burg, and it is interesting to note that in spite of his long life he was not burdened with the three great sorrows—want, worry and family.

According to the Wellington "Free Lance," a Thorndon servant-lady arrived at a fashionable doctor's door on Wednesday night, in a state of tremendous excitement. Her mistress had gone mad! Would the doctor come quickly, please? Mr Swelldom had recently "gone bung," and, perhaps, it had sent the lady crazy. Would he come round, and have a look at her? Doctor asked the maid what peculiar form the alleged lunacy took. Well, Mrs Swelldom (who weighs fifteen stone two and a-half pounds) was turning somersaults on the floor of the drawing-room, taking noisy breaths, and trotting round amongst the furniture. The doctor collared his bell-topper and bag, and betook himself Tinakori-road-wards. As he arrived, Mrs Swelldom had just executed a brilliant somersault, and was sitting, a good deal tired, in an easy chair. She wanted to know why the doctor had come. She did not feel ill. She had heard that a Swedish lady doctor had recommended the "somersault cure" for obesity, and she was a convert to the cure. It seems that the epidemic is spreading, and it is quite a fashionable pastime for ladies of obese habit to slowly trundle head-over-heels for an hour each day. If you notice that the fat women of your acquaintance are becoming thinner, be sure that they have been trying the "somersault cure."

Many and peculiar are the stories told of the telephone. The following, however, actually occurred the other day. A tradesman residing in the suburbs had occasion to communicate with a certain establishment in the city; and after some little delay was successful in getting "switched on." "Are you there?" was the stereotyped enquiry. For reply came the familiar strains of "Soldiers of the Queen." "Oh, never mind that now," he yelled back, "I'm in a hurry; are you there?" Again he listened, just in time to hear the chorus of the first verse. He waited quietly for a few moments and took a walk round the room and made another effort. By this time the second verse was well under weigh, and the effort to open up communication was given up in despair. Some time afterwards it was found that a graphophone had been turned on playing the patriotic song, and the shrill and metallic notes of the 'phone quite drowned the rather thin voice of the speaker at that end of the wire.

Another telephone story arises out of some of the wires getting crossed as they occasionally do. A certain well-to-do tradesman was communicating with his financial agent to arrange a draft for £600, and evidently the other party was negotiating with some firm for six yards of material for some purpose or other. All the tradesman could make out of combined wires was this: "Are you there?" "Yes." "Then you——" "Oh, but six is too much." "What on earth has that to do with you?" "I think with care you could manage the job with two." "Two what, you donkey?". "Oh, yes, I'll attend and——" "If you really want another couple of yards." At this point negotiations were broken off, and it was not until after a personal interview that the status quo was restored.

The question as to the amount of allowance to His Worship the Mayor (Mr A. Kidd) for the ensuing year was considered at the City Council last week, and after considerable discussion the amendment, fixing the salary at £300, was carried by 7 votes to 5. On the Council's resolution being communicated to the Mayor, Mr Kidd said that he was glad to hear of it. He did not know what the discussion had been about, but if an increase had been agreed upon, he would not have accepted it. He did not know what had been going on, but those who might have voted for an increase did an injustice if they thought he would accept it.

The Martinique Disaster.

MOUNT PELEE.

AN INTERESTING DESCRIPTION.

Dr. E. W. Alexander writes as follows to the "Otago Daily Times":—

I am probably the only person in New Zealand who has actually been on this mountain, though I did not get near the summit. My visit was nine years after the eruption of 1851, which caused a rain of ash on St. Pierre, but did no damage there, though the face of the upper part of the mountain was so much changed that my guides found it impossible to even get near the top from the St. Pierre side. The name Morne applied to a hill comes from the Spanish, and is a frequent one in French West Indian Islands. The great volcano of St. Vincent, known now as Soufriere, was formerly called Morne Garow, and at Castries St. Lucia the garrison occupies barracks on Morne Fortune, a low hill at the head of the harbour. The entire chain of the Windward Islands is volcanic. In 1812 there was a terrific eruption of Soufriere, in St. Vincent; Guadeloupe has suffered from violent earthquakes; St. Lucia has, in the Valley of Soufriere, boiling springs and mud pools like those at Tikitere.

