

TOPICS OF THE WEEK.

THE GAME OF POLITICS.

WE are being told almost every evening now from some political platform or other that there never was so much duplicity and dishonesty in any government as in the one which at present holds the reins of power in this colony. Politics—at no time a very clean game—have, we are assured, degenerated into the very gutter under the management of Mr Seddon and his friends, and we are constantly asked to compare the methods of colonial administrators with those of European statesmen, and to weep over the sins of the former. Fortunately for the colonials, recent events in Europe have turned the comparison very much in their favour. At a moment when no one expected it Prince Bismarck has suddenly lifted up a corner of the diplomatic curtain behind which the great game of international politics is really played, and has shown us that our rulers in New Zealand do not enjoy anything like the monopoly in duplicity and dishonourableness we were told they did. Mr Seddon is not in it with Prince Bismarck, who, it appears, was buying and selling his allies behind their backs when these unsuspecting friends were trusting him implicitly. So far as Prussia is concerned such political scheming is considered quite legitimate so long as you are not found out. The end justifies any means. Frederick the Great gave an excellent precedent for this sort of statesmanship when he invaded Saxony without any justification except that he calculated to rake up one in the Saxon state archives. I suppose in the same way that the Opposition here count on finding ample justification for their condemnation of the present ministry when they have supplanted the latter in office. But, alas! the mystery which envelops European diplomacy is quite absent from New Zealand. There are no secret treaties here just as there are no Prince Bismarcks, to reveal them. Where there is even the suspicion of a mystery a watchful Opposition and a keen-scented press are on the track of it at once, and if Mr Seddon meditated a *coup d'état*, as his opponents declare sometimes that he does, the details of the scheme would be in every paper before the hour had struck for its accomplishment.

BEHIND DATE.

WHAT three years of absence from newspapers really means is illustrated in a conversation between a member of Nansen's expedition and a citizen of Tromsø, reported in an Amsterdam paper. The humour, it must be confessed, is a little Dutchy:

"What a crowd there is in the streets to meet us on our return!"

"Yes, it makes one think of the Chodysky fields during the Czar's coronation."

"The coronation?"

"I forgot that you don't know. Alexander III. is dead, and at the coronation of his successor, Nicholas II., thousands of people were killed in the crush."

"I suppose Carnot and the French made a subscription for the victims?"

"Carnot? You mean Faure."

"Faure? Has Carnot resigned?"

"No, he was murdered at Lyons, and was followed by Casimir-Perier, who resigned to make room for Faure."

"During the rest of the conversation the companion of Nansen reveals his ignorance of Ibsen's 'Klein Eyolf,' and wants to know what Röntgen rays are! His Tromsø friend good-naturedly warns him that if he asks any more questions he will 'wallop him as the Japs licked the Chinese,' or 'as the Cubans licked Martinez Campos.'"

"A war between China and Japan? A revolution in Cuba?—I see it is useless to try to hear all the news in one day."

THE WHEEL WAR AGAIN.

IT was bound to come at last. Reason and British love of fair play both demanded it. I mean the magisterial admission that there is not one law for the cyclist and another for the perambulator. Mr Northcroft, Auckland's Stipendiary Magistrate, has gained notoriety beyond the Northern city for his unswerving hostility to the cyclist, who occasionally prefers the pavement to the street. While the inevitable wheel has gradually wheedled its way into hearts that at one time sternly repelled it, while its praises are mumbled by octogenarians and lisped by infant lips, Mr Northcroft has kept coldly aloof. But now it appears that he, even he, is beginning to waver in his opposition. In court the other day, when looking through one of the city by-laws which has become painfully familiar to more than one Auckland cyclist of late, the Magistrate suddenly exclaimed, 'Does not this apply to perambulators also?' The query had reference to a clause forbidding vehicles

of any sort whatever being driven on the footpaths. The traffic inspector, who was the interrogated party, paused a moment, and then answered that he supposed the prohibition did apply to perambulators as well as cycles, but that he would not like to be the first to start a crusade against perambulators. Of course it applies, as I have pointed out more than once before in these columns. Every cyclist from the Bluff to the North Cape felt it applied, and marvelled that Mr Northcroft, who is presumably versed in the tables of even the municipal law, did not publicly recognise this. I do not for a moment believe that he recognised it privately. No, he simply was blind to the fact so patent to everybody. But just at that moment when he said to the traffic inspector, 'Does not this apply to perambulators also?' the scales seem to have fallen from his eyes. It is one of the most striking conversions to reason on record, and reminds me of nothing so much as that of Saul as he went along the road to Damascus breathing threatenings and slaughter. There will be general rejoicing among all Auckland cyclists that the redoubtable Mr Northcroft has made the admission he has, for now he cannot, without fatally shaking the reliance people place in his reasoning powers and love of fair play—qualities of first importance in a magistrate—he cannot countenance the prosecution of the bicycle unless he lends his authority to a raid on perambulators. The question is, will he, or the traffic inspector, or the municipal authorities dare to interfere with the privileges of mothers and nurse-girls to monopolise the public sidewalks? If they do not dare, then how can they logically treat the cyclist differently? and if they do dare, then we may be prepared for a revolution of a much more serious character than I care to contemplate. I should like to see the first policeman so intrepid as to order any perambulator off the pavement on to the cold unsympathetic street. I should very much like to see that man. He would deserve promotion to a commander-in-chiefship for his intrepidity. Just fancy the uproar such an incident would cause in the public highway! The unfortunate officer would be the centre of a raging mob in less than five minutes. The fatherly instinct would arise in every man and the motherly in every woman, and they would tell the zealous constable to 'unband the choild' or 'let go the hinfant' with an insistence the bravest man might quail before. A crusade against perambulators is out of the question. It might have been remotely possible before the women got the franchise, but now it can never be. Yet why, I ask again in the name of all devotees of the wheel, should the bicycle be persecuted if the perambulator goes scot free?

