

be whole of France. In 1894 the number was 233,028, and in the following year 255,084. These figures, says the Minister of Finance, will be left far behind by the end of the present season. The popularity enjoyed by the bicycle may be estimated from the fact that last year the tax on them produced no less than 3,272,339*fr.*, of which Paris paid about one-fifth of the sum, or 629,916*fr.* (The curious feature established by these statistics is the use made of the State pawn-shops by bicyclists as store-houses during the off season. Of course all the year round large numbers are left daily at the four branches of the Mont de Piete authorised to receive bicycles, but as soon as the actual season draws to an end there is a regular rush, as many as forty per diem being taken. As they are carefully stored, if the precaution be taken of well oiling them before they are turned over to the State, no harm can possibly come to them, while as for the cost, the bicyclist is a big gainer, as for from 1*fr.* 50c. to 2*fr.* he can store the bicycle for four months, whereas it would cost him or her 2*fr.* at the least to keep it in ordinary storage, without taking into account the feeling of security given by the realisation that the State is responsible for the safe keeping of the cherished wheel. If any proof were wanted that it is not necessity that causes this rush at the end of the season it would be found in the statement that so far the Mont de Piete has only had one machine left on its hands, and even then it was such a hopelessly old fashioned make that it did not bring in as much as had been lent on it.

Views on bicycles of next year's model are numerous. In 1897 the price attracted more attention than the wheel, but in 1898 the money question will be subordinate. Cyclists look upon the £20 bicycle as gone. The standard price will be somewhere, we suppose, between £10 and £15. Chainless wheels will surely be prominent next spring, promising to put the greasy chain wheels completely out of mind. Tubing next year will be about the same as it is now. Gears of high, low, and medium size will be on the market for choice, but during this season the liking for high gears has developed greatly, probably as the result of the greater strength which practice has brought to the average leg. The radical genius, who is being heard from, asserts that the 1898 bicycle will be operated by either the arms or legs. This sounds more risky than interesting. The wheel's most vulnerable point, its tyre, is being studied and experimented with, with ardent desire for its improvement and with no little hope. It must be possible to put into the rubber some element that would lessen its slipping on wet pavements; and it seems absurd that wheels destined to pass over jagged roads should be left so puncturable. A less puncturable tyre and a tyre which when inflated will remain full indefinitely is greatly needed. In spite of the promise of 1898, however, owners of good bicycles needn't worry. A good bicycle to-day will be good next year.

A bicycle has just been completed in London which promises to revolutionise the wheels of the world. The difference is that it utilises the entire power furnished by the engine of propulsion—the leg of the rider. For years bicycle manufacturers have sought some method whereby the waste of power could be prevented, and (says the 'New York Herald') Gerald Barker has found it.

The change is, of course, in the gearing, but it is not a chainless wheel—that sort which, it is said, will next year be the king of all wheels. If the opinions of experts are worth anything the new wheel is the one that will take precedence over all. There are three reasons why this new invention claims attention. The first is that it is far speedier, the second is that the propelling power is almost doubled without increase of exertion, and the third is that on a racing wheel the compound crank will be such a gain as it is hard to imagine.

It is asserted that by the use of the compound crank a cyclist is enabled to use at least a 40 per cent. higher gearing without increasing the stroke of the pedals or the pressure on them.

The cleaned hat was duly handed to the right honourable gentleman, and he sent his thanks to the woman, who vowed that the brush which had whisked the 'glair' from off it should never be debiled by being used for a less noble purpose.

While at the end of 1879, Mr Gladstone was in the thick of the Mid-Lothian campaign, his hat was blown off and whisked over a hedge into a newly-ploughed field. The headgear was promptly recovered by a boy, who carried it into a cottage by the roadside, when the guide-wife carefully removed the extraneous earth from the nap with a clothes brush.

SPORTS AND PASTIMES.

BOWLS.

At the Auckland Bowling Green, which was opened on Saturday, there was some good play on the Upper Green, the lower one being too wet. Nine rinks aside played a match of 15 heads, the President (Mr A. W. Thompson) being in command of the one side and the Vice-President (Mr W. Coleman) of the other. The result was a win for the former by 44 points, the scores being respectively 117 and 103.

The Parnell ground was in good order and a match of one rink a-side was played, while ten was dispensed to the players and visitors.

At Ponsonby four games were played. In No. 1 rink Mr T. Watson's team beat Mr C. Bloomfield's (22-18); in No. 2, Mr Ballantyne's side defeated Mr McDermott's (24-22); in rink No. 3 the sides were equal; in No. 4, Messrs Hutchison and Somers scored a win by 19 to 12 over Messrs Hutchison and S. McDermott.

Some four hundred people were present at the opening of the Remuera Green on Saturday. The place looked very pretty, and Boffa Bros.' band added to the attractions. The President (Mr J. Hardie) welcomed the visitors and made a few remarks appropriate to the occasion, mentioning among other things the formation of a tennis club, with Mr A. Brown as hon. secretary. In the match that followed, President v. Vice-President, (Mr T. Finlayson) the former won by 16 points, the scores being respectively 143 and 127.

The Thorndon, Wellington, Bowling Club was opened on Saturday by the president of the club (the Hon. Dr. Grace), several hundred people assembling on the Green, a delicious afternoon tea being provided by Mesdames Grace, Rose and Barry.

