

Notes & Notions.

(By our Flippant Flaneur.)

Evidently, from the enthusiasm and applause which greeted the reader of the paper at its conclusion, there is no subject nearer the feminine heart of this country to-day than that of their obtaining by law a moiety of the husband's income. It will be remembered that this was a great feature of last year's meeting of the National Council of Women, and last week, in Auckland, the matter was once more ventilated by Mrs Sheppard, of Christchurch, in a distinctly able address on 'The Economic Independence of Married Women.' The speaker was an earnest, and at times so eloquent, that many male murmurs of 'Almost thou persuadest me' were heard, and I really regret being obliged to set on record my opinion, that, like a good many other theoretical schemes for the betterment of this poor old world of ours, this one 'won't do.' It won't do primarily because it is impracticable and unworkable, and because, as I said about another reform a week or so ago, it takes for granted that women, as a class, are a different and superior set of mortals to what experience has proved them to be. But before going into the matter at all, might I point out that the title of Mrs Sheppard's address is not without humour. To discuss the forcible abstraction of half a man's income for the benefit of his wife under the heading of 'Economic Independence of Married Women' is distinctly comical. Surely the address delivered would be more correctly described as the 'Economic Enthrallment of Married Men.'

That is assuredly what the proposed sequestration of the husband's income comes to. The arguments now brought forward are not new, and there is no need to go very deeply into them. One must admit that there is something, nay, a considerable amount, to be said in support of the contention that a good wife by performing her household and maternal duties helps her husband in the earning of his income. Also, one deplores the condition of women whose husbands treat them shabbily in money matters, and would like to ameliorate their lots. But the point lies just here, that all the arguments used are based on the assumption that women are morally and intellectually not merely equal, but superior, to men in regard to the management of money as in all other things. Years ago, when the social purity crusade was in full blast, and Mr Stead was (very rightly) anathematising the young libertines of London town in his usual impassioned style, someone, I remember, observed, not without point, 'We hear a good deal from you of the soiled doves, Mr Stead, but don't altogether forget the plucked pigeons.'

Now that is precisely the fault with the arguments used in favour of the Economic Independence of Women. We hear at voluminous length all concerning the good that wise and good women would achieve if given control of a moiety of the husband's income, but the question of what would happen in the other cases (equally numerous) where wives are foolish and imprudent (far less bad) is kept very much in the background. It is taken as a sort of axiom that most men are brutes, and most women angels. They don't put it quite so boldly, or perhaps so brutally as that, but that is what it comes to. This is of course absolutely incorrect. There are many mean husbands, but there are also many extravagant wives. The proportion is, I fancy, about the same, and, though the commercial morality of man is by no means what it should be, it is as a rule superior to that of women. We are told that if women were aware of the exact amounts of income and expenditure, and were given by law a hand in the manner and means of investment, that many a wife would save her husband from financial disaster. Possibly, but it is absolutely certain that for every man saved from bankruptcy by a woman's interference in his business, half a dozen would be ruined. Women as a class are more prone to panic in times of stress, and less self-restrained in mo-

ments of excitement than men, and the majority would be utterly unable to 'look on' during a 'slump' or a 'rise.'

Moreover, God help us, if we are never to leave our business at the office, and if all the worries and anxieties of the pursuit of Mammon are to be re-opened at home. Any husband who has in mistaken affection made his wife full confidante of his exact financial position, knows that it is a mistake, for when things go temporarily 'wrong' they worry too, and add to the man's anxiety, while a good fortune is apt to unduly elate. No, no, let women remember that in this respect any way 'It is better to bear the ills we have than fly to others that we know not of.'

The plucky experiment of the Wanganui Borough Council in expending close on £4600 on an opera house will be followed with curious eyes by the ratepayers of less progressive but more cautious townships. One is ignorant as to whether the Wanganui Municipal Fathers have gone into the matter as speculators or from motives of philanthropy and the advancement of intellectual and moral Wanganui. In Paris, of course, and in most Continental capitals there is a heavily subsidised theatre and opera company, the Comedie Francaise being perhaps the best known example, but there is no intention or hope of making money in these concerns. They are supported by the State for the same reason as the public art galleries and free libraries are, and it is comparatively speaking a matter of small moment if they work at a profit or a loss. As to the Wanganui affair, taking it at five per cent. £224 will have to be paid in rent—exclusive of sinking fund—for the Councilors to pay their way. Well, it's not a very big sum, but after some considerable experience of matters of this kind I do not precisely hanker after Wanganui's bargain.

The indifference of New Zealanders, as a race, to S.M.E.L.S (capitals please) has ever been a characteristic of the inhabitants of these (as we call 'em) sunny isles. If our endurance—or even enjoyment—of stinks were a harmless mania, odd perhaps, but inoffensive, and even interesting to the visitor, and to 'strangers within our gates,' there would be little need for me to remark on the matter. New Zealand wants to nationalise everything nowadays, and in course of time a national stink is surely conceivable and allowable, and will indubitably arrive. But, unfortunately, a law of Nature has decreed that typhoid shall follow if you persist in encouraging smells. And Nature is one of the few persons who know their own minds, so that if you disregard her laws she makes you pay for it. If it were not so the agitation now going on in Dunedin would be rather foolish, for apparently the odours of decay are pleasing to the local taste. According to the Dunedin 'Star' the state of the Southern Recreation Ground is delightful. A member of their staff sent to investigate reports in brief but convincing terms.