EXPORTING ATHLETES.

THE visit of the Australian cricket team to New Zealand has given a wonderful fillip to the game here, and has fired the imagination of our youthful colonists, who are asking themselves, 'Why should not we, too, reap glory in foreign lands as our Australian cousins have done?' There is no particular reason why they should not at least try. The Auckland boys gave a very excellent account of themselves in the recent match, and the Australians freely admitted that there was among the Northern players some excellent material which could be worked up into first-class cricketers. If the Australasian has any special genius for anything it is a genius for sports, and in these days when sports share pretty equally with business the attention of the world, it might not be unprofitable for us to cultivate what is our most decided characteristic. When the ancient world was becoming effete it ceased from active sports itself and got others to engage in them for its lazy amusement. In the past to day it would be considered a ludicrous waste of labour and sacrifice of dignity for a man to go dancing round a room when he could get others to dance for him. In the same way the time may come when over-civilized Europe will lose its relish entirely for the active kind of pleasure and confine itself to the passive contemplation of exercise in others. The tendency lies already in that direction, and the ultimate result of it must be a repetition of what happened in ancient Rome, or what exists in China. Then will be the opportunity for those young communities who have not yet lost the relish for physical exertion. With them will rest the duty of amusing the rest of the world. In that way it may come about that the most valuable export of a country will be its athletes. You have probably never thought of raising cricketers and athletes for export, but the suggestion is worth considering in a country which wants to grow something, and whose talents run so conspicuously to athleticism. Why, in the future, should not New Zealand supply Europe with its professional cricketers, bowlers, golfers, cyclists, footballers, boxers, swimmers, rowers, and so on through the entire category of sports? In the past small countries like Scotland and Switzerland used to furnish soldiers of fortune to the other states of Europe. What is to hinder

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MISS CELIA DAMPIER,
CITY HALL,
WEDNESDAY NOVEMBER 13, 1896.

PART I.

1. Selection. MISS HARDING'S ORCHESTRA
2. Song, 'Love in the Rain' (Molloy). MR G. M. REID
3. Duet, 'Tel Rammento' (Campsano). MRS BOYLAN AND MISS HIRTA TOLLE
4. Piano Quartet, selected. MISSES SPOONER, LAMBOURNE, BARKER, AND MR A. WALTON—Members of Mr W. H. Webbe's Piano Quartette Classes
5. Song, 'Three Wishes' (Finou). MISS ANNIE LORRIGAN
6. Violin Solo, 'Fantasia de Concert sur ma Muette de Portici' (Delphin Alard). MISS CELIA DAMPIER
7. Song, 'Sweet Love of Mine' (Cowan). MRS BOYLAN
8. Piano Solo, 'The Fontaine' (Bennett), & 'Valse' (Chopin). MISS E. MACLURE (kindly playing in place of Mr W. H. Webbe, who is unable to attend)
9. Song, selected. MISS CARIER
10. Instrumental trio, 'Intermezzo Rusticana' (Mascagni). Violin, MISS CELIA DAMPIER; Piano, MISS ADA WOOD; Organ, MR ALF. BARTLEY

Interval of Five Minutes.

PART II.

1. Sextette, A 'Normandis March' (F. J. Armstrong), B 'Imperial Mazurka' (F. J. Armstrong). MEMBERS OF THE AUCKLAND HANJO, GUITAR, AND MANDOLIN CLUB
2. Song, 'The Skipper' (Jude). MR WILFRED MANNING
3. Song, with clarinet obligato by Mr S. Jackson. MRS KILGOUR
4. Violin Solo, 'Wieslawski's Legend'. MISS CELIA DAMPIER
5. Serie Comie. Recitation, 'Bairnes Cuddie Doon'. MR ALEX. SMITH
6. Duet, 'See the Pale Moon' (Cavan). MISSES LORRIGAN
7. Song, 'The Lifeboat Man' (Cavan). MISS STOKESMITH
8. Scenes from 'Miserere', 'Il Trovatore' (Verdi). MRS KILGOUR AND MISS CARIER

Accompanists: Misses Bates, Harding, Wood, and Mr Alf. Bartley.
Doors open at 7.15, commence at 8 p.m.
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