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The Week in Review

Municipal evolution is in the air, and at the forthcoming Conference it may be expected that important changes will be advocated. One of these has reference to the institution of an order of aldermen, a proposal to that effect emanating from Auckland City Council. It is in accord with the spirit of national development that titles and dignities should increase. New Zealand, from being a colony, has become a Dominion; the title of M.H.R. has given place to M.P.; the legal profession has now its K.C.'s; why should not the more important municipalities have their Aldermen? Whether this dignity should be confined to ex-Mayors, or whether there should not also be Aldermen in each City Council, chosen for their fitness or their long service, are questions of detail; but there will be little difference of opinion as to the advisableness of creating the new dignity in our four chief cities. Another proposal, which the retiring Mayor of Dunedin has ventilated, aims at altering the system under which the whole of the Councillors retire simultaneously. To secure "continuity of office," and prevent dislocation of business, it is certainly desirable that only a proportion should retire at one time. Municipal accountancy is also advanced by the ex-Mayor of Dunedin as a matter requiring attention, in view of the pronounced growth of municipal trading concerns in this country. These three subjects should receive the serious consideration of the Municipal Conference and of Parliament this year.

The burglar scare, while not by any means confined to Auckland, though "the craft" seem to be rather busy there just now, is attracting the attention of the police, and likewise certain nervous "old women," male and female. As a matter of fact, there is little cause for alarm. If a gentleman publicly crowds his pockets with coin of the realm, and then, on arrival home, proceeds to dispose of the same "portable property" with blinds drawn up and no curtains drawn (as was done in Auckland last week), he is surely "begging" someone to play a game of Tom Tiddler's ground with him, and human nature being fickle and always thirsty, who can wonder he got what he had been "looking for," as modern slang has it. This burglar, by the way, carried, if one remembers rightly, a dark lantern, an instrument one had imagined had ceased to exist, since modern burglars, or the cleverest of them at all events, usually conduct their deprecations in broad daylight or gaslight. Yet what man can read of that dark lantern and not remember childhood's days, when, in "playing burglars"—most fascinating of amusements—the evil smelling, obfusely working dark lantern was, with all its potentialities for burning fingers, and its unmitigated stink, the fiercely desired trophy of all players. It brings youth back even to think of such things.

But there is a more serious side. In "playing burglars" the writer has time and again demonstrated that, if "thieves wish to break in and steal," the uttermost precautions will hardly keep them out. Your clever auditor will be powerless to absolutely eliminate the dishonest clerk. The hermetic closing of doors and windows is powerless to protect householders from skilled, or even moderately skilled, burglars; but the natural consequences of making a vault of one's house are likely to be far more dangerous than the chances of the hardest working burglar. Besides, the colony must be a poor hunting ground after all. The number of idiots—ones can call them little else—who store large sums of money in their houses, when there are banks and saving

institutions open at the most convenient hours, is still large, but one can spare little pity for them, for it is cupidity and the disinclination to pay charges that lays them open to Burglar Bill. Gone, too, are the days of solid silver. Arizona plate, and the like, serve our householders equally well, and we slumber in peace. As for diamonds, really one pities the poor burglar! The imitations are so undetectable from the real that an expert education is required, and so often, too, the husband, or the wife, if the latter play bridge, has forestalled the burglar and left nothing but a string of shining paste. On the whole, one is not scared of the burglar. Even in those legendary days when he hid underneath the bed (a most tantalising and stuffy position one would think) he was a less fearful person than imagination painted him. Nowadays, with a modicum of common sense, his visits can be written off the list of probabilities. It only, moreover, needs a decently trained watchdog, and a determination to avoid outward show and ostentation in the matter of personal valuables to make that hard-working and usually ill-paid profession as extinct as the Dodo.

Jeremiads have of late been very frequent on the subject of the scarcity of clergymen, and it would seem that the dearth is felt more especially in the Anglican communion. It is a portent of the times that men of ability show an increasing disinclination to engage in the work of the Christian Ministry. What is the cause? Is it the material one of insufficient monetary inducement being held out? Or is it the spiritual one of lack of fervour in the work? Both causes may be at work; but the clergy themselves think that the former is the chief operating deterrent. There is certainly ground for this belief, so far as New Zealand is concerned. Many clergymen of the Anglican Church in this country, and some of other denominations, are paid starvation salaries, and it must require great zeal in soul-saving to reconcile men to the miserable existence to which the majority of them are condemned. The remedy proposed by the Bishop of Dunedin is for church members to contribute more liberally towards the support of their spiritual pastors and masters. The Hon. George Fowlds has pronounced against free sittings in the Congregational Church, because he fears that the result would be a sadly diminished revenue. All this points to a growing indifference to religious teaching on the part of the people. If the men and women of the Dominion really wished to have able ministers, they would support them liberally. As they do not provide the means to secure such men, the conclusion is irresistible that they are content to let things drift. And, as regards candidates for the ministry, they stand confessed as being more influenced by sordid motives than by love of the work.

It is, of course, right that "they who preach the Gospel should live by the Gospel," though St. Paul's noble example of earning an independent living is on record to shame the worldly-minded men of to-day. As few clergymen are prepared to follow in his footsteps, the downward tendency must go on. Preaching has become a money-making pursuit, and it has fallen so low that fortune-tellers, music-hall artists, and barrel-organ men can earn a better living than the preachers of glad tidings. This may or may not show a deplorable degradation of the public taste, but the facts are undoubted. The principle of voluntarism in the support of church ordinances has had a fair trial. If it

fails, as it is likely to do, it will be because priest and people have got out of touch with each other. Both are to blame—the priest for his love of pelf and ease, the people for their devotion to strange gods, chiefly the god of Pleasure. The gulf between them will probably go on widening, unless the churches experience a great awakening and once more place themselves in the forefront of popular movements, instead of, as they too often do, allying themselves with the forces of superstition, conservatism and reaction. It is to-day possible for them to regain their lost influence; it may be impossible to-morrow. "Wanted, men!"

