

After Dinner Gossip and Echoes of the Week.

Dusty Railway Journeys.

Owing to the dreary country through which the line passes, the journey from Auckland to Rotorua or, in fact, anywhere up that way, is not a very fascinating experience under the most favourable circumstances, but in dry, hot weather, the dust makes train travelling in these parts simply unbearable. As soon as the volcanic country round Auckland is left the material used in ballasting the line is pumice gravel full of very fine sand, which envelops the train and insinuates itself into every corner and crevice—closed doors and windows notwithstanding. Before the journey is half-completed the tired passenger is coated with a layer of gritty dust from head to foot. It gets in his hair, ears, nose and mouth and collects in little heaps in the folds of his clothing. Everything he touches, seats, window-sills, parcels, and even the paper or magazine he is reading is dusty and gritty, and there is no escape from the torment. Several hours of this sort of thing get very monotonous. Even a Mark Twain would surely find some difficulty in being "perky" when travelling under—rather in—such a cloud. And if he did manage to bear up bravely in his dusty carriage his courage would surely fail him when he walked through to the dining-car and found that the head had penetrated even that carefully guarded spot and had settled visibly and palpably on the butter and marmalade. According to the old adage one must eat a peck of dirt in his lifetime, but it is rather disconcerting to have to take in one's short railway journey the quantity apportioned for one's natural life. The Railway Department with Sir Joseph Ward at its head has of late years been showing that it desires to meet the people's convenience—which after all is what we ratepayers pay for—but nothing has apparently been attempted towards abating this vast nuisance. In America they have been meeting with a good deal of success in laying dust by the use of crude petroleum on roads and railway lines, and there seems no reason why the general Railway Department of this colony should not experiment in this direction. For the man who can drive the colliery and lay the dust on the railway lines of New Zealand and particularly those south of Auckland there counts a fortune and immortality. In the event of the Government failing to do a good thing I would suggest a remedy, and that is to have the carriages dusted at every Hamilton and Morrinsville junction. An express train seldom has more than half-a-dozen cars, and a man could run over the seats, window-sills, even in a very short while, and the benefit to weary travellers would be incalculable. To be without dust for even a short time would be a refreshing treat.

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Another Regrettable Incident.

On a recent day during the recent test matches, both in Melbourne and Sydney, the New Zealand players exhibited, and lost the honour of displaying a somewhat unparliamentary attitude, and resorted to childish and unreasonable methods of expressing its disapproval of either the umpires or the batsmen or some other cause of offence. All these things were duly recorded as regrettable incidents, and the press duly expressed its disapproval of the conduct and pointed out how seriously such outbreaks of temper and ill-feeling, and the consequent stoppage of the game, etc. In short these conduct were

very thoroughly and very deservedly lectured. Similarly on such occasions when some player loses his temper in the football field the fact is invariably recorded, the affair is animadverted upon in the strongest possible terms, and one hears a vast amount of indignant comment from the man in the street. Luckily, in the football field it is possible to make an example of any particular flagrant case, and as we all know several offending players have from time to time been warned off for various periods, and it has been generally made clear that if a man cannot keep his temper he will not be allowed to play. These being the games to which the masses are for obvious reasons more devoted, the severest comments have not infrequently come from "the classes" who are devotees of more expensive, and, therefore, more exclusive amusements. A recent occurrence shows, however, that shameful loss of temper is confined, unhappily, to no game, and it is not limited to any section of the community. It is currently reported that during the recent polo tournament, in a match between Auckland and Manawatu B team, there occurred an incident, for which the conventional term, "regrettable" is altogether hopelessly inadequate. At an exciting stage of the game there was one of those unavoidable collisions or cannons, of which three must always be a proportion and one of the Manawatu players was thrown from his pony, and it is stated that, with an access of fury worthy of an Nero, he lifted his heavy polo club, and dealt the pony of one of the opposing team a blow which necessitated the unfortunate beast having to be immediately retired from the game. Now, if a man wilfully assaults another in the heat of a hotly-contested football match, he is promptly (as has been said) warned off. One has never heard of a man wilfully striking another at cricket, either with bat or ball, but if there have been such occurrences, they have doubtless been properly punished. To lose one's temper and hit an opponent is bad enough, but to violently assault an unoffending dumb animal is worse. But this is not all. The fact that the affair was even mentioned in the press has been warmly resented in certain quarters, as if the fact of the game being "Polo," and therefore fairly well known to the wealthier section of the community, gave the offender privileges denied the footballer, and rendering him immune from the consequences of a shocking exhibition of temper. Now, this is a very wrong position to take up. It matters not whether an act of violence is committed on the hockey, football, or polo grounds, it is equally reprehensible and equally deserving of warm condemnation. In fact, the polo incident is far worse, for it occurs with persons who are in positions of greater social advantages, and who ought to consider themselves bound to set an example of higher things—Notless obliging applies. It is to be hoped the Polo Association will take some notice of the matter, and institute an investigation. Such affairs must not be allowed to pass unnoted if only to occupy the high place it has hitherto so well deserved.

