

A Smart Dinner Party at the Central Hotel.

The dinner party given at the Central Hotel, to celebrate the completion of the recent extensive alterations, was unquestionably one of the most sumptuous affairs ever served in Auckland, and would have done credit to any chef and cuisine in the Empire. The guests assembled about seven o'clock, and were received in one of the private drawing-rooms on the first floor by the host, Mr. Rolleston. A stroll round the new wing and first floor generally showed how extensive are the alterations. The most striking improvement is that whereby the little smoking-room at the end of the main hall leading out on to the handsome portico has been thrown by an archway into the drawing-room on the right, thus making a very prettily-shaped and convenient lounge, which has been richly carpeted and furnished with such taste and discretion that it now forms one of the most charming and genial meeting places for guests to be found in any hotel. The large drawing-room remains as it was, but has been splendidly re-carpeted and re-furnished; this being the case indeed with regard to the whole hotel. Some of the bedrooms, notably two on the first floor, are furnished with a disregard of cost and lavishness nothing less than amazing even in these days of luxurious hotel accommodation. Into the matter of the alterations, etc., however, we hope to return at length in another issue, and to describe them in some detail. Dinner was served in the convenient supper-room, which has been added for the convenience of theatre-going and late-arriving guests. The menu was as follows:

MENU.

- Hors d'oeuvres Variés. Tartines de Caviare.
- Olive Farces. Anchovy Eggs. Devilled Almonds. Oysters on Half Shell.
- SOUP.**
- Tortue Claire a l'Anglaise. Puree of Chicken a la Reine.
- FISH.**
- English Salmon and Cucumber Sauce Hollandaise. Filets de Soles a la Colbert.
- ENTREES.**
- Larded Sweetbreads and Puree of Green Peas. Lamb Cutlets and Fresh Mushrooms. Shrimps in Aspic.
- JOINTS.**
- Roast Sirloin of Beef and Horseradish Sauce. Roast Spring Lamb and Peas and Mint Sauce.
- POULTRY.**
- Devilled Turkey and York Ham and Oyster Sauce. Roast Chicken. Pommes Frites, French Salad.
- GAME.**
- Compte of New Zealand Pheasant aux Champignons. Asperges au Beurre.
- ENTREMETS.**
- Omelette au Rhum. Victoria Trifle. Charlotte Russe. Macedoine Jelly. Bavarian Cream. Salade de Fruits and Cream. Glace a la Tutti Frutti. Desert Variés. Cafe Noir.

November 6, 1902.

It is not too much to say that the cooking and service of this fine banquet could not have been excelled anywhere, and reflected the highest credit not only on the chef de cuisine, but the maître d'hotel, who saw it sent to table. The wines were, moreover, worthy of the viands. An excellent chablis was served with the oysters. A light and elegant amonillado accompanied the soup. Claret-drinkers were provided with fine vintage, and the champagne was Goulet,

1859, one of the best champagnes which has ever reached this colony. After dinner, to which, needless to say, ample justice was done, Mr. Rolleston, after the usual loyal toast of "The King," proposed the health of the owners (Mr. L. D. Nathan & Co.). He spoke of the large and very heavy expenditure of capital which had been necessary to bring the hotel to its present position, a position he was proud to see it occupy, and a position for which he was proud to say he was in some degree responsible. He claimed without egotism or boasting that some kudos for bringing up the hotel from what it was when he took it over to what it was to-night belonged to himself, but it would have been impossible for him to have done much had he been denied the generous and hearty support of the owners. He had time after time gone to Mr. Nathan, suggesting some improvements, and, though that gentleman might look at him severely for a moment or two and ask shrewd and searching questions, it always came to a smile, and "Well, Mr. Rolleston, if you think it is justified it must be done," and the cheque, however heavy, was cheerfully forthcoming. Even now, with the vastly-increased accommodation just added, there was not any room to spare, but he believed if he went to the owners again they would meet him cheerfully. He was proud of the hotel, proud of the share he had had in making it what it was, and he knew the owners were proud of their property too.

Mr L. D. Nathan, who was received with much applause, opened his speech with some informal and very interesting reminiscences of the old Greyhound Hotel, the forerunner of the Central. He said: It may be interesting for you to learn so far as I can tell you the history of the old Greyhound Hotel, now merged into the magnificent structure we are in this evening, called the Central Hotel. So far as I can remember the Greyhound, situated in Queen-street and Victoria-street corner, was originally owned by the late W. L. Rogers. This was in 1849, and when he died he left a life-interest in this property to his wife. I think a family named Vercoe ran the hotel in the latter portion of Rogers' lifetime. The yard, the portion on which the Central, and the bulk of the D.S.C. building stands to-day, was occupied by the late Henry Hardington as livery and bait stables for very many years, having his exit or back entrance in High-street. In fact, the yard ran right through by an archway in the middle of the Queen-street building and out at High-street. Mr. Hardington's foreman was the late Thomas Belcher, and he subsequently took over his late master's interests, and also conducted most successfully the livery and bait stables on the same spot. Then when the Thames goldfields broke out, the place was leased by the Messrs Melbaues, the noted miners and prospectors. They subsequently sold their lease to the late Michael Cochrane, and at the termination of Michael Cochrane's lease, I think my late father determined to remove the Greyhound Hotel from Queen-street to High-street, building the shops as you see to-day in Queen-street and Victoria-street East, and the Central Hotel at the corner, in which we are sitting this evening.

Subsequently Mr Nathan took advantage of the opportunity to put the views of the owners of hotels on the local option question. His remarks, which were temperate and well thought out, have been fully reported in the daily papers, but owing to considerations of space cannot be repeated here.

Mr Mowbray proposed the health of the host, Mr Rolleston, whom he was proud to describe as one of his oldest friends. He paid high tribute to Mr Rolleston both as a private host, a hotel host, and a courteous English gentleman, and Mr Mowbray's sentiments were evidently those of all present, for they met with enthusiastic applause. Several other toasts were honoured, and a very delightful evening was spent. Yuring dinner Mr Burke's orchestra played an admirable programme of music.

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