

will empty itself after a final curtain. If the seats are properly "turned up," there is plenty of room, so they tell you. Exactly so—If everyone turns up the seats and no accident occurs! There is much virtue, or the contrary, in an "if." If we are in perfect health and the possessors of perfectly working digestions, we can sup off crayfish, cold roast pork, and bottled beer. But "if" ever so small a derangement takes place in our internal results of such a meal are likely to prove disastrous. Likewise, our theatres can admittedly empty under normal conditions in a surprisingly short while. But just suppose a panic, even a moderate one. A shawl or an opera cloak would jam; a man would faint (more likely than a girl); then the seats in the stalls, orchestra stalls, or dress circle of most theatres in the Dominion would become a shambles where the life would be stamped out of the helpless. The scene does not bear thinking of.

Then there is the matter of asbestos or iron fire-proof curtains. Until you force proprietors to supply these within a specified period, they will never be supplied—only talked about, and possibly promised. The attitude of theatrical managers is well shown in the report of a meeting held at Sydney, which denounced the Christchurch by-law as "arbitrary in the extreme." The reply to this is that no regulation that seeks to secure plain justice to theatre-goers, combined with safety and comfort, can be too arbitrary. Only the other day, Auckland had experiences proving the need for a regulation to safeguard the public against imposition. Scores of people who had paid for seats in the orchestral stalls were crowded out, and had to be content with seats in the ordinary stalls. Under a proper system, such as is to be introduced in Christchurch, no opportunity would arise for the spoliation of the public in this fashion. If it is not "obtaining money under false pretences" to sell a thing which you are not in a position to dispose of, there is need for a new legal definition. No doubt the practice in vogue is illegal, but people prefer to "grin and bear it" rather than create a disturbance or raise a lawsuit. The remedy lies with the owners of theatres, not only for this evil, but also for those of overcrowding, and danger in case of fire or panic. If they do not voluntarily introduce these reforms, they will have to act under compulsion of law. It is to be hoped that the wealthy and public-spirited men who own the theatres and opera houses in our large cities will of their own volition take steps in the desired directions.

Do dreams ever come true? In other words, do events that "happen" in dreams ever occur afterwards in real life, in such a way that the occurrence can truly be said to be a fulfilment of the dream? Most people in this matter-of-fact age simply laugh at the idea, or when confronted with an instance that cannot be laughed away, take refuge in the theory of "coincidence." What matter, say they, though an occasional dream has something like a fulfilment? What of the thousands of dreams that never come true? That would be a very effective retort if it were contended that all dreams partake of the nature of warnings or previsions; but no one has ever made such a claim. In the words of Tom Hood—

"Some dreams we have are nothing more than dreams—
Unnatural, and full of contradictions;
But others of our more romantic schemes
Are something else than fictions."

Thinking it possible that some of our readers might have had experiences of "dreams that come true," we offered prizes for the best true narrative of a dream and its fulfilment. The result exceeded all expectation, for a large number of incidents, vouched for as facts, have been described by competitors, and some of the more striking will be found in another part of this issue. These stories bear a close resemblance to others that have been told of dream experiences; but, being personally vouched for by writers, they must carry more conviction than the anonymous narratives often published. The dream stories sent in for the competition do not all deal with disasters. There is one that tells how the dreamer was led to back a winning horse; another is a very purposeless case of prevision in the matter

of shaving water. But the very triviality of this narrative argues the reality of prevision, since in such case no theory of foreboding or anxiety will satisfactorily account for the dream.

