

HOW civilised and polite the world is becoming! Far away even in the Cook Islands, where once upon a time the natives used to dine, not with, but on each other, they do things quite in the European fashion. The other day, I am informed, they sent a letter of condolence to Her Majesty Queen Victoria and the Princess Beatrice expressing sympathy with them in the bereavement they had suffered through the death of Prince Henry of Battenberg. Just fancy the change that has come over our little world when Pacific Islanders, who not so very long ago hardly knew of the existence of Great Britain, have now advanced so far as to send 'their sincerest condolences.' The inhabitants of these groups consider themselves bound to observe all forms of courtly etiquette—*noblesse oblige*, and they would feel it derogatory to their own dignity to ignore a royal birth, death, or marriage in any other part of the world. The King of Karatonga must keep in touch with his royal cousins. Was it not he who, on the threatened outbreak of a European war, allayed the fears of the Powers by declaring that he had resolved to maintain a strictly neutral attitude, and to favour the pretensions of neither one party nor the other?

I HAVE often been amused at the number of persons who, when they come across a description of a robbery, a swindle, a murder, or even a suicide, in which the culprit bears the same name as themselves, feel it incumbent on them to write to the papers and assure the public that they are not the parties referred to. Of course the inference is manifest. Unless a man considered himself open to the suspicion of guilt he would hardly take the trouble to draw public attention to his innocence. Occasionally the newspaper paragraphist, in his haste, makes matters worse, as he did in a small town in Australia the other day. "We have been requested," said this journal, "to state that John Smith, who was charged at the Supreme Court on Monday last with embezzlement, is not John Smith, of Moores, who follows a like occupation." If all the John Smiths in the district had been so fearful of their reputation as this one, the newspaper would have been hardly equal to the demands on its space.

WHEN one considers the confusions and misconceptions that may result to a man from the mere commonness of his name, it is easy to understand that it is not always foolish vanity that leads to changing it in whole or in part. It is seldom that a man cares to discard his patronymic; he evinces a clinging respect for it even when it has been dragged in the gutter. You will notice that criminals, when they are forced for business purposes to take an *alias*, very often choose something of the same sound as their original name. They do not, somehow, like to destroy every vestige of their ancestry. The individual who, either from vanity, or to avoid inconvenience, alters his surname, is usually content with a slight and not a radical change. If he is Smith, he becomes Smiths, or Smyth, or Smythe. On the stage where it is popularly, though erroneously, supposed no one goes by his or her real name, partial changes in names are very common. This is especially the case in the lower ranks. For instance there was a certain young man named Frank Dillon who used to be conductor on a street car, and Frank Dillon he was to all who knew him. But he discovered that he possessed a talent for acrobatic song and dance, and now he figures on the bills as 'Mr Franklyn Dyllyn.'

A FEW months ago Edith Conners made her triumphant debut in a lady's wood-sawing contest at one of the dime museums in the States. Later on she discovered that her histrionic genius was better adapted to fights. So now the gifted maiden is carrying a shield and spear and is known to fame as 'Miss Edyth Conners.' Others in the cast are Haryet Nelsyn, Mr Wyllys Fyscher, Kathryn Klyby, Mr Myrtyl Gylbyrt, Gwynn Gyfford and Olyve Rhynes.

UNINTENTIONAL jokes are frequently the most amusing, but there is a grim suggestiveness about one which recently came under my notice that provokes a passing comment. A gentlemen well-known in one of our principal cities, but whose name, for obvious reasons, I will withhold, recently died. As far as could be judged from his external manner and usual way of life and conduct, he was an average sort of man—one with quite as good a chance of going to the 'Happy Land' in the hereafter as anyone in the town. Yet, passing down a side-street a day or so ago, I saw the following legend in a shop window:—To Let.—Apply to Mr — (the name of the deceased), a little below. The implied descent into lower regions is a little rough on Mr — and on his friends. As a rule, we act up to the good old motto—*De mortuis, nil nisi bonum*, and unless the theosophists have betrayed secrets, there seems no need to depart from it in this case.

