies' Benevolent Society hit on an excellent idea when they decided to hold a real flower *fête*, and I am told the idea is 'catching on' wonderfully. To those who have witnessed similar carnivals on the Continent of Europe, or in England where they are much rarer, there is no necessity to say what beautiful and delightful affairs these flower *fêtes* are, and what an infinite amount of amusement and room for the display of good taste they offer to the public. Auckland should be able to give us something very fine where it is a question of flowers. In very few places in the world does the earth clothe herself in such radiant hues as she does in the city and the surrounding country. Strangers have been charmed with the wealth of blossoms our gardens display. It is sincerely to be hoped that all classes of the public will give a warm support to the *fête*, and that everyone who has anything on wheels, from a child's go-cart to a barouche, will bedeck it with flowers for the occasion and join the floral procession at Potter's Pad-dock. And we would suggest for the benefit of those who do not own even a perambulator or a bicycle that there should be a battle of flowers. The blossoms are plentiful enough at that season, and the animation such a contest would add to the scene would be of great ad-

vantage. The *fête* comes off on the 7th of next month. Let everyone rack their brains for original and beautiful designs and decorations. Entries must be lodged with Mr Ewington, of Coombes' Arcade, by the 25th inst.

IF Sherlock Holmes were alive he would find work for his genius in Auckland. In his absence the local detective force have a somewhat ticklish problem to grapple with. For some time past a clever 'cracksman,' or a party of them, have been doing smart business in different parts of the suburbs—the investigation of money safes by means of explosives being their favourite line—and have eluded all efforts to run them down. But just the other day a youth discovered a burglar's 'kit' carefully 'planted,' and the police being informed of the find, arrived on the scene and effected the arrest of two individuals, one of whom was clearly the owner of the illegal instruments. The tools are described as the most perfect of the kind the police have ever come across. Although it would be assuming too much to connect the recent burglaries with this fortunate discovery, still it may be a clue to the apprehension of the criminals. The temptation to clever burglars, seeking pastures new for the exercise of their talents, to pay New Zealand a visit is pretty considerable, and it is well they should be pounced on without delay *pour encourager les autres*.

ONE wonders whether Lord Dunraven has any good reason for implying that in the famous race between his yacht and the Defender, the victory of the American boat was obtained through fraud. He hints that the Defendersailed under one weight and measured another. It may very probably be impossible to ascertain the truth, but the allegation cannot fail to cause a good deal of bitterness, even beyond yachting circles, on both sides of the Atlantic. It is a good deal of satisfaction to an Englishman to think that, after all, perhaps the American boat was not the best, and the doubt as to the fairness of the trial will help him to bear with equanimity the jeers and braggadocio in which some sections of the American Press have had the wretchedly bad taste to indulge. If there is anything in Lord Dunraven's implication the English sportsman may not only be entitled to the credit of winning the race, but he has won an infinitely greater victory over his competitor in that he was actuated all along by those upright principles which are the spirit of English sport. To gain a yacht race of that magnitude would certainly have been a feather in his cap, but it is much better to have lost it honourably than to have gained it by deceit. The winning of a yacht race is a very small affair to set against a dishonourable action that reflects discredit on a whole nation.

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