What is the philosophical explanation of the phenomenon of prophetic dreams? The occultists tell us that Time is a mere illusion, and what we call Past, Present and Future are in reality the same. Hence, if human beings can rise superior to the conditions of this life, which are the cause of the illusion, they are able, in greater or lesser degree, to see occurrences long before they happen. It is an enlargement of vision analogous to that which one obtains on climbing a hill, only it results from an exaltation of spiritual state. This is the whole theory of prophecy. There are people to-day, called clairvoyants, who in their normal condition claim to be able to see what ordinary mortals call "the Future." There are others who get this power of pre-vision when in a trance condition; others, again, are raised into the proper state when asleep. The dreams described by our competitors are, according to this theory, the dreams of people who in their sleep are capable of entering on a plane of existence in which they are unhampered by fleshly conditions; in which their minds are impressed directly, and they gain information of occurrences to come. In general, such dreamers can distinguish between dreams of foresight and those that are "nothing more than dreams." The first prize narrative, published in this issue, gives an instance of a dream-warning that was heeded, possibly with the result that the dreamer's life was saved. This incident proves that dreams may have their uses, and are not such unsubstantial stuff as they are generally supposed to be. It also seems to show that people in a certain stage of intoxication may have the gift of peering into the future. A sporting story suggests that if the power of "picking winners" were generally developed, there would be an end of gambling on horse races, for everyone would be in the position of backing a "dead cert." The gambling reformers might do worse than look into this aspect of the question.

Our Illustrations.

SAMOAN GIRLS MAKING KAVA.

Kava is prepared from the aromatic and pungent root of a tree belonging to the pepper family, and the dusky epicure thinks as highly of a good brew as a bon viveur does of the finest vintage that ever left France. "Soapy water" is the comment that invariably rises to the lips of the stranger who tastes this concoction for the first time, but even he gets to like it after a while. In the old days kava was prepared by the youngest and prettiest girls of the village, who chewed the root, "the result" being mixed with water in a big wooden bowl, and then strained through cocoa-nut fibre. The brewing and subsequent drinking were attended by an interminable amount of etiquette and ceremonial, which has just about the antitheses of the custom of the gentleman in the East End of London, who picks up his "pot" and settles it with no more than a curt "Cheer, O!" to his pal. The native takes life easy, and nothing delights him more than a little ceremony and show—the more trivial the occasion the better—and he lavishes all his ingenuity on the drinking of his favourite beverage. Now-adays you will see them grinding it up in a coffee mill, and mixing it in any old thing handy in place of the time worn bowls, which in the course of many brewings acquired a beautiful pink tint on the inside, resembling fine enamel. This is the hall-mark of a bowl of value. The effect of kava is peculiar. You may be as clear as the head as an Arbitration Court Judge, but when you get up to take leave of your hospitable host, you discover to your dismay that you are undeniably intoxicated as to your nether limbs, and if you persist in leaving your moorings you describe parabolic curves, rhomboids, and scalene triangles, which would have puzzled Euclid to demonstrate, let alone prove. If the cocoa-nut cup has passed freely the best plan is to simply sit and think, and postpone all engagements requiring a peripatetic effort.

Musings AND Meditations

By DOG TOBY

OUR CRITICS.—II.

THE statement that we have no horizon, and that we only interest ourselves in local affairs, has a good deal to recommend it at first sight. For we undeniably do take a great interest in our own little corner of the universe, and we like to hear of the doings of our compatriots when they leave us for other climes. Our newspaper "locals" are generally true to their name, and doubtless to many people appear trivial. But the question is not so much whether we take an interest in our own affairs, but whether we confine our interest in these affairs. For all men take most interest in what is near them. Any mother worthy the name will feel far more concern over baby's first attack of measles or chicken-pox than she feels over the ravages of the sleeping sickness among the natives of Africa. He would be an extraordinary man who did not experience more concern at the burglary of a few pounds worth of goods from his own house than over the looting of a bank or strong room in Russia involving many thousands. It is not the greatness of anything that most moves us; it is its nearness to ourselves. Nor is the instinct to be condemned. It makes for patriotism, for love of home, for love of family. We can not set out to regenerate the world, but we can try to improve the small corner of the world in which we are placed.

What we want is not less national spirit, but more. Odd as it may seem to those who assert that we are always blowing our own little tin trumpet, we are strangely distrustful of ourselves. We are only feeling our way to national life, and the cultivation of a national ideal. We are too prone to believe everything English is better than our local production. We don't say so in print, and we seldom say so in speech, but we always act as if we thought so. Why, otherwise is it that we always send Home for men to fill our best posts? If we want a good engineer, or a professor for the university, or a bishop for the Church, or an expert in any department of art or commerce, we invariably advertise in the English papers and ask the Home authorities to choose a man.