Morne Pele, on the scarred mountain, lies just at the back of St. Pierre, much as Flagstaff Hill is situated with regard to Dunedin, though the former is at a somewhat greater distance, and is more lofty. Anything like a great eruption, then, overwhelms the town at its base with ash, or, as is stated, with mud. After a day spent in St. Pierre, I rode early next morning over a plain for three miles or more, then up the mountain side for about the same distance to a small picturesque plateau, where there was a small Hotel des Bains, and barracks and quarters for invalid soldiers, sent there to use the hot mineral baths, and to be in mountain air. These buildings were on cliffs of consolidated ash, with vertical sides of a hundred feet in depth, all clothed in vegetation, but showing the magnitude of former outbursts of the mountain. I engaged a guide to go to the summit next day, who was confident of reaching it, having been on it before the eruption. On our way we got a volunteer who was working near our path, and who at once joined when he learnt where we were going. Both were Africans, and were slaves until after the revolution of 1843. Each carried a cutlass, and I went between them. I do not remember the distance we went, but we finally came to precipices and no path, trees stripped of foliage, and many dead. The guide was sure that the summit could not be reached from the precipitous faces caused by the eruption. I thought we might do it, and tried scrambling down a declivity, but I saw that further progress was not to be done, and gave up the attempt. My guide suggested that jumping down a bank might bring you on a viper, and the bite of the lance-headed viper of Martinique and St. Lucia is most deadly. From the point we reached, the bare white rock of the summit seemed very near, and was, perhaps a thousand feet above us. A slight odour of sulphur was perceptible. My friends took me in another direction still higher, where we came to a small shallow lake—Grand Etang—an old crater, no doubt, but of no importance. I learnt later that the best way of ascending the Morne was from the S.E. side, St. Pierre being on the N.W. I fear, alas! that the pleasant Hotel des Bains and the baths must all have been overwhelmed by the present outburst. It is obvious that no such eruption has taken place for three centuries, as no settlement would have been made at St. Pierre, which is the seat of Government and commercial capital.

MARTINIQUE AND ITS PEOPLE.

No less interesting than the natural features of Martinique are the inhabitants of the island. In 1895 these numbered nearly 500 to the square mile, aggregating 187,692 people, all of whom, except 1307, were either blacks or members of the remarkable mixed race which distinguishes the island. The mixed populations show every variety of colour and type, but they are generally healthy and thriving. Traces of Carribean blood are seen in their colour, physiognomy, and physical characteristics. In Lafcadio Hearn's "Two Years in the French West Indies," the population of Martinique is thus described:—"Fantastic, astonishing—a population of the 'Arabian Nights.' It is many-coloured, but the general dominant tint is yellow. . . . Straight as palms, and supple and tall, these coloured women and men impress one powerfully by their dignified carriage and easy elegance of movement. Perhaps the most novel impression of all is that produced by the singularity and brilliancy of the women's costumes. Some of these fashions suggest the Orient; they offer beautiful audacities of colour contrast. . . . But few are thus richly attired; the greater number of the women, carrying burdens on their heads—peddling vegetables, cakes, fruit, ready-cooked food, from door to door—are very simply dressed in a single plain robe of vivid colours, reaching from neck to feet, and made with a train, but generally girded well up, so as to sit close to the figure, and leave the lower limbs partly bare and perfectly free. These women can walk all day long, up and down hill, in this hot sun, without shoes, carrying loads of from 100 to 150 pounds on their heads."

THE CITY OF ST. PIERRE.

St. Pierre, situated on the west side of the island of Martinique, stands on cliffs overlooking the bay of the same name, which is nothing more than a slight curve in the shore line, vessels having to anchor in the open roadstead. The town, according to descriptions of visitors, had an aspect of great solidity, looking as if it had been hewn out of one mountain fragment instead of constructed stone by stone. Although commonly consisting of only two stories and an attic, the dwellings had walls three feet in thickness. There were also many fountains in the city carrying drinking water, which came from another source than that of the water in the gutters. The town had many images, and some fine statues. One of the latter, standing on a height and easily visible from the sea, was a gigantic "Christ," which overlooked the bay; a great white "Virgin" surmounted the Morne d'Orange, to the south of the city, while "Our Mother of the Watch" overlooked the anchorage. There was a great white cathedral with a superb chime of bells. Behind the city lay a beautiful cemetery. The market was in the middle of a square surrounding a fountain, and was usually filled with countrywomen dressed in gorgeous Oriental colours, selling their oranges, bananas, vanilla beans, or cocoa, while the fishermen used to lift their boats bodily out of the water, and convert them into stalls, where could be seen a most wonderful fish display, rivalling in colours the tints of the rainbow.

THE SOUFRIERE VOLCANO.

