

### GOUT

Readers of this paper should know that to effectually cure Gout the great thing to do is to eliminate the urates from the system, which are the cause of the malady, and nothing does this so effectually as Bishop's Citrate of Lithia, which is strongly recommended by the "Lancet," and "British Medical Journal." Supplied by all Chemists in two sizes.

Australian Offices  
18, O'CONNELL STREET, SYDNEY

### CURED.

## TOPICS WEEK.

### THE TERRIBLE KUMI.

OUR New Zealand bush has been invested with a new interest, and in some minds with a dread terror perhaps, by the story of the discovery of the Kumi in the bush some fifty miles from Gisborne, which has been circulated throughout the length and breadth of the colony. It was only the other day that our little scientific world here was greatly excited over the capture of a Notornis, that peculiarly rara avis; but the discovery of the Kumi, if it proves to have been discovered, is an event calculated to excite not merely naturalists, but every man, woman and child in the community. For the Kumi stands in quite a different category to the Notornis. The latter is after all but a bit of a bird, and besides the one recently taken down South there are two other specimens of the family in European museums. But the Kumi is a cold, clammy saurian monster that has never been seen alive or dead by anyone now living. Of his appearance and habits we know nothing, except what the Maoris were told by their great grandfathers, who, it seems, had met the Kumi, though they never cultivated very intimate relations with him. And little does one wonder at their unneighbourly attitude. The Kumi was not an animal to make friends with. According to the Maoris, he was like a huge lizard,



The alleged discovery of the Kumi near Gisborne.

with four legs. He had a great head like a bulldog, and jaws filled with curved teeth, and a body twelve feet long. He could climb trees, and, night he used to lie in wait on the branches till his victims passed below. The Moa and he were great chums; in fact,

the Maori idea was that he used to protect his feathered friend; and so when the moa disappeared the Kumi, having, so to speak, no more object in life, was supposed to have become extinct also. It may turn out, however, that he has only been lying low all these generations. At present his existence hangs chiefly on the word of a bush-feller of Arowhata, who says he saw a strange animal answering the Maori description of the Kumi run into a hole in a rata tree. Other bush-fellers who were summoned at once by the discoverer, allege that they could trace footprints of an altogether unknown appearance to the hole, and round the tree they could see the track worn by the claws of the creature. I confess the chain of evidence is not of the strongest. We are all aware that it is on record that scores of bush men and men not connected with the bush have seen snakes in this colony, while, as a fact, we are entirely free from such vermin. But still the evidence is almost as good as that on which the great sea serpent has established a strong sentiment in favour of his existence, and a good deal better than that on which some friends of the Taniwha attempted to gain for him a standing in the colony. If not enough to make us actually believe that the Kumi is still with us, that bushman's story will be quite sufficient to give us the creeps next time we hear a strange sound when we are benighted in the bush. Further, it will be something to frighten our disobedient children with; and, better still, to startle the girls at bush picnics. The vague terrors that may be evolved out of that little story, the stimulus to imagination it can afford and the provender for hungry nightmares make the incident of the discovery of the Kumi—whether it really belongs to the category of discoveries or only to that of inventions—a valuable addition to that stock of half beliefs on which to a large extent we depend for a living. When all that science and scepticism can suggest has been said, it still does not follow that such an animal as the Kumi does not exist in New Zealand. I own it is strange that no one has come across him till now, and I don't regard the fact that the Government has recently taken under its protection the Tautara—that distant relation of the Kumi—as explanatory of the latter's re-appearance. That would betoken a range of intelligence and a knowledge of the world generally which is not to be looked for even in a saurian that sat at the feet of the Moa and called that giant Dinornis friend. But in a new country like this there must surely be a few surprises in store for us yet. I nourish a hope that some one may come across the Moa some day.

### THE ACME OF STATE PATERNALISM.

THE legislators of France, face to face with the problem of how to arrest the decline in population, which means an annual loss to the country of 20,000 persons, have lighted on a new device. Hitherto they have been endeavouring to popularise marriage by taxing the bachelors, and encouraging large families by giving 'special inducements' to the fathers and mothers of such. But all these schemes have had only a very moderate success, and now the Government, despairing of being able to appreciably increase the number of its babies, has determined to take special care of the ones it has. Every one is familiar with the fact that the rate of infant mortality is enormously larger than that which prevails among adults. For instance, even in healthy New Zealand, which boasts of the lowest death rate in the world, the number of children who die before they reach five years is twelve times larger than the number of those who die between five and ten, and three and a half times as big as the number of those who die between thirty and forty or forty and fifty. Bearing this general fact in view the Government of France has passed a law embodying a number of regulations for the care and upbringing of tender infants. One provision of this measure forbids anyone to give solid food of any kind to babies under one year without the written authority of a qualified physician; and another prohibits the use of long rubber tubes to feeding bottles, because of the difficulty of keeping them sterilised. I have always thought that the lot of babies in almost any country was a truly enviable one, and if I had been consulted as to my choice, I think I would have