If we were as conceited as some of our critics make out, we would surely choose a man from amongst ourselves. But the truth is that in spite of our outward boastfulness, we are at heart unduly diffident of our own powers. We mistrust the real ability of our own men, and feel that for any really high and important position it is better to look for a man further afield. And this system, while much can be said for it, is far from being wholly good. It goes far to discourage native talent. However brilliant one of our own students may be, he feels that he can never attain to the highest and most coveted educational prizes. The colonial parent realises that the best posts in the Church will be given to imported clergy. The clever boy knows, from the start that the plums in his profession are not for him to gather. And not only is the system bad in so far as it tends to discourage native talent, but also many of the men sent out are out of touch with colonial ways and colonial aspirations. If we would become a nation with national characteristics we must cultivate a greater spirit of self reliance. Our judges, our bishops, our professors, our engineers, our experts must be native born. Probably at first they might not be so good or so experienced as the imported article, but all young nations must learn to walk alone before they can expect to run.

But it is far from true that we take no interest in the great world outside. Does the average Englishman know more about New Zealand than the average New

Zealander knows about England? How many Londoners could tell you the names of any of our Ministers? Very few, and yet most colonial, know Asquith and Morley and John Burns by more than name only. When Ballance died, the English evening papers announced "Death of Premier," and the man in the street felt aggrieved when he had bought his paper, to find that it was only an unknown premier of a place he had never heard of. Yet when Campbell-Bannerman died, all New Zealand mourned his loss. We are told that we take but little interest in great Churchmen at Home, yet it is not so long ago that English Churchmen always contemptuously referred to colonial bishops who had gone back to England as "returned emetics."

Indeed, what has struck me most in the colony is the great interest which people take in European affairs. I have known out-back settlers who had a most intelligent grasp of foreign politics, living remote from any large centre of activity, they seem better able to take a bird's-eye view of the world's doings. The average Londoner confines his attention to London. He mostly ignores everything else, and is woefully ignorant not only of Europe and the outlying parts of the British Empire, but even of his own provinces.

A young country should be optimistic, it should be proud of its achievements in the past, and hopeful for its future. It cannot be expected to have the wide horizon of older lands; but we do not limit our outlook to our own islands; rather do we take a sympathetic interest in the welfare of the world at large, while not neglectful of our own. Next week I hope to offer a few remarks on the question of our alleged pessimism.

During the last five years the population of New Zealand has increased just twice as fast as that of the Commonwealth, and however Mr. Deakin and Sir Wm. Lyne may try to explain this fact, it is a very bad advertisement for Australia. Either the country must not be what it is claimed to be, or its advantages are neutralised by bad government. Between the natural increase of the Dominion and this country there is little difference; it is further off Europe, has not been settled half as long, and was at the date of last census nearly six times as thickly inhabited as Australia. Nevertheless, whilst our population has grown at little more than $\frac{1}{2}$ per cent yearly, New Zealand's has increased by over 3 per cent. Whereas since 1901 the number of souls per square mile has risen in the latter from 7.4 to near 9 in the former, it has only grown from 1.27 to 1.4. In this respect, while our neighbour all most ranks with such old colonised States of the American Union as California and Florida, Australia can only find a parallel for its emptiness in the newest territories.

The gentleman who has been hanging on to land round about Sydney, in the expectation that some day neighbours will build and make his little lot valuable, is getting desperate, now that a municipal land-tax has arrived. One estate is advertising that it will give the possession and use of land free to builders. When a sale has been made, the land will have to be paid for, but at a very low price. The estate wants, of course, to dodge the land-tax on at-present unoccupied blocks. Also, tired of waiting for somebody else to build on neighbouring land, it is driven to almost give away some of its own land, so as to create a demand for the balance. It all shows that the land tax is doing just what its friends said it would, viz., forcing land into use.