In his latest utterance at Reefton on Saturday last, Sir Joseph Ward emphasised various points in the Government policy, such as the promise of continued support to the farming industry and the provision of a superannuation scheme for all workers. The latter project would seem to be a sort of supplement to old age pensions, based on a system of universal contributions from workers. His most interesting statement was the definite announcement that during the coming session of Parliament the Government would introduce a Bill to do away with the minority vote. Whether the measure would propose to control voting by means of an absolute majority or by a second ballot he could not say at present; presumably the exact form to be taken by the proposed legislation has not yet been resolved upon by the Cabinet. The Hon. Mr. McNab is a strenuous advocate of an absolute majority scheme, based upon preferential voting, and this really seems to be the best method of ascertaining the wishes of the majority of electors. As an illustration of the ineffectiveness of the existing system, it may be pointed out that Mr. Winston Churchill has secured the Dundee seat as a minority representative—more votes having been cast against him than for him. Had there been preferential voting, it is possible that the Unionist candidate would have been returned by a preponderance of second, third, and fourth preference votes. It will be another "feather in the cap" of New Zealand if the Dominion should lead the Empire in the introduction of a rational system of preferential voting, under which we should have a more scientific means of securing majority representation.

An anonymous correspondent has thought fit to send to this journal a copy of a certain yellow-orange-coloured journal called the "Winning Post," published in London, with the request that special attention be paid to page 2, which contains a lengthy and decidedly scurrilous attack on the future Governor-General of the Commonwealth (Lord Dudley). The effusion takes the "open letter" form, which is the last resort of disreputable journalism, and is evidently written by a person actuated by feelings of no little spleen towards a nobleman who, if he has not extraordinarily distinguished himself, has at least kept a great name and reputation "unspotted by the world," and whose mother has done, perhaps, as much really hard work of solid value as any woman in the Empire. To attempt, as is attempted here, to blacken the fame and prejudice the reception of a Governor-General is both a cowardly and an unworthy act. Some idea of the style of the composition may be gained from a brief extract: "It has struck us that you must fondle a very optimistic view of the reception likely to be accorded you when you reach your destination in the nether world. In spite of this, it might be diplomatic to pause and take a retrospective survey. Is the colonial experience you collected likely to stand you in good stead? It is not for us to reply to this question; it is one solely for your own considera-

tion. You must not imagine that the Australian forgets his lord; on the contrary, peers are scarce in the land down under. You will find opposition, whether it be in a majority or minority, and the first time you made your bow before the public, and the curtain was rung up on what we will style a farce, will be remembered."

This spiteful attack would not have been noticed or quoted from, but for the fact that no pains are being spared to make all the damaging articles as public as possible. It is to caution those who may read it that the comment indulged in is not only unfair, but grossly so, and is a bitter and prejudiced view of a good fellow that these few lines have been penned.

Even the lot of a competition editor is not without its compensations! This reflection is suggested by the very liberal response made by readers in sending in verses for the "Bouts Rimes" Competition, of which the result is announced in the present issue of the "Graphic." More gratifying than the mere number of the competitors was the evidence afforded of the versifying powers of the people of this country. Among the contestants were numbers of ladies, as well as boys and girls in their teens, and in the great majority of cases the ability shown was most commendable. But perhaps the most satisfying thing to the editorial soul was the number of competitors who wove into their verses laudatory references to this journal. The rhymes supplied for the verses appear to have suggested to most contributors a reference to the No-License agitation, and quite a host of Prohibitionists entered the lists; but hardly one of their compositions showed literary ability. A curious feature was that many ladies and juveniles displayed anti-prohibition proclivities. Out of a dozen of papers sent in by boys and girls of from 12 to 15 years of age, only three preached No-License. One young lady closes her poem by declaring:

"There will be no more sorrow,
No need to shed a tear,
And we will join to-morrow
In a glass of sparkling beer."

Another, a Miss Morrow, weaves her rhymes around the subject of the "Bouts Rimes" Competition thus:

"When the Judge gives his (o)pinion
On May the 16th day,
And announces to the whole Dominion
The name that holds the sway
There will be no cause for sorrow,
Though I may shed a tear;
But, if he gives first prize to Morrow,
I shall certainly shout him a beer."

Despite the ingenuity displayed, and the seductive bribe held out in the closing line, the adjudicator found it impossible to award the prize to this composition, its fatal defect being the use of "opinion" instead of "pinion," a mistake made by about 60 per cent. of the competitors. About a score of other competitors contrived to associate the "Graphic" and "beer" in various combinations. Nearly all agreed that the "Graphic" is "the paper of the day." One young lady declared that

"It brings us a brighter to-morrow
And cheers us like good lager beer."

Another fair competitor gushingly asserted:

"If I meet the editor to-morrow
I'll shout him a glass of beer!"

Yet another young lady—a Prohibitionist this time—after eulogising the "Graphic," closed with the good advice:

"I think it is published to-morrow,
So buy one and give up the beer."

A mere man says: "We live in hope to-morrow of our 'Graphic' and our beer."