He says: 'The weather was mercifully cold, and so the place was nothing like so offensive and noxious as usual. A space of nearly two acres has been filled up to a depth varying from 2ft to 4ft, and the bulk of the material is refuse of an abominable type. My investigation was superficial; I did not dig down into it, nor did I poke round it very much, or very long, but I found on the surface great masses of decaying vegetables and other substances even more offensive. There were large quantities of apple and turnip parings, cabbage leaves—not one here and there, but in masses—pieces of carrots, oranges, lemons, and apples rotting rapidly, vegetable marrow—not mere scraps, but pieces weighing 2lb or 4lb each—in a like condition; dirty scraps of leather and linoleum; innumerable old meat, salmon and sardine tins, with their unsavoury remnants of meat and fish; masses of feathers and portions of dead fowls—evidently deceased in the course of nature, not scraps of cooked poultry; loads of oyster shells, with their 'ancient and fish-like smell'; old shoes, slippers, and cast-off wearing apparel, in a filthy and rotten condition, and great masses of rubbish and garbage in a semi-liquid state, that did not invite further attention. The smell

was shockingly bad, at close quarters, even on a cool day. On a hot one it would be much better that it should be smelt by all who are responsible for the creation of this nuisance than described by anyone else after anything like a searching investigation.'

As I have frequently remarked, the 'saving grace of humour' plays no unimportant part in the most painful and even pathetic events of life. For example, one reads in the Wellington papers of a scene which, according to the reporter, brought tears to the unaccustomed eyes of the Benevolent Trustees the other day—but, as he remarks, they were tears of laughter and not of sorrow. What caused this phenomenal scene was the recital of a story by a man about his mother-in-law and a loose chin-strap. His trouble was that he wanted the Trustees to advance him £1, the amount of the license fee that would enable him to utilise the services of a horse and cart bought for him by his mother-in-law. The horse had already had one trial; it had unshipped the winkers by a device only known to itself, and only possible when reined with a loose throat strap; it had bolted with the applicant and his little boy, and had not stopped until it ran into a policeman. When he had expostulated with its late owner, the latter had said he forgot to tell him about the horse's habit of bolting when he sold it. Other people had informed him that 'all ———'s horses did that.' He casually mentioned that his mother-in-law owned ninety-six acres of land and a four-roomed house. 'And yet she has been living with you and eating our rations?' queried the chairman. 'Well, if you had a mother-in-law ———' was the response, which was drowned in laughter and was followed by the statement: 'I could not sit down and give she nothing.' Then it transpired that the old lady 'went to the risk of mortgaging her place' for £10 for the purchase of the horse and cart aforesaid, but was not inclined for further sacrifices. She 'had had the cheek to apply for an old age pension, but she was eighty-nine, and they would not give it to her—too old,' continued the son-in-law, which brought forth another outbreak of mirth. Now she was ill, and it was more than likely he would have to take her to the Hospital soon. He had a little baby in the Hospital already with spine disease, and 'I would sooner have that little baby out than the whole lot, gentlemen; if I could get him out I wouldn't care what I lived on.' The applicant (whose recital was quaintly earnest and full of strange quips and cranks and figures of speech) was granted a loan of £1 and given rations until 'he picked himself up.'

Obviously, the Government have trodden heavily on a good many corns in opening the native game season on Good Friday. No doubt a certain number of holiday and city folk were pleased, but from one end of the colony to another arise the complaints of acclimatisation societies. And, really, taking the trouble and expense to which these societies put themselves, I think they are the proper

persons to regulate the game seasons in the colony. They have the necessary knowledge at their finger-tips, and have only one interest to serve—the naturalisation and protection of game, imported or natural. Their unwearied efforts—innocent of personal gain—and the benefits they confer on the colony, in providing game and bringing visitors to our shores, merit every encouragement that can be offered them, and assuredly the recent snub administered, in the neglect of their recommendation as to the date of opening the shooting season, was—well, let us say, ill-advised. To show that even sportsmen and sportsmen disapprove of the season opening on Good Friday, I would quote from the bush correspondent of the Hawke's Bay 'Herald,' who observes that sportsmen in his district 'are complaining lustily that the shooting season for native game was opened too early, as it gives unscrupulous sports an opportunity of playing such havoc with the imported game that when the time comes round for the true sportsmen to make use of their licenses, the game which they have purchased a right to take is either shot or so scared that miles and miles can be tramped without even a sight of the birds which they are seeking. What they suggest with a view to the abolition of the inconvenience under which they labour is that the shooting season should only extend over a month for native game, that it should start a month later than it does at present, and that it should not commence before the opening of the season during which imported game may be taken.'

The Auckland West End Tennis Club give a dance on 23rd of May in the Ponsonby Hall.

England is firm on the Ritualistic question. The House by 200 votes to 14 demanded that preference should be restricted to the clergy who were loyal to the Bishops, the Prayer Books, and the Courts. Balfour made a strong and stirring speech.

'I never saw anybody hate the Spaniards like my wife.' 'What makes her feel that way?' 'She got to reading the way news the other day, and let a lot of raspberry jam burn up.'



LIEUT. LANSDALE, OF THE U.S. PHILADELPHIA, WHO WAS KILLED IN THE FIGHT AT VAILELE, SAMOA.



THE LATE LIEUTENANT A. H. FREEMAN AND THE SHIP'S GOAT. Reil, photo. Taken on board H.M.S. "Tauranga," January 16th, 1899.