TOPICS OF THE WEEK.

THE FUNCTIONS OF A GOVERNOR.

THE arrival of our new Governor, Lord Ranfurly, in Wellington was the occasion of some display in the Empire City, and further festivities in his honour are now in preparation. The fact that we have been Governorless for some time now may not have seriously interfered with the daily avocations of the great majority of us, but it will undoubtedly add to the warmth of the welcome which the more socially-minded section of the community accord to Lord and Lady Ranfurly, who come among us with a reputation for social qualities. The advent of Her Majesty's representative suggests to me a good many things on the subject of Colonial Governors generally. Although most likely the Israelites had far too high an opinion of themselves to suppose it possible, we all know that a king was given them because of their sins. Someone has suggested that the real reason for there being such a thing as a Colonial Governor in these days is just as different from the ostensible reason as it was in the case of the Chosen People, and maintain that Governors have been given to the Australasian Colonies, at any rate, not by any means to govern, but what is far more important—to amuse. And is there not a great deal in the contention? He would be a bold man who in this democratic land would be guilty of such rank heresy as to say that our Governors are here to govern us. The idea! It is the function of no man on this earth to govern *us*. We can do that for ourselves, and though outsiders occasionally say that we overdoit, we have no misgivings ourselves on that score. As for anyone daring to interfere in the business, I only say woe betide that man. It's perfectly plain then that Governors are not given to rule over us. Everybody understands that clearly. On the other hand, it is equally clearly understood throughout these Colonies that the great function of a Governor is to amuse, and the only great difference of opinion seems to be on the point whether it is for himself or us that he has to provide amusement. A small minority—quite a negligible quantity—think that he is quite justified in laying himself out to have a real good time of it in the Colonies. A larger number of colonists believe that he comes here with that intention, and are enviously hostile to any such thing. 'Why,' they churlishly ask, 'should we pay for the amusement of Lord this or Lord that, both of whom are much better able to afford to pay for themselves than any of us?' A third class, while ready enough to admit that a Governor comes here to amuse himself, are quite willing that he should do so provided that he always bears in mind that his chief aim and end must be to entertain them and not to allow his own amusements to clash with theirs. To this last class belongs the so-called society of our Colonial cities. They look to a Governor to be a leader in social circles. The Roman populace were devoted to the ruler that supplied them with plenty of bread and games. The upper crust of our Colonial community being in no need of bread, and lusty with three meat meals a day, throw all their energy into a demand for entertainment. Now, there, I think you have the true views of the Australasian Community on the subject of Governors. At first sight it might seem a fairly easy thing to fulfil all the requirements of a billet that seems to entail none of the hard work of actual governing. But stay, is it? I rather think that when you came to try it, dear reader, you would find the entertaining, and especially the entertaining of a Colonial community, no such light business—that is to say, if you did it as you were expected to do it. As a fact there have been no Governors who have ever been able to come up to the standard of our requirements. The man who could do so would have to be constructed on an entirely different plan from that of all other men. He would have to be a man of very many parts, and most of the parts, if made in the Old Country, would have to be refitted according to Colonial ideas before he would work without a hitch.

WHAT MAY BE BREWING IN INDIA.

THE British Lion, who, with all his defects and their complementary merits, stands as the emblem of the spirit of the British Government and the great responsible mass of the British nation, is a vastly tolerant animal where seditious talk is concerned. Speeches, printed or spoken, that would ruffle the plumes of the German Eagle and make the fur of the Russian Bear stand on end, and drive both that bird and that beast into extremely expressive action, evoke no more notice from the British Lion than what a mildly contemptuous wink of the eye may convey. 'Seditious talk, my brothers?' one can fancy him saying to the Eagle and the Bear, 'Bless you, if seditious talk could kill, I'd have been a dead lion thousands and thousands of times, and here I am not a hair the worse for it all. Look on seditious talk as the safety valve for the discontent that is sure to exist as long as men are men and don't get needlessly excited.' In no part of his dominions, not even Ireland excepted, have the ears and eyes of the British Lion encountered more seditious expressions than in India. I am given to understand that seditious utterances, the ranker the better, are the salt of the largest portion of the native Press of India, and that the paternal Indian Government does not trouble itself much to make native newspapers forgo the use of this salt, which procures them their readers who evidently find much harmless satisfaction in its consumption. If one were to seek out the editor of some native newspaper, noted among its subscribers for being rampantly against the Government in all its sayings, and for serving up in its columns food for sedition piping hot, one would probably find, ensconced in some hot, dingy, little editorial den in Calcutta or Bombay, a mild-faced Hindoo, writing rank treason with a hopelessly facile pen and much childish delight in his grandiloquent sentences and the terrible nature of his denunciations. Looking on this picture, you feel that it would be a pity for the Government to interfere with this poor fellow, who is writing for his living without the heart or stomach to hurt a fly, and whose seditious leaders most probably do nothing worse than infuse a little mild excitement into the lives of their readers. But, bearing in remembrance the Indian Government's usual attitude of large tolerance towards the talkers and writers of this seditious stuff, seemingly dear to the heart of the native, the new rigour, with which such talkers and writers are now being brought to book, suggests that those in authority have reason to believe that, at the present time, a serious meaning has passed into the disloyal vapourings which they have hitherto been able to regard as merely full of sound and fury signifying nothing.