The rainy weather has necessitated the postponement of many opening matches. Last Thursday, however, it cleared up temporarily, and advantage was taken to celebrate the opening season of the

CRICKET AND BOWLING SEASONS. accordingly. At the Recreation Ground the opening match was played, which resulted in the victory of Mr S. Kennell's team v. Mr G. Barren's, the rival teams being hospitably entertained at an afternoon tea given by Mesdames Kennell, Holmes and Teed. The ceremonial opening of the Bowling Club will be

deferred for about a fortnight, until the new pavilion is completed, which will be a great attraction and enable the wives, sisters and cousins of the members to assist by their attendance, and enthusiasm to incite the emulation of their male admirers. The Green is still looking lovely now.

The Bluff Hill Bowling Club, Napier, opened their season last Saturday afternoon, when a pleasant afternoon was spent by the members, their friends and the visiting bowlers. Captain Todd, the president, made the opening speech, thanking the ladies for providing afternoon tea during the past season, complimenting the ground committee on the appearance of the Green, and welcoming the visitors. He then invited the wife of the hon. secretary to play the first bowl, and the Green was declared open for the season. The following are the scores:—

Visitors.	No. 1 Rink.	Club.
Stubbs	Todd	
Dean	Hindmarsh	
Evans	Crowley	
Shirley (skip) 24	Plafford (skip) 17	
	No. 2 Rink.	
Banner	Hansard	
Marshall	Williams	
Smith	Wilson	
Sweetapple (skip) 23	Bull (skip) 19	
	No. 3 Rink.	
Sandtman	Turnbull	
Simpson (skip) 26	Baxter (skip) 20	

CROQUET.

The Auckland Croquet Club had a very pleasant commencement to their season last Saturday. The lawn is pleasantly situated in the grounds of the Auckland Bowling Club. The President is Mr W. Ledingham, who declared the ground open for play. The Auckland Bowling Club entertained the croquet ladies and their friends at afternoon tea.

TENNIS.

The Thorndon, Wellington, Tennis Club opens its season on the 30th of this month, weather permitting.

AQUATIC.

The Picton Rowing club have started the season with a will. They intend to purchase two new boats—one a four-oar racer, and the other a clinker. The entries for races to be rowed on the first November were in on Saturday, when crews were drawn for pair oar races for two medals presented to the club by Mr A. G. Fell, and a trophy presented by E. W. Mills, of Wellington. In the event of Picton not being chosen as the course

for the Championship Regatta, the Picton Club have decided to vote for Dunedin this year. The Picton boys are very enthusiastic, and are likely—if their enthusiasm lasts—to render a good account of themselves in this year's doings. The Picton Snowball Minstrels are going to assist them by getting up a popular entertainment for their benefit, on the 9th November.

WHO INVENTED SPECTACLES?

Dr. Johnson expressed his surprise that the inventor of spectacles had not found any biographer to celebrate his achievement. It is known that a monk named Rivalto, in a sermon preached at Florence in 1305, said spectacles had been known about twenty years. This would fix the time of their introduction at 1285. Accepting that date, it is still left in doubt as to the person who introduced them. The honour is divided between two rivals, Spina and Salviuo, who flourished about that time. Some state that Salviuo was first to make the discovery and turn it to practical use for his own advantage. He made known the astounding fact that he could arrest the decay and restore the original strength and acuteness of sight even in those who were nearly blind. But he was careful to avoid giving even a hint as to the means by which he could effect this improvement. Spina, however, discovered the secret, and proclaimed it to the world. He did not attempt to keep the power he had discovered and use it for his own advantage exclusively. He generously made it common to all. Even if it be granted that Salviuo's discovery preceded that of Spina a few years in point of time, it does not in the least reduce the latter's claim to the gratitude of mankind, nor alter the fact that the world—that great portion, at least, afflicted with defective vision—is indebted to Spina for spectacles.

The famous sphinx near the pyramids of Gizeh was thoroughly investigated by Professor Erman, who at a recent meeting of the Berlin Academy delivered a lecture about its probable age. Careful researches show that it could not have been built previous to the so-called 'Middle Kingdom,' or about 2,000 B.C. Between her front paws there was originally the image of a deity, all trace of which has at the present time disappeared. For the building of the colossal work more than twenty years must have been necessary, even if 1,500 men had been employed all the time.

An idea of chloroforming plants that sounds like a fairy tale comes from Copenhagen. A scientific Dane claims that a sleeping plant exposed for some time to the fumes of chloroform or ether is roused into activity, the effect of the anæsthetic on the plant being the reverse of what it is on an animal.



Kinsey, Photo. Wellington.

RUAHINE FOOTBALL (ASSOCIATION) TEAM.

WINNERS OF THE NEW ZEALAND CHALLENGE SHIELD, 1897.

- BACK ROW.—A. HENDERSON (Referee), C. MATTHEWS (Swifts), E. NOSSITER (Feilding), H. STOWE (Wanganui College), J. R. ORFORD (Wanganui College).
 MIDDLE ROW.—D. SHARPE (Swifts), P. GILLESPIE (Napier), E. W. ANDREWS (Wanganui College), F. G. HAWTHORNE (Swifts), J. E. BANNISTER (Wanganui College).
 FRONT ROW.—E. HUGHSON (Wanganui College), F. S. SIMONX (Wanganui College).