The following description of a visit to the Soufriere volcano, on St. Vincent, by Dr. E. W. Alexander, is published in a Dunedin paper:—"St. Vincent is the most beautiful of the Windward Islands, the loveliness of the Mariaqua Valley being famed. I visited it twice, ascended the volcano, and made a circuit of the island, visiting several of the plantations. I left Kingston one afternoon in a large canoe with topsides, probably a vestige of Carib architecture, in which we sailed and paddled along the leeward coast 22 miles to Soufriere, a small village under the mountain of the same name, which was originally called Morne Garou. A small canoe, paddled by one man, took me a little farther to Mr Cloak's estate, where the manager, to whom I had a letter, received me. The estate was one of a few which had remained some generations in the same family. I noticed in the garden next morning a flowering shrub with numerous small humming-birds darting among the flowers, looking like bright-coloured butterflies. The manager gave me Mr Cloak's mule to take me as far as there was a track, and a guide over the top of the volcano to the windward side of the island. The track was much like a watercourse, and steep, but passable. The way was entirely through forest until near the summit—lofty tree trunks with leaves surrounding them, while the foliage quite shut out the sun. No bird life was visible, though the long, melancholy note of one bird was constantly heard. Grass and stunted bushes alone covered the mountain top. The crater was reached at about 3000ft, a most striking one. It was quite perfect, a mile in diameter, with precipices and narrow terraces for 500ft, clothed with trees, ferns, etc. At the bottom was a lake of a dark bottle-green colour, unruffled, and itself 500ft to 600ft deep. Coming as I did on to this vast and deep crater on the summit of a rounded mountain was most impressive, and the view of the crater was a fine one. But this crater was to all appearance extinct. No fire or eruption had marred its beauty and singularity for many centuries. Whence, then, came the enormous volume of ash which covered all the surrounding estates, and had even been wafted to Barbadoes? A little farther on was another vast cavity, but not a perfect one, separated from the original crater by the narrowest of ridges. This great opening belched forth all the ash of the eruption, and this crater was formed then. It would probably be from it, too, that the present ash cloud came which was noticed over the mountain by the passing vessel. I had sent the mule back on getting out of the forest, the guide and I walking on up to the craters. The old crater is absolutely perfect, wooded and deep. At one time it was the source of lava floods, later of ash and mud eruptions. My guide, then a boy of nine or ten, remembered the eruption, and being taken a distance away to avoid the falling ash and the hot water streams. The volumes of water acting on the fallen ash swept it over valleys, filling them."

Writing to the Wellington "Times" on the subject of the recent great eruptions, Mr. Edward Tregear says: I do not know why Mount Pelee in Martinique, the volcano which has lately wrought such awful devastation, was thus named. Probably, as Martinique is a French colony, the meaning of the name is "the bald-head," because its summit stood out as bare rock above the luxuriant tropical vegetation of the lower lands. It is, however, a curious coincidence to find that Pele (both vowels pronounced) was the Polynesian goddess of volcanoes. Her home is in Mauna-loa, the huge volcano at Hawaii, and a fearfully destructive divinity she has always been. So widely known is her name that even as far west as the Malay Archipelago we can find the word tuta pele, "exudation of Pele," as a name for sulphur. It will be hard to convince the people of Honolulu that the likeness of name between the West Indian volcano and that of their cruel deity was mere coincidence; they will say it was the worst of ill-omens to give the hill such a name. Within days of my own recollection, when the lava-floods from Kilauea were pouring down on the lower lands and eating up villages, a Princess of the Royal House of Hawaii offered herself as sacrifice to Pele. The Princess herself was (genealogically) one of the descendants of the goddess, so the sacrifice was accepted and the lava-flow stopped. Doubt is impossible; I have a newspaper account of it.

Mr T. Hutchison, S.M., paid a compliment to the Salvation Army last week in the hearing of a case against Frederick De Arcy and Harry De Arcy, street singers, who were charged with causing a number of persons to collect at the Thames Hotel Corner so as to impede passers by. One of the defendants said that the Salvation Army played at street corners, whereupon His Worship ejaculated, "Ah, but they play music." The defendant replied, with a touch of indignation in his voice, that he and his brother "played music." However later on Mr Hutchison paid defendants a compliment by referring to them as "syrens." The police evidence went to show that the crowd round defendants blocked the pavement and compelled passers to go into the muddy street. Defendants promised not to offend again and His Worship inflicted a nominal penalty of 5/ and costs on each singer.