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Which is the Better Way?

There would probably be little profit, and certainly no pleasure, in discussing the problem which is on everybody's tongue, and with which the columns of the daily press abounding term—the falling birth-rate one alludes to, of course—but a side issue concerning one of the causes—the increased love of luxury and desire for wealth—suggests a few ideas worth following up. There can be no doubt very un-English motives underlie the desire of every parent to

leave his children either as well off as themselves or better. With those who have "got on" and have acquired the good things of this life, this desire is probably particularly strong, and the one object of existence with them is to furnish for their children every desirable thing denied their own youth, and which may seem to minister to their present and future happiness and advantage. But, as a matter of fact, is this the best thing to do, and is this the right way to secure the happiness for one's offspring? Take the case of a man who from the smallest beginning has built himself up a fortune. His son, to his idea, has to have everything provided for him—any other course would seem unnatural. Yet it is not certain it is right. Suppose from the very beginning you made it clear that your wealth would buy nothing for him but mere food and clothes, and these only up till the time when the children of hard-working parents have to start out and earn something for themselves. You would have to impress the fact that all your possessions, your garden, your luxurious furnishings, your horses, etc., were all acquired by sheer hard work, and that if he wanted similar agreeables for himself he must start out and get them. You would send him only to the public school, and would just let him push for a stool in an office or start as boy in any profession or trade just as you did yourself. Unnatural would, as has been said, be the term applied to your conduct. "That is carrying the thing too far" would be the general verdict, and perhaps it would be right. Few would certainly have the strength of character (and lack of tenderness) to carry out so severe a course of training, but there is no saying it would not make happier and very probably more useful men and women of them than the usual method. Take any rich men of your acquaintance—a man who has made his money in his own life time, and had nothing to start with. When in reminiscent mood, is it not the joys of the old days when the luttie was still being fought that he looks back to? Do the sons who come after him and have the spending of the wealth enjoy that privilege, as he did the acquiring, and even if they are good fellows themselves, is it certain they would not have been better, and occupied even higher positions had they had to battle for themselves?

What the St. Louis Exposition Celebrates.

It is a thousand pities that the Government only decided to send an exhibit to St. Louis for the Great World's Fair at positively the eleventh hour, for it is scarcely likely there will, or can be, much response to the advertisement now appearing and offering to take charge of exhibits which have to be in St. Louis by April 31st. Mr Donne has to be advised as to the nature and size of the exhibit, it has to be packed, shipped, landed and sent half across the American Continent in just about a month and a-half—an impossibility to all intents and purposes. It is therefore certain that the New Zealand exhibit will scarcely be what it might have been had due attention been given to the first offers of Consul-General Dillingham on behalf of the World's Fair Commission. However, it is no use moral-

ising over what might have been. We can but wish the Exhibition every success, and resolve to be more wide-awake on a future occasion. The object of the present paragraph is to answer a query put several times during the last few weeks as to what it is the World's Fair celebrates, and why it is such an occasion for such national rejoicing. Most well-informed persons will tell you that it is to celebrate the centenary of the purchase of Louisiana from France, but few remember how extraordinary was the bargain, and how it came to be formed. Louisiana belonged at first to the Spanish! At the time when Napoleon was First Consul of France his ambitions led him to look to a means of re-establishing the French Colonial Empire in America. A little bribery and corruption was all that was necessary to induce the Bourbon King of Spain to cede the territory coveted, under the express promise that it was on no condition whatever to be ceded to any other Power. The feeling in America was intense. Louisiana had long been coveted, and to see the prize snatched away in front of their eyes, and seized by a neighbour whose presence was such a menace was terrible indeed. War was talked of, but the prudent Jefferson made every effort to secure the territory by negotiations for purchase. At first every effort was baffled. Napoleon was temporarily at peace, and was determined to satisfy his ambition, but the trend of events favoured the waiting game of the American statesman. Napoleon was soon in difficulties again. The attitude of England and Austria got daily more hostile, and he felt he could not afford to saddle himself with a distant province in the midst of a hostile people who would seize the opportunity of any embarrassment on his part to acquire the territory by force. Moreover, he required money for the struggle on which he was just entering with the allies. So, after some chaffering, Louisiana was sold a second time—despite Spanish protests—and for the sum of fifteen millions of dollars. The treaty was signed on April 30th. Extraordinary as it may appear now, the ratification of the treaty brought on some very sharp debates in Congress. The people of the United States were warned that they were incorporating into their number men who were wholly alien in every respect, and who could never be assimilated. They were warned that when they thus added to their empire they merely rendered it unwieldy and assured its being split into two or more confederacies at no distant day. Fortunately, however, talk of this kind did not affect the majority; the treaty was ratified and Louisiana became part of the United States.

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