

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

Notice to contributors.—Any letters or MSS. received by the Editor of the NEW ZEALAND GRAPHIC will be immediately acknowledged in this column.

PEMBERTON PEMBROOKE.—Your story has been duly read and commented upon by our reader. I regret to say that the verdict is not altogether favourable, but I will quote the opinion given:—Pemberton Pembroke is evidently quite a 'prentice hand in story writing. The tale under consideration does not run as fluently and easily in style and expression as one could wish, and unfortunately, the spelling and punctuation are such as, despite the masculine *nom de plume*, lead me strongly to suspect a feminine hand guiding the pen, and, in the interest of the story, forgetting her third standard lessons. For instance, cruel is spelt *crual*; testily, testly; reigned, reighd; being, beiaing; nervous, nervious; foam, foun; saddle, saddel; passed, past; crisis, cricis, etc. In the last case the heroine was dangerously ill, and no one could be expected to have time to attend to such minor matters as spelling. It is hardly correct to say, 'he was terrible lame,' yet Pemberton Pembroke does use this expression. Possibly it is only a slip of the pen. The actual idea of the story is not at all a bad one, and is, in fact, a very interesting occurrence in the heroine's life, and I feel sure all who begin to read the tale will certainly finish it, in order to find out how she escapes from the terrible dangers which threaten her life. But if Pemberton, etc., sends the editor any more MSS., I would humbly suggest that he—for the name is that of a man—should leave a margin on the left side of the paper, and sufficient space in the corner to secure the leaves together without interfering with the writing.'

EVERY-DAY RHYMES.

COURTSHIP OF IRENE.

OLD STYLE: IRENE THAT WAS.

HE stood at the gate of the garden, as often he'd waited before
In the golden days, gone for ever: the mystical years of yore
When the earth was young, and life was gay, and man seemed brave and true,
And woman soft as an azure sea, and bewitchingly gentle and new.

And he thought of the changing years since then—the years that had rolled away
Since Irene came to the garden, like a fawn, at the close of the day,
Timid and shy, yet confiding, and innocent as the dove;
Nestling and sighing and listening to eloquent words of love.

Gone are those visionary times! The sun and the stars look down
On a troubled world, and restless men, in every throbbing town;
And the Girl that Was has passed away: Irene sleeps by the sea,
Where, all night long, the snow white surf sings a wild weird melody.

NEW STYLE: IRENE THAT IS.

But grief dies too, and he waited again, and, heralded, she came—
The beautiful Irene—by a dull red lamplight's flame;
Like a will-o'-the-wisp it swept along, glinting and glowing still
In the moonlight, and the gaslight, or what other light you will.

Onward and noiselessly slid the machine along roads dusty and brown,
The wheels all the time going round and round, the fair one's legs up and down.
A 'bike' Irene called the thing! two wheels, a seat, and a lamp,
And tied in front, the print, *Woman Free*, fresh from the printing, and damp!

She had steered through traffic and gazing crowds, by road and by railway line;
Her collar and cuffs were starched and stiff, her shirt front just like mine;
Nor lawn, nor lace, nor flower she wore; her coat, and petticoat too,
Proclaimed her to all men, the Girl that Is—the woman exceedingly new.

But presently the little feet of this curious modern lass,
Were tripping, and beating time with his upon the avenue grass;
And then they sat down, and she spoke for long, of Huxley, and Darwin, and Hume,
Who had swept such rubbish from off the earth, with a long scientific broom!

She touched his cheek with her glove tip, and mentioned, *appropos*,
That the woman's tide was rising, and was now quite on the flow.
'It will rise, and rise, and rise,' she said; 'and lave each coast and strand.'
Said he, 'let it rise, my only love,' and he squeezed her small white hand.

She spoke of Wallace and Besant, and thought there was no hell,
And he said she was a darling, most angelic infidel;
And she thought there was no heaven; but a haven of calm rest
Might be found—upon occasions—on a pretty woman's breast.

So he knew that he was in it! Presently his arm was placed
Round an unbelieving body, and a truly graceful waist;
But she went on, never minding what he did, or what he said—
And then upon his shoulder fell a dainty, godless head.

And she babbled about Darwin, beautifully, all the time,
And some friends of female freedom whom I can't fit into rhyme:
So then he knew his chance had come, and, not at all remiss,
He sealed upon her ruby lips a glowing burning kiss,

She wasn't vexed a bit. In fact, when he looked down again,
Her pouting lips were waiting, as the parched bud waits for rain;
Yet she said 'Emancipation for the female sex was nigh,'
Then he pressed her still more closely—and he winked the other eye.

By and bye he led her, gently, to things she could understand;
The perfume of the violet, the rot of Sarah Grand;
The pale moon, of course, he mentioned, and he pointed out the stars,
And the love of Venus spoke of—and the chivalry of Mars.

She clasped her arms around his neck, and then the thing was plain—
She loved this whiskered fellow, who kissed her once again;
And she whispered such soft whispers as poor Eve did, I suppose,
(But Eve, of course, lisped Hebrew, and wore rather different clothes.)

