

Topics of the Week.

SOCIETY'S SAYINGS AND DOINGS

THE curious and unseasonable weather lately experienced throughout the colony has elicited numerous growls from every city and town. It is useless to publish them all. Doubtless some people feel better when they have let off their indignant feelings in a letter to the Editor, but as I have not charge of the weather department, and cannot, therefore, redress their woes ament rainy picnics, damp garden-parties, windy boating excursions, cold and wet evening entertainments, earthquakes, gales, and other pleasant atmospheric disturbances, I must let these complaints severely alone.

HIS EXCELLENCY the Governor is expected in Auckland on Thursday. Lord Glasgow will be warmly welcomed again in the Northern city.

LORD HOPETOUN, Governor of Victoria, called at Napier and Taupo on his way to Wairekei. He intends to remain for a few days at the hot lakes, thence he will go to Auckland until March 18th, when His Excellency with Lady Hopetoun, Lord Northesk, Mr Ralston, etc., will proceed to Sydney by the Warrimoo. Lord Hopetoun proposes to go on another tour of exploration through the interior of Australia.

THE Countess of Kintore and her daughters were very active during their short stay in Auckland. They visited every industry possible in the time, being specially interested in the kauri gum trade. They left for Sydney on Saturday.

WE are informed that a paragraph in our issue of the 25th instant, referring to the canvassing for subscriptions for public objects, has been taken to refer specially to Mr John Abbott, and has given great pain to that gentleman and his family. And also that certain references might bear a meaning which was not intended to be placed upon them, and which is not strictly in accordance with facts. Our sole intention was to deprecate unduly pressing, by personal canvass, for subscriptions towards the Queensland fund, and to urge that the committee should trust in the main to the voluntary generosity of the people. In view, however, of the beneficent provision that has been made for the most sadly afflicted of humanity, mainly through the personal exertions and zeal of Mr Abbott, we should be sorry if our remarks on the Queensland Fund should be construed as depreciating the great work which he accomplished for the blind in New Zealand.

MRS STREET, 'Birtley,' Parnell, gave a most delightful garden party on Friday, to meet the members of the University Senate, Sir James Hector and many others being present. Their residence is beautifully situated, overlooking Judge's Bay. The grounds comprise nearly the whole of the land surrounding the bay, which was shown to advantage that afternoon as the tide was coming in. The little wooded walks with shelled paths round the top of the cliffs were entrancing. The fern trees and native shrubs of every description overshadowed the paths, but here and there the trees were cut away, giving a lovely peep of the sea, dotted with numerous vessels. Rustic seats were placed at these spots, so that the views could be enjoyed at one's ease.

MRS STREET received her guests on the verandah, whence they dispersed in various directions; some to wander through the grounds, enjoying the glorious summer weather, while the more energetic joined in games of croquet on the extensive and well-kept lawn. A good band was a pleasant adjunct to the afternoon's enjoyment, and excellent and varied refreshments were provided.

THE annual picnic of the Auckland Yacht Club at the Lake Beach was a great success. Very pretty indeed was the sight presented by the flotilla of yachts, as, headed by the Matangi (the Commodore's vessel), they gracefully moved down the harbour. When the rendezvous was gained, various aquatic sports were indulged in; a duck hunt, water tournament, and several races being greatly enjoyed. The ladies were not much to the fore in their pair-oar race, but the two who did row acquitted themselves very well. (Owing to the late start and other causes, the party, onlookers, and yachtsmen, did not return to town until very late, after having spent a most amusing time.

A GOOD many entertainments in aid of the Queensland Relief Fund have been given very successfully in Christchurch. An organ recital at the Cathedral was well attended, and the goodly sum of £32 was realized. Mr Tendall played some lovely selections in his usual masterly manner, and the choir gave very effectively Mendelssohn's 'Hear My Prayer' and 'I Waited on the Lord,' and last, but decidedly the most enjoyable item on the programme, Dr. Bridge's setting of Tennyson's 'Crossing the Bar,' which is a most beautiful composition. The expression of the music was very well brought out by the choir, who had evidently made a careful study of the piece.

DR. LEVINGS, of the Asylum, Sunnyside, Christchurch, gave a large picnic last Wednesday afternoon. The guests were conveyed to Lyttelton by special train and taken over the harbour to Diamond Park, a pretty little spot opposite to Lyttelton. The weather was not all that could be desired by any means, as towards evening cold showers of rain fell and about 9 o'clock a heavy thunderstorm broke over Canterbury. This condition of things rather spoilt the pleasure of the picnickers as far as outdoor enjoyment was concerned, but dancing was indulged in in the large boarding house close at hand, and in spite of the elements being so unpropitious everyone declared it was a most successful affair. Mr Freeman had the catering for the party in his hands, which fact speaks for itself as to the excellence of everything provided. The rain kept away a good many people, but among those who ventured were Mr and Mrs Westera, Mr and Mrs Campbell, Dr. and Miss Nedwill, Mr and Mrs Otterson, Col. Lean and his daughters, the Misses Campbell, Beawick, Helmore, Ford, and the Messrs Reeves, Robinson, Beawick, Harman, Mathias, Hall, etc.

CUP WEEK in Dunedin was unusually fine, and in consequence a large number of ladies put in an appearance at the races each day, making, as a gallant admirer of the fair sex remarked, even the Forbury Course look perfectly enchanting. The present style or styles of dress admit of plenty of colour—a privilege which was availed of to the full, as very few costumes were of one hue throughout, or even of two shades of one colour, very striking contrasts being the leading modes.

