

Topics of the Week.

SOCIETY'S SAYINGS AND DOINGS.

THE earthquake on Sunday morning appears to have been felt pretty generally all over the island, and caused not a little alarm in those districts where the shocks were most severe. It was without doubt responsible for the fact that the church attendance that day was the highest known for many a long Sunday, and that a number of grey if not black sheep appeared to be considerably more alive to the value of repentance than usual. Man accusatus himself to all dangers, for in this as in everything else, familiarity breeds contempt, but without doubt earthquake is the peril which best holds its own, and which, provided it be a little more severe than usual, will strike terror into almost every heart.

THERE is something desperately uncanny in feeling the earth, the foundation of all things, heave, tremble, and billow like unstable water. It leaves no refuge, no place whither to fly, and seems a fitting prelude to the end of all things. But the terror of the earthquake does not come with the first shock usually. Wonderment swallows up fear; but when, after one or two premonitory shakes of the sort we get in this country, there is a deafening roar and the whole earth billows and shakes, the most lion-hearted men appear to catch the infection and shake in their shoes. The deadly nausea which is the almost invariable effect of really severe earthquakes is no mean ally of the initial fright, and serves as much as anything to completely subject the usually fearless.

HAPPILY New Zealand earthquakes are not to be called severe as a rule, though they are not of infrequent occurrence. Sunday's appears to have been the most severe that has taken place for some time. The reputation of the Empire City for earthquakes is indeed scarcely deserved, for they visit other places with the same disregard for the feelings of the inhabitants. On this occasion Nelson would appear to have suffered most severely, the damage, even before the shops were opened, being assessed at £4,000. Naturally many people were very badly scared, and there were a good many white faces at breakfast. The quake will indeed furnish matter for conversation for some time in that little township, and probably my correspondent there will supply reams of copy anent the occurrence next week.

WELLINGTONIANS also received a considerable shaking up and doubtless this whim of nature will cost poor humanity some considerable sum of money there too—for a number of windows were broken and damage of a general character done. The Free Library has suffered, and the chimneys of several peaceable citizens have fallen about their ears, but there has happily been no very serious loss of property and none of life.

BLLENHEIMITES were particularly unfortunate for they not only felt the morning shocks severely, but also suffered two minor quakes in the afternoon. Everyone will commiserate with the unfortunates whose glass and crockery have been wrecked.

APROPPOS of the earthquake a good story comes from Wellington, and if not true is at least *ben trovato*; but there is every reason to suppose it is true. A gentleman of rotund person and considerable avoirdupois was enjoying a shower bath at the time of the shock, and the bottom of the bath being somewhat slippery, the shock caused him to lose his equilibrium and fall with a fearful crash to the floor or rather to the bottom of the bath. So great was the 'fall thereof,' that a whole shelf of crockery in the adjoining room was thrown down with a terrific clatter. Dazed and half stunned by the fall, the crash of the breaking china seemed to herald the falling of the house, and catching up a towel the unfortunate gentleman fled out of the house, the front door slamming behind him. Like Mr Winkle on a certain memorable occasion, our hero regained his senses, when he found himself naked and very much ashamed in the street with quite a number of people wending their way to 'early service.' He made frantic endeavours to regain the friendly refuge of the house, but the door held firm, and he finally in despair threw his full weight against the French windows which, breaking inwards, let him sprawl his length on the drawing room carpet. (Of what he 'said' my correspondent wires not, but one can imagine it would be forcible.

SEVERAL somewhat belated Picton events have come to hand, and must therefore go through the condenser. This is unfortunate as regards Mrs Beauchamp's excellent picnic, as the full description, had it arrived earlier, would have been of interest. The *rendezvous* was the historic spot known as Bottles Bay. Few gentlemen turned up, the picnic having been postponed in consequence of bad weather, but the ladies bent to their oars with a will, arriving at their destination in capital condition for a good breakfast. Three adventurers, I hear, reached the top of the trig station, a tremendous climb, but resulting in a splendid view. The names deserve to be recorded—Mrs Allen, Miss Mary Seymour and Mr Anderson. The same two ladies pulled from Mr Beauchamp's pretty place, Arrikiwa, back to Picton, a distance of eight miles. In addition to those mentioned and Mrs and the Misses Beauchamp, the party comprised Misses Isabel Seymour, E. Waddy, A. White, S. Philpotts, M. and E. Greenhill, F. Western, M. Linton, N. Allen, and Mrs Waters. I hear Miss Duncan's afternoon tea and a ladies' picnic were also successfully carried out.

THE Dunedin Amateur Boating Club held their second Ladies' Day on the Regatta afternoon, a number of ladies taking advantage of the invitation to visit the sheds, which were made bright and pretty for the occasion. The afternoon tea and its attendant delicacies were very acceptable. After these refreshments an impromptu concert was given, Mrs Angus and Miss Lily Cameron both singing, Miss Cameron also contributing a pianoforte solo. Dr. Fitchett, President of the Club, thanked the ladies for their attendance, and spoke of a bazaar which they intended getting up, with a view to building a substantial boat-house.

A THOROUGHLY enjoyable garden party, and one of the best of the Christchurch season, was given by Mrs Cowleslaw at Chatterton. The place was looking so green and such masses of lovely flowers in the garden, that when all the guests had assembled in their pretty summer costumes, the day being fine and warm, the scene was a very festive one. Refreshments were served in all the nice little nooks. Tennis was played on courts in the pink of condition, and was very enjoyable. Tennis has been brisk in Christchurch lately.