He said he'd wed Irene, and he swore he didn't care
A hang who nursed the baby, or who filled the boss' chair;
So she rode away elated, on her bike she made a bound—
Her legs again went up and down—the wheel went round and round.

Wellington, March 8th, 1896.

H. R. R.

THE NEW POET LAUREATE'S GUILT.

WHAT I want to know now (writes Mr Labouchere in *Truth*) is whether the poet Austin is going to be put on his trial along with Dr. Jameson and the other participators in the 'ride' lauded in the verses published by the *Times* last Saturday. Jameson, according to Sir Hercules Robinson, was ordered in the Queen's name to return. He replied that the message would be 'attended to,' and at once ordered his men to saddle and ride towards the Boers. From the point of view of an Alhambra audience this may have been a very fine and noble thing to do, but it was a flat defiance of the Queen and her Government; and if it had not ended in disastrous failure it must have exposed the country and the empire to incalculable complications and danger. Ordinary poets are, of course, at liberty to write jingo verses to raise cheers in the music-halls without regard to their political significance. But an official rhymester, paid so much a year to sing the praise and glory of Her Majesty and her Government, though he may privately approve of any act of rebellion against the Crown or of piracy against the Queen's allies, can hardly be allowed to express such sentiments in his public capacity. This should at once be explained to the poet Austin, and if he is not prepared to confine his heroics in future to such events as the birth of Royal babies or the reception of foreign potentates, he should be required to give up his 30s a week to some more loyal bardlet.

THE FASTEST RAILROAD RUN.

McClure's Magazine for February contains a graphic account of 'The Fastest Railroad Run Ever Made,' written by Harry Perry Robinson, one of the official time keepers on the occasion when the train made its great record over the Lake Shore and Michigan Southern from Chicago to Buffalo, and from Buffalo to New York over the New York Central and Hudson River Railroad. The ambition on that occasion was to beat the English record just made on the West Coast Railroad by a train which ran 540 miles at an average speed of 63.93 miles an hour. The attempt to lower this record in America was coupled with the disadvantages which came from carrying extra weight; for the total weight of the Lake Shore and Michigan Southern cars was 304,500 pounds, as against 147,400 pounds in the English train. Moreover, the American run was to be interrupted by four stops, and although the actual time of rest was, of course, allowed for, still there is a great deal of time lost just before and after the stop, owing to the lower average rate of speed in slowing up and starting off. As a matter of fact there were five stops in the American run, one of which was unanticipated.

A NEW TYPE OF LOCOMOTIVE.

Each of the several divisions of the thousand-mile course, the machinery of the various engines, and all the arrangements for recording the trip are described by Mr Robinson in the story of this wonderful railroad run. The last engine was of a different type from the rest, and made the most magnificent showing of speed. It was a 56½-ton ten-wheeler, with driving wheels of only 68 inches in diameter, and very unlike the machines specially devised for fast speeds. This driving wheel is, indeed, ten inches less in diameter than the Caledonian locomotive which did the best work in the English races. 'For those who had misgivings as to the possibilities of this type of engine, there was a surprise as soon as she picked up the train. She must have reached a speed of a mile a minute within the five miles from the first movement of the wheels. The first eight miles were finished in eight minutes and forty-nine seconds; from there on there was never an instant of slackening speed.'

It happened in a large hotel; the table *d'hôte* had reached coffee and cognac when I ventured to inquire what opera was announced for that evening. A zealous waiter volunteered at once the information. 'It is the "Barber of Seville." 'That is no kind of an opera!' growled my *vis-à-vis*, a well-nourished gentleman with a very red face. 'But I beg of you,' I asked modestly, 'you will surely give credit to Rossini?' 'No!' he cried furiously. 'Anyone who writes two-act operas is no composer at all!' 'What! then Mozart with his "Don Juan," and also Beethoven do not count with you as composers?' I asked, surprised. 'That they are not! I assure you an opera with only one *entr'acte* is simply a monstrosity!' answered the fat one, as he halved with furious cut an apple, looking at the pieces as if they represented to him two acts of 'Fidelio.' 'My dear sir,' he continued, 'I am a judge on that point; I myself am of the theatre. Look you: Meyer beer and Richard Wagner; these I call composers! You must know that I have the lease of the theatre restaurant these twenty years past, and know all the operas and their worth. For instance, the 'Africaine' is one of the best operas. The public staring constantly at the scenery of tropical countries are beset by a sharp thirst. The *entr'acte* in which they build the ship is a long one; everybody rushes for the restaurant, and streams of beer and hundreds of sandwiches are consumed. I must say that I have experienced *Götterdämmerung* and *Huguenot* representations when we had to cut six hams, 400 sausages, and five Swiss cheeses; with these go, if you please, six barrels of beer and uncounted seltzers. Yes; this is what I call operas!' 'One evening I will never forget it; it was a *Meistersinger* performance, with the tenor celebrating the hundredth repetition of his *rolé*, when eight hundred and seventy-five sandwiches found their Sedan. Now, this is what I call classic music!'

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