preferred to remain in long clothes all my life with a bottle and a 'pam'—the admired of all admirers—in preference to growing up through a disappointing childhood and a thwarted boyhood to man's weary estate. But in France under this new arrangement the condition of babydom is something infinitely superior to anything any of us have ever experienced. These little crumbs of humanity, so to speak, which we by our very excess of kindness and general ignorance suffer to fall from our tables, France proposes to economically garner. She has to be thrifty with her population in these days has France, and hence she means to save the scraps. One smiles at such care as is betokened in the provisions against solid food and long tubed feeding bottles, but the day may come when we shall not despise such devices. Statistics tell us the birth rate of the colony is decreasing, and with a diminished production of babies the value of the output must be increased. What a charming outlook for posterity! The baby of to-day is doubtless dear enough to his immediate progenitors and relations, but the baby of the future will be a national treasure. Yes, instead of being as he now is, the terror of most people outside his own family circle, the butt of current humour, the aversion of bachelors, he will rank as the most precious of our national possessions.

### 'SING, BOYS, SING.'

MR MUIR, of the Auckland Education Board, will not improbably achieve for a time a more enviable fate than Lemuel's mother assigned to the virtuous woman in the last chapter of Proverbs. Not only will his own children arise up and call him blessed, but the whole children of the colony must feel inclined to bless and magnify his name. For it is to Mr Muir that they largely owe various suggestions calculated to lessen the burden of school life. Mr Muir recently advocated the abolition of the individual examination system—a glorious reform I fancy in the eyes of every schoolboy and schoolgirl, and the Chief Inspector, though he would not go so far as that, went to lengths that completely upset all the pupillary preconceptions of that august embodiment of pedagogic omnipotence. He said that the scholars were overladen with work. He virtually conceded the truth of three-fourths of that raving, from which I remember I used to draw some solace, which begins by declaring that multiplication is a vexation, and ends by attributing the increase in juvenile insanity to the teaching of fractions. What precisely is likely to come out of all this no one can pretend to foresee, but I am inclined to



attributes the increase in juvenile insanity to the teaching of fractions.

regard it as a premonition of the total upheaval of our present educational system, which is largely made up of crum and sham. I understand that in the schools some sense of a change is dimly felt, and warmly welcomed, but from what I hear our young friends are scarcely well informed on the matter. There is a growing conviction in some school circles that the school syllabus is to be enormously cut down, corporal punishment entirely abolished, holidays largely extended, and altogether a sort of millennium, in which the lion of a schoolmaster will lie down peacefully with the lamb of a pupil, is to dawn over the school world. Now these are visionary hopes which one cannot encourage. I can assure my young readers that there is no foundation

for their entertaining such quixotic dreams. Mr Muir and the Chief Inspector, though evidently much more like the school master in Ben Bolt, than the traditional dominie, scarcely contemplate a revolution of that kind; and what they do contemplate must certainly prove a disappointment to all who are expecting the millennium. For even their ideas on the subject of education, liberal and enlightened men as they are, must still be somewhat behind the schoolboy's ideas. They still believe that it is necessary that youth should be taught something—antiquated delusion though it may be—and if they counsel contracting the area of study it is only that what is taught may be taught more thoroughly. At the risk of depriving them of their present popularity, I must unmask their real purposes. That confluence of pedagogic and pupillary opinion which is the vain dream of boyhood, may never happen. In the nature of things they are as opposed as the poles.

### THE TRANSMIGRATIONS OF LI.

POOR old Li Hung Chang! This partition of China business seems coming very near a partition of him too. The other day he was Viceroy of China, but thanks to British influence he has now been dismissed from that high altitude. Apparently, however, he has the powerful friendship of Russia on his side, and the Muscovite is doing all he can to get Li back into his old post, and may succeed. All the same, the uncertainty of things in this mutable world must have been borne home on the great Chinaman with painful force in the last year or so. Before the foreign devils took it into their heads to worry over China, the position of Li Hung Chang must have pertaken in a fair degree of that steadfast conservative character which belongs to most things in the Flowery Land. Through his own talents and by taking advantage of that colossal system of legalised plunder and bri-



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bery which prevails in his country, the Viceroy had gathered to himself no inconsiderable amount of gear. Some say he is the richest man in the world. However that may be, he is certainly rich, and he doubtless looked forward to enjoying his wealth in his declining years after the most approved fashion of his race. But Fate in the shape of the foreign devils has intervened, and now he finds himself little more than a football—a costly one, no doubt, but still a football—for the Powers to kick. To say the least of it, the role of a football is not a very dignified one, and it must be particularly humiliating, one would say, to a Mandarin of the first degree, who has been decorated with peacock feathers and crimson dragons, to have perforce to fill the bill. Of course, the moral of Li Hung Chang's story is obvious, and is applicable to both Celestials and Christians alike. One consideration it suggests to obscure people like you and me is that after all we may not have the worst of the bargain. The career of such men as Li Hung or even Ben Tuck is not by any means all beer and skittles.