IT can be for no light cause that the Indian Government has suddenly seen fit to throw off its velvet glove of tolerance and let the disloyal native feel the iron grip of the powerful hand it covered. The summary action of Lord Elgin in arresting and deporting without trial persons who have shown themselves disaffected to the Government cannot fail to give rise to much anxious conjecture as to its cause. For aught the general public knows, or perhaps ever may know, the Indian Government may be in possession of information which leads it to believe that there exists among the natives a formidable spirit of disaffection to British rule which is only biding its time to break into a widespread insurrection, beside which the great Mutiny of '57 would look like a merely local rising. This is not an impossible surmise, and if it is in any degree correct, we see ample reason why the Indian Government is putting forth its strong hand to crush insurrection in its infancy. With the benevolent purpose of letting the Indian subjects of Her Majesty share, with her other liege throughout the Empire, the full benefits of education—since the benefits of education seem to be the preached gospel of the last half century—a paternally-minded Government has turned the school master loose upon India. This benevolent action has apparently had some results which could scarcely have been desired. The British rulers of India would be sufficiently well pleased, no doubt, to find that the spread of education has given to the native population of the vast peninsula a full and keen appreciation of the advantages of British rule to India, but they can hardly be pleased to discover that education has tended to give the natives the belief that they are just as well fitted to rule India as the English. This fallacious belief, if it were put into practice, would probably prove far more disastrous to India than to England. The practical realisation of the cry, 'India for its own peoples,' would sooner or later lead, we may be sure, to the re-establishment of the tyranny or the anarchy or the exquisite mixture of both that prevailed in the days before the rule of the English was felt in the land. But the English are not likely to give Hindoos and Mussulmans a chance of practically demonstrating to the world at large their methods of governing India. England knows how to put down insurrection in India. In 1857-58 she gave India a terrible object lesson on her capabilities for dealing with insurrection, and if it ever should prove—which Heaven forbid—that the passage of thirty years has so far blunted the effects of that lesson on the Asiatic mind as to impose on England the necessity of giving another such lesson—why, I dare venture to say, England will give it. The heroes of '57 have, by no means, all passed away. Many are with us yet, and, if the occasion should call, fresh heroes would spring to embrace it and fill up the gaps left by those who fell in the Mutiny and by those who have fallen since. The India of to-day, they tell us, is not the India of '57, but the English blood and sinew and spirit of to day is, of a surety, the same stuff that in '57 was made into Havelocks and Outrams and Lawrences—into brilliant, daring Nicholsons and Hudsons—the same stuff that marched in the ranks to Lucknow, making the relieving army, under the wise and brave Sir Colin Campbell, an army of heroes—and the England of to-day can, if need be, keep by the sword what the England of a former day won by the sword.

FEMALE CHURCH HELPERS.

THERE is a quiet but resistless power in some women which, by dint of its gentle persistency, eventually gets its own way. In the majority of New Zealand ladies, this sweet obstinacy is very marked. It is needless to refer to the granting of the Female Franchise. That is such an old story now that it scarcely serves to point a moral. The question at issue at present is mainly connected with the Anglican Church and its large body of women workers. As these ladies pathetically express it:—'We are allowed to do most of the parish business, raising funds either by sewing our fingers to the bone at bees for bazaars, or tramping from house to house at the unwelcomed and unthanked task of collecting money; keeping church feeling alive by means of Sunday-school teaching, district visiting, mother's meetings, etc., etc., and yet when the annual election of church officers and the question of the disposal of the money comes round, we are absolutely ignored, and told we may attend the parish meeting and hear what our lords and masters have to say, but we must very emphatically take a back seat.' Now this is all very unfair indeed, because more women go to places of Divine worship than men, which alone shows that they take more interest in the church than do their unregenerate brethren—at least they say so. But this is all to be changed. In various places a movement is on foot to insist upon woman's equal right with man to vote and speak at a parish meeting. In Picton, two Synods men have actually been appointed to convert the Bishop of the diocese to the ladies' view of their rights; at St. Paul's, Wellington, the opinion was strongly expressed at the recent annual parish meeting that it was unfair to exclude women from voting in matters spiritual as well as temporal; and a bachelor clergyman in Auckland, besides one in the suburbs, advocates the justice of the claim of the women workers. The last meeting of the General Synod was antagonistic to this claim, but there is no doubt that even these doughty Churchmen will soon have to admit that *vox populi, vox Dei*. Courage, therefore, gentle ladies! Fight on, and perchance in time even the barred pulpit-door of the Anglican Church will be opened to you. Then perhaps the novel spectacle will be seen of churches packed with eager crowds of men, listening with wrapt attention whilst the slender white finger of a refined and educated woman points the way to Heaven, whilst in eloquent and telling language she explains the plan of salvation which guides the traveller thitherward.

THAT HEROIC PIANO.

I HAVE hitherto been of those who spoke bitter things about the pianoforte and bore it little good will. I have had cause, too. Perhaps it would have been more just if I had vented my contempt on the creatures who play upon it rather than on the instrument itself; but then I never could individualise them, and I could the piano they hammered. They were invisible to me, but the instrument proclaimed its presence by every note in its seven and a-half octaves. Naturally, therefore, I transferred the enmity of which they ought to have been the objects to the whole race of pianos. I endowed the thing with human-like characteristics, and pictured it as a fiend that took especial