THE sleeves were, almost without exception, worn very full and of a very bright hue, while the hair was in many instances dressed low, with hats worn flat and bonnets trimmed in front. Some of the costumes looked like old pictures—oddly quaint, while others were mere caricatures. At all events the Dunedin ladies showed themselves in the van of fashion's over-driven train. A pretty, piquante face can stand the new hideous costumes, but from an ordinary or even plain woman thus got up, deliver me!

THERE have been no less than four dances in Dunedin during the week, so that there was no lack of amusement. The first was given by Mrs Henry Mckenzie the night before the Cup at the 'Chilet.' The arrangements were perfect, and all the guests delighted. There was some excitement caused during the evening by a portion of the bush in the near proximity of the house catching fire, but fortunately no harm was done. Another delightful ball was given on Wednesday evening by Mrs McNeil at her residence, Woodhead. There were fully one hundred and twenty present, the men being much in the majority. The decorations, supper, etc., were all excellent, and the ball was a most charming affair.

THE race ball *par excellence* during the Dunedin cup week took place in the Choral Hall. It was a most successful dance, and everyone seemed to enjoy themselves. It goes without saying that some lovely frocks were worn, and that the ladies looked particularly nice. Down South they know how to dress well, and can afford it too. The music, supper, and floor were all that could be desired. The hall was prettily decorated, and the arrangements were excellent.

AN open-air concert was to have been held at Mrs Richmond's pretty residence, 'The Cliffs,' Nelson, but owing to the showery state of the weather was postponed. For the sake of the Cathedral Fund it is hoped a large number of shillings will be taken when it comes off.

MRS LEDGER, of Nelson, entertained a number of children at the 'Waltons,' when they all seemed to thoroughly enjoy themselves, especially as they were indulged in a pull down the harbour, a treat which it may surprise many to hear Nelson children seldom have.

THE Picton ladies are cultivating a spirit of independence and business-like precision which is worth recording. At a ladies' meeting held last week a chairman—I beg pardon, a chairwoman—was appointed, under whose direction the meeting elected a committee and hon. sec., who settled all the one hundred and one arrangements for holding a monster conversation to welcome the Rev. A. H. Sedgewick and Mrs Sedgewick back to Picton in less than an hour.

THE Picton ladies are voted *facile princeps* in the art of arranging and managing social functions of all sorts. The conversations given by the residents of Picton to Mr and Mrs Sedgewick on Thursday is generally conceded to be the best-managed affair ever held in Marlborough. Archdeacon Grace, of Blenheim, who was a visitor, expressed himself both astonished and delighted at all the arrangements, and also at the happy at-home-like expression on everybody's face.

THE Public Hall was arranged like a huge drawing-room, into which furniture from all parts of the town had found its way—couches, easy chairs, and small tables *ad lib.* laden with fruit, lollies, and flowers. Huge vases of flowers stood on the stage, where the tables were literally laden with cakes and good things. Carpets and rugs covered the floor, and flags from the 'Prince of Wales,' nikan palms, and boughs of conifer laden with scarlet berries covered the walls. Everybody had joined so heartily in doing what they could, and there was something in the hall from almost every house in Picton, as well as from Koromiko and Para.

MR AND MRS SEDGEWICK are much gratified and charmed at the ovation accorded them, and Mr Sedgewick, in thanking those present, said 'it was worth going away for, if only to come back to meet with such a warm and hearty welcome.'

ONLY three short speeches were allowed. Mr Waddy, on behalf of the residents, welcomed the wanderers back in a speech bubbling over with original wit and humour. Mr Alsorth, Presbyterian Minister, also said a few words of welcome on behalf of himself and church work, and Mr Sedgewick replied. There were also some songs and musical selections by Mrs Baillie (Para), Miss Greensill, Miss Marion Speed, Miss and Mr C. White, Mr Howard, Mrs Atkinson, Mr Gudgeon, Miss Linton, Mr Christopher, Miss Falcoer, Miss Philpotts, and Miss Howard. Pleasant gossip conversation filled up the intervals.

MR J. R. GARD of Rougemont, Picton, has collected £27, amongst the townfolks, towards the Brisbane relief fund.

BOATING parties are all the fashion just now in Napier, and on moonlight nights this is a delightful pastime. Very few venture upon the outer harbour, most of the boating excursions being in the inner harbour. The return by moonlight is very enjoyable.

A VERY pleasant afternoon was lately spent on the banks of the Ngaraora River. A party of people rowed down the river to a pleasant spot, where they landed and practised shooting with an air-gun. Miss Logan and Miss Milly Rhodes tied, so had to draw, when Miss Rhodes won. The prize was a very elegant little gold brooch, and was presented by Mr Wargent. Lady Whitmore and Mrs Dixon were of the party.

A FAR from easy task would it be to decide what is the most attractive feature in the pantomime 'Aladdin,' as played by Tom Pollard's juveniles, now playing in Auckland, and soon to appear in Wellington and the other Southern capitals. As one who has seen a good many pantomimes, good, bad, and indifferent, I may perhaps say with some little authority that this one most thoroughly deserves the laudations which have been so freely bestowed upon it by the daily press. The scenery is far and away ahead of anything of the sort which has previously come this way, and the acting is admirable indeed, the children playing with a self-abandon, and manifest enjoyment of the work perfectly delightful. All the fun, moreover, is pure, and innocent of those *double entendres* which so frequently characterize like entertainments in the Old Country. After a long and signally successful season in Auckland, 'Aladdin' will be withdrawn on Thursday to make way for the 'Gondoliers' on Friday, which is sure to command bumper houses. This will be followed by the 'Mikado,' and since most of us have grateful remembrance of Alf Stevens as Ko Ko (an inimitable masterpiece), that will also prove a sure draw.

OWING to a rush of news, part of the Dunedin letter, including a capital account of dresses at the races on the second day and at the race ball, together with interesting letters from Picton and Blenheim, are unavoidably held over till next week.