After Dinner Gossip and Echoes of the Week.

"Kia-Ora te Kawana!"

The more one hears of Lord Ranfurly the more one feels that his successor has a most difficult task before him in filling the role of Governor of this colony. His latest visit to those out of the way places which he delights in ferreting out was to Ruatoki, in the Urewera country, and some of those who were fortunate enough to be present at the great gathering which the natives made in honour of the visit tell me His Excellency created a splendid impression among the Maoris, and came away leaving behind him a memory which will always be kept green by the dusky people who dwelt amid the mountain fastnesses of the Urewera—"The Children of the Mist," as they are poetically called in the Maori tongue. And before everything a man who would gain the confidence and esteem of these children of nature must be genuine and sincere. The Maori is even quicker than his pakeha brother in picking mere political claptrap from the sincere utterances of a man who has come to talk to them straight about their grievances—"as man to man," to use a favourite expression of Kipling. And I have often listened with ill-suppressed amusement at big native "huis," or meetings, to the remarks which are drawn by the long-winded oratorical feats of a certain New Zealand statesman who shall be nameless. I don't think the Governor knows half a dozen words of their language, but his sympathy with them is great, and deals with them in such a frank, manly, and straightforward way that he appeals to that common humanity which is the same whether it is found in a black, white, brown, or yellow case. If you find the native race regard a man as they do Lord Ranfurly, you can rest assured that there is something in him to admire. When he leaves our shores, and the hour of parting draws near, not the least sincere farewell and keen regret will be expressed in the brown man's "Kia-ora te Kawana!"

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Then and Now.

Talking about Ruatoki reminds one what a very young colony we are after all. True, we are large for our age, but we are still very juvenile, and it is only when some of the names which go to make up our short but interesting history catch the eye, that we are reminded of our youthfulness. Why it is only a matter of three decades since the Urewera was the theatre of the chase of one of the most cold-blooded scoundrels that ever escaped the hangman—Te Kooti—and the people lived in this rugged, mountain-strewn country provided the butcher with the following of fanatics who enabled him to defy the white man's Government so long and so disastrously. They were a stubborn people these "children of the mist," and it is not so long since they sufficiently overcame their aversion to theodolites and the other impedimenta of the pakeha surveyor, to allow these pioneers of civilisation to travel through their country without the aid of a posse of police or a squad of the Permanent Force. It seems inherent in hill-dwellers to have a love for their soil which can never be quite understood by the prosaic people who live down on the plains, and the Urewera tribe possess this trait in a most marked degree. Now, of course, all their opposition to the tread of the white man has vanished like the mists whose children they are, and a white man is safe to travel from Whakatane to Te Wairoa, or from Rotorua to Turanganui-a-Kiwa. Of course it is very nice and pleasant to know this, but it is sad to think that it is one of those pathetic incidents which mark the march of the conquering race and the gradual retreat of the conquered. I know the Maori is not ipso facto a conquered race, as a pakeha-Maori friend of mine is always at great pains to remind me when we get on this subject, but the effect of contact with the white man is the same whatever we call them. And we cannot regard but with feelings of regret this slow but sure passing away of the finest coloured race which Britishers have ever met.

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A Dying Race.

Census statistics notwithstanding, I feel positive from my own observation that the native race has not (as we were told) increased, and that it is doomed in the years to come to fade away and join the peoples that were. When on a recent visit to Rotorua I was much shocked to notice the difference that has come over the Maoris there—particularly at Ohinemutu and the neighbouring village of Otahina. As long as one can remember, the Rotorua Maoris never were a particularly virile branch of the race; but the change in, say, the last decade has been very great. At Whakarewarewa the people seem better housed and more attention is apparently paid to sanitation than is the case at the villages I have mentioned, but even there one sees room for improvement. At Ohinemutu and Otahina disease and unhealthy modes of life have left their stamp, till the remnant is a very poor specimen indeed of a noble race. A walk through the villages is more than enough to explain the causes of their deterioration. Any race but Maoris living under such conditions would have been effaced years ago. The Government have done a little towards enforcing a better state of affairs, but there is ten times more to be done. If things are allowed to go on as they are the native villages will be places to shun instead of places of interest. The Tourist Department is spending a great deal of money on the district, and it seems to me a short-sighted policy not to spare a little for that part of the town which interests all our over-sea visitors. Take for instance the work that has been done on the lake edge at the bottom of the Sanatorium grounds. It will no doubt be very pretty when completed, but surely it might have waited a while and the money better employed in some urgently-needed drainage and other matters of sanitation in the native villages at the other end of the town. Lose the Maori element and Rotorua will never be quite the same. The natives cannot in human possibility live many more years in their present surroundings, and as they won't do anything to help themselves—because of their ignorance—the Government should surely step in. It is a fact that Dr. Pomare has done much to improve the condition of the kaingas, but still more should be done, and the Government, through the Tourist Department, should do it.