THE position of an Acclimatisation Society in this colony is not altogether an enviable one. It is called upon to please a dozen different sections of the community, and generally does not succeed in pleasing one. Its work is mainly experimental to begin with, and it is consequently liable to make mistakes now and again. But the public has no sympathy with it on that score, and not only blames the members in office for all their errors of omission and commission, but saddles them with the shortcomings of their predecessors. The introduction of the sparrow, for instance, is always cast up against the present *personnel* of the Societies, as if they had harboured that bold and prolific bird merely to injure the farmer, who is often heard hurling shot and curses at the pheasant, whose acclimatisation in the colony is considered by some sportsmen to be the only good thing the Society has ever accomplished.

AT this moment the Auckland Acclimatisation Society is having a warm season of it. A whole host of sportsmen are up in arms because the Society, on the plea of the scarcity of game, has issued a *wake* deferring the opening of the shooting season for native game till May instead of allowing it to open in Easter, as usual. I never knew there were so many people interested in shooting till now that the decision of the Society has drawn them from cover. They are assailing the poor members on all hands, and for the last fortnight one could not take up a paper without finding some anonymous 'sport' taking a pot shot at the Society from behind the correspondence column. The great grievance of these Nimrods is that they will not be able to get any shooting during the Easter holidays, and as killing ducks has been their favourite method of celebrating the blessed season, they will be deprived of a great deal of pleasure by the Society's action, and probably may be reduced to going to church *pour passer le temps*. For the most part the complainants appear to be men of little leisure who can only get a chance of a holiday at Easter, and some of them declare that game is very plentiful this year, and that the postponing of the shooting season is only a base contrivance of the leisured sportsmen to get better bags for themselves. I confess I cannot ascertain which side is in the right. The truth would seem to be that in some districts there are lots of game, and in others that the reverse is the case. I should think that the Society has a better opportunity of judging what is the wisest general course to pursue than the occasional traveller who may chance to come across some good flights of ducks, or the city tradesman who has no knowledge of the matter whatever. As to the charge that the members of the Society are making the change for selfish ends, I can hardly think they would be guilty of such ungenerous and unsportsmanlike conduct.

THE sequel to the Little Barrier eviction case was very amusing. It seems that Tenetahi, driven from the halls of his fathers, has refused to acquiesce in the justness of the proceedings, has abstained from lifting the purchase money due to him, and has declared himself 'agin the Government.' He has no intention to remain a wanderer on the face of the earth, but is determined to return to his old home, which in his eyes is evidently 'the first flower of the earth and first gem of the sea.' According to one account he or his friends have since their eviction made several attempts to land on the beloved spot, but were repulsed by the guard. Eventually, however, they succeeded in their invasion, and were not removed till a police force from Auckland had gone down to the island and forcibly brought them to town. Tenetahi and his friends have been charged with trespassing on the island, and as I write their case is under consideration. Probably by the time this is in print the matter will have been settled, but, however it is arranged, I cannot see how the Government are to prevent Tenetahi visiting the place as a Maori tourist, in which capacity his solicitor inferred he went. On the other hand there is nothing to prevent the Auckland police arresting tourists if they take it into their heads. So between arresting Australian tourists and Maori tourists the force is likely to have its hands pretty full.

THE enterprising spiritualist who finds the spook business played out among the whites should try his skill among the Maoris, who in the North have lately developed a great interest in ghostly manifestations. Far away in the Hokianga they are having nightly *ances* in their big *wharés*, where they sit in darkness awaiting the advent of the spirits. The latter come sure enough and reveal their presence by a kind of whistling. Who the Mrs Mellin is in this case, or who does the whistling has yet to be found out, but the Maoris have so little of European scepticism where ghosts are concerned that the man who is running the show runs little chance of exposure. I daresay he will go on raking in the dollars or their equivalents in kumeras and pipis till he grows sleek and fat. The poor clergymen in

the district seem quite unable to shake the faith of the natives in these 'manifestations' by any amount of reasoning, and I don't wonder. Moses had to make an extra big serpent out of his walking stick that could swallow all the serpent-walking sticks of the wizards before he could make Pharaoh believe in him. What the clergymen in the North really require is a little training in legerdemain in addition to theology. A few neatly-performed tricks in which 'the quickness of the hand deceives the eye,' or still better, a clever representation of Professor Pepper's optical illusion, would do more in this case than all the sermons in creation.