SEAVIEW, AWITU, was last week the scene of an extremely enjoyable entertainment followed by a dance, the host and hostess being Mr and Mrs E. P. Lodge. The weather turned out most satisfactory, and the *s.s.* Manakau conveyed a large number of guests to this hospitable home-stead. An excellent tea was served to one hundred and forty people in what is known as Lodge's Hall, a large and most suitable building. Then the hall was arranged for a performance by Lodge and White's minstrel troupe, who delighted their large audience by their excellent songs, local hits, break-down dance, etc. Messrs George Brook (Auckland) and John Pye, junior, provided the music (organ and violin). A dance followed, Mr Clayton acting efficiently as M.C. As the day dawned, the genial host and hostess were conducted to the centre of the hall whilst the whole company sang 'Auld Lang Syne,' and amidst many congratulations and thanks, the party reluctantly broke up.

THE expeditions round the Sounds have been as successful as usual. The second trip made by the Tarawera was signalled by perfect weather, only one day being wet. But this was not regrettable, as the mountains are then seen in dim vapours which surround them with mystery, and a hundred little waterfalls appear leaping into the sea, where, in dry weather, there may be only one. The day of the regatta was, as usual, a day of intense excitement, four crews starting in the ladies' race. The race was very interesting, the finish being a close one. The winning crew were Miss Buchanan (stroke), Miss Roberts, Miss Chapman, and Miss Gilkison, with Mr H. J. Williams, cox, representing New Zealand. In the evening a grand display of fireworks and the Regatta Ball was held, the regatta prizes being distributed by Mrs J. C. Roberts. These are to the ladies, usually, silver or brooches, and I believe they are the same this year. Arriving at Milford Sound, six ladies joined the party to the Sutherland Falls, an expedition of great beauty, but demanding much pluck and stamina. The party returned next day, all being well.

CHRISTCHURCH polo was played on Friday afternoon, as the Summer races occupied Saturday. The players turned out in goodly numbers, but not so many spectators as usual.

THE Dunedin Regatta was held in the upper harbour on Saturday afternoon. There was a strong breeze blowing, but not too strong for the yachting which was the most prominent part of the regatta. The U.S.C. Penguin made a good flagship, but most of the spectators were on the wharves. The Kaitorai Brass Band played excellent musical selections during the afternoon, and had the weather been warmer a very enjoyable time would have been spent. Mr Parvo made a good starter, Captain Thomson, and Mr J. B. Thomson acted as judges, and Mr E. B. Hayward as secretary.

A GOLF CLUB of married ladies has been formed in the City of the Plains, so we may expect to hear of matches between the newly arranged one and the girls of last year.

TWO Picton girls have distinguished themselves at the Wellington Girls' High School during the last year. Miss Nellie Allen and Miss K. Stanton have each taken one of the Governor's Scholarships, and their names figure in the list of successful candidates for matriculation at the late New Zealand University Examination. I heartily congratulate these young ladies, with the other fortunate candidates, on their success.

WHAT might have been two tragedies are reported from Picton. Little Miss Jeannie Seymour quietly walked into a deep hole in the river with the idea of coming out on the other side. Fortunately a companion saw two tiny hands fluttering in the water and promptly rescued the daring little mortal from her perilous position. The other, a small boy, walked over the end of the little wharf in the dark. One or two persons on the wharf—the boy's father included—saw a dark object in the water and thought for a time it was a dog. The idea was almost fatal to the little chap who was pretty well exhausted when rescued by Mr Howard Greensill.

QUITE a number of Picton residents, friends, and parishioners of the Rev. Mr Sedgewick congregated on the wharf on Wednesday to welcome their pastor back. There was quite an exciting little scene—people reaching over the steamer rails to shake hands and welcome the travellers back after their long sojourn in England. Mr and Mrs Sedgewick both look remarkably well. They have enjoyed their visit Home immensely, and yet seem delighted to get back to 'dear old Picton.' Mr Sedgewick will preach in Holy Trinity Church on Sunday, and then go on to Nelson for a week with his wife, to see their relations and Bishop Suter, ere settling down to parish work. On their return they will be properly welcomed by the Picton folks.

THE Hon. Mr Reeves, the Minister for Education, and the Rev. Mr Habens were in Nelson a few days ago, the object of their visit being chiefly to arrange for the housing of the different school children, two of the largest schools having been burnt down. It is a question of what is to become of the children. The local school committee want to build one large central school, and it was to see and consider the ways and means, etc., that the Ministers paid the visit. Mr and Mrs Reeves were the guests of the worthy Mayor and Mrs Trask.

THE Wesley Hall Blenheim, was crowded to hear the Choral Society perform the 'Rose Maiden,' by Cowen. The cantata itself is not particularly pretty or taking, but it was capitally rendered, and from first to last, was well worth hearing. Mrs McIntosh with her solo, 'Bloom on, bloom on, my Rosea' again took the palm, her voice being clear and sweet as a bell, while Mrs Lucas also sang beautifully but her part was a trifle high for her. Mrs Snodgrass sang sweetly, and Miss Clark particularly well. Mr J. B. Green sang nicely and with great expression. Mr Snodgrass was, as usual, first-rate, and Mr Orr sang with his general taste and feeling. Indeed, all did well, and Blenheim must be congratulated upon the number of really good singers it possesses. Mr Penney has the makings of a good singer if he could be induced to open his mouth and pronounce his words clearly.

THE orchestral accompaniments of several of the solos were far too loud, and I won't say that some of the violins were actually out of tune, but they were very decidedly sharp, and the effect they produced even at the back of the hall was by no means agreeable. The great attraction of the concert was perhaps the exquisite violin-playing of Miss Lamont Kebbell (Wellington). It is seldom that Blenheim people have the opportunity of hearing such finished playing, and although Miss Kebbell good naturedly gave a long encore, even then her audience did not think they had half enough. I must not forget to mention Messrs Lucas and Cheek, and Miss McCabe, without whose efforts the concert would not have been as enjoyable.