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In Praise of Pageantry.

Several New Zealand papers one notices, gave pictures last week of the opening of the Imperial Parliament by the King and Queen, and as editors usually give the public what their judgment tells them it likes, one may argue that most of us out here are as fond of pomp and pageantry as are the good folk "at Home," only we have to get ours second-hand by illustrated papers and descriptive articles by the various London correspondents. The enormous and enthusiastic crowds which turned out in torrents of rain to witness King Edward and his Queen journeying to Westminster personally to address his noble lords and "faithful commons," naturally provoked comment from the press, and the value of such State processions, and their share in increasing the enormous popularity of the King, and in still further solidifying the love of a monarchical form of government, are forcibly pointed out in more than one journal. It is, after all, as some would assert, no mere childish love of the tinsel and gold and the clash of music and the jingle of arms which makes us as a people love pageantry. These things please and please legitimately, but if that were all we so far off should not share the satisfaction or feel the interest which we so certainly do. "The lust of the eye" cannot be gratified over 13,000 miles of sea. No, it is something deeper which makes pageantry dear even to those who scarcely can realise the spectacle. We have the pride of race more strongly than any nation! So strongly that it has occasionally made us blunder into bad taste, but part of our pride of race is in our hereditary monarchy. We love sovereignty, and we love to see the Sovereign bear himself as a Sovereign. Will it be denied that the somewhat small stature and insignificant general bearing of the present Prince of Wales, when he visited us as the Duke of Cornwall and York, had a somewhat chill effect on more than one occasion, and that it was the one bitter disappointment and grave mistake of the tour that His Royal Highness should have appeared at the ever memorable Maori gathering at Rotorua in a sac touring suit, which exaggerated the slightness of his physical proportions, and seemed to accentuate the timidity of his general bearing. We like a King, and we like a kingly bearing, and for the same reason and however we may chaff on occasion, we are glad of the existence of an hereditary aristocracy in England, though we should keenly resent any attempt to build one up out here. We read with real pleasure, and with pride, too, of a great Duke who entertains his Sovereign with Royal magnificance just as his forefathers in direct line did their King hundreds of years before. We feel that this is as it should be, and remote as we are from such persons and such scenes, we get a reflected glory therefrom and delight to know this is our race, and these are our people. The visit of the Imperial troops served no small object, and created no small effect here in the colonies. The splendid procession of those glittering troops up our streets reminded us of the might and glory of the Empire, and made us doubly keen to keep her proud and supreme in her place amongst the nations of the world. It would be well worth the expenditure if great generals or others of the Royal Family were to visit us with due pomp and circumstance occasionally. A tour by the Duke of Connaught could not but have the happiest and most valuable results. He is indeed a princely figure and every inch a Royalty and a great personage. Moreover, he has with his martial bearing and handsome personality a charm of manner, a cordiality and an obvious enjoyment of life and pride in his country and position which were certainly not obvious in certain other visitors we have had.

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The Vice of Taking Notes.

Under some such heading as the above I came the other day across a very fierce and designedly overdone philippic on this subject. Note-taking in all its branches, the writer smote both hip and thigh, and declared the practice was reducing the race to a set of mental cripples, unable to remember anything without the aid of the crutches of the note-book. This is, of course, an exaggerated absurdity, but it certainly contains a grain of truth, and that grain is perhaps worth considering at a time when many think it desirable to make the study of shorthand universal in our public schools. That shorthand is valuable only a fool would question, but that it brings in its train disabilities and disqualifications is also certain. It is, in short, just as easy to use stenography to excess as to debase any other originally good thing by overuse. To make a young man as valiant on the practice of taking notes that he cannot remember even the shortest message without the aid of Mr. Pitman, is not an agreeable spectacle, yet it is one which one observes every day. At lectures, too, one cannot but feel that the students who bury themselves in their note-books, and make themselves mere note taking machines, are defeating the real objects of the higher education they are supposed to be acquiring. Certainly they are not enjoying to the full their advantages, and are merely preparing for a process of after-cram, which is, of course, as distinct from knowledge as the proverbial chalk and cheese. Though there are assuredly many shorthand reporters, who are also good descriptive writers, yet it cannot be questioned that the enormous increase in descriptive writing, and the general brightening and improving of both English and colonial journals, dates from the time—not so long ago—when shorthand as an essential to the entrance of newspaper life began to be regarded as a fallacy amongst the younger editions.