THE observance of St. Patrick's Day in this colony is a remarkable phenomenon, for New Zealand does not profess to be an Irish or a Roman Catholic country. Indeed, statistics show that the Romanists are not the most numerous of our religious bodies, and, as everyone knows, the English nation—of which we are part—is professedly Protestant. How comes it, then, that St. George's Day and St. Andrew's Day are slurred over, whilst strangers would imagine, from the honour paid to his memory, that St. Patrick was the patron saint of New Zealand. A good many of our schools, private and public, gave the children a holiday on that day—a most unnecessary proceeding seeing that Easter is so close at hand, with its usual rest for pupils and teachers. As it is the accepted belief in this colony, and indeed throughout Australasia, that every possible excuse for a holiday must be seized upon, we shall, in common justice to the beneficent spirits which watch over England and Scotland, find now that St. George and St. Andrew are also accorded their due, and that English and Scotch children are being taught to duly reverence their patron saints. There is just as much reason for the observance of these two days as there is of the 17th March, and, as far as I know, St. George and St. Andrew are fully as entitled to respect as is St. Patrick. Indeed, had I to choose amongst these three gentlemen, I should certainly take St. George.

A ROBBER-PROOF TRAIN.

A ROBBER PROOF train of mail cars has lately been placed on one of the United States railway lines. It is not armour clad or mounted with turret guns, yet it is strong enough to stand a heavy strain, and there are no places on it where a train robber can find a footing.

This postal train is a curious sort of an affair. Most trains look like a procession of turtles. This has the appearance of a big centipede. There are no platforms, and there is so little space between the cars that the joints of the big centipede do not show except when the train goes around a curve. On a straight track it looks like one long car.

In the stories of train robberies the outlaws usually leap on the platform of the postal cars and shoot the clerks through the glass in the doors. In this new car this performance could not be carried through. There are no platforms, and only one end door, which is solidly barricaded. There is a small trap door of solid wood at the other end, but that is hardly big enough for a man to crawl through. There are two doors on each side for the delivery and receipt of mail.

The car is built of heavy and solidly joined timbers, and bullets could hardly penetrate it. The sides and top are strongly braced. If there were a smash up on the road this car could be in the worst of it and perhaps not suffer much.

The ends are strengthened by heavy timbers and iron braces, which protect the carriages from being telescoped. When there is an accident on the railroad the postal cars, which are in front, have to bear the brunt of the smash-up. They are demolished first, and the lives of many postal clerks are lost. These new cars ensure the clerks, to a large extent, against the dangers of robbers and accidents.

COMFORT BESIDES STRENGTH.

The cars are comfortably furnished. They are light, well ventilated, and are more comfortable than many a post-office in government buildings. Each car carries three tanks for gas, under a pressure of thirty-six atmospheres. The light is furnished from twelve chandeliers, and the travelling post-office is as light as day even at midnight.

The general election is already casting its shadow before. Mr C. E. Button, M.H.R., is going to address the electors of Auckland on Friday evening, the 27th.

Of all the fashionable fads of to day that accentuation of domestic grief which shows itself in a black shirt, black collar and cuffs, and white studs, white cuff buttons, and white necktie, is about the most ridiculous. Fashionable London says a metropolitan journalist will soon be promulgating Piccadilly with miniature coffins for jewellery and artificial tears painted on the cheeks. It is doubtful whether such people could really shed any other kind but genuine hand-painted tears. When women put their toddling children in deep mourning and role in the park with their poodles dressed in crape, it seemed that this sort of thing could go no further. Now that men have taken to black shirts and sable handkerchiefs, however, the onus of timidity is removed from the shoulders of womankind.