

It was in the gallery, and the view of the stage was blocked by the usual matinee hat—with feathers that had been grown in good country. "Take off yer 'at," yelled a youth behind, but the wearer kept a straight back, a stiff neck, and all appeals were vain. As the lights went up at the interval she half turned to look indignation at the offenders. One of them, with mock alarm, burst out, "Oh Lor! Keep yer 'at on, num, if ye loike. I've seen a: f yer face; I don't want to see the rest of it."

This week has seen the departure from this world of Wiremu Nahira, or more commonly known as William Taboika, or more commonly known as William Nahira, who died at St. Stephen's Pah, Rangiora, last week. It is calculated that he was in his ninety-second year at the time of his decease. He was one of those who escaped from the old Kaiapohia Pah, at the time it was taken by Bohulla. The funeral took place at St. Stephen's Cemetery, the service at the grave being conducted by the Rev. W. Blathwayte, assisted by Mr Tutuila Hope, lay reader. Miss Dlatlwayte, the organist, played the Dead March while the coffin was in the church, and the hymn, "Now the Labourer's Task is O'er" was sung by the choir. At the grave-side the choir and Natives sang a chant.

A correspondent writing from one of the up country districts of New South Wales reports the starting of a new local paper, but expresses the opinion that it is not destined to live very long. The local agricultural society held a meeting, which the members expected to find reported at length in the next issue, but the paper came out with the following:—"We have sufficient notes in our pocket to fill several columns, but the utter ineptitude of the farming community of this locality that we have come up here to help incites the belief that we simply wasted three hours of our life attending their meeting, and to place a full report before them would be a still further waste of time. The indifference of the farmers of this district in matters of a progressive nature is absolutely incomprehensible to us. The farmers at the meeting, to our mind, resembled a ship-wrecked picnic party, deliberately sinking within a fathom of the shore, under the belief that their duty to the Almighty was to do nothing but keep on splashing."

This is an Australian drought story, retailed in an Australian exchange. Hegan was farming in the mallee district, and a few good seasons had made him a substantial man. He was given to eloquence, and had an ambition to shine as a public personage. Then the big drought came, and gave Michael a pretty hard knock. As there was nothing to be done but wait for water, Hegan concluded that it was wise to do the waiting within easy reach of cold drinks, so he took a trip to Melbourne, intending to remain there until the breaking of the arid spell; but he was back within a week, and a neighbour found him standing in his yard, admiring three fine peacocks strutting on the rail fence. "Hello, Mike!" said the neighbour, "what in the name of fortune made you bring peacocks into the mallee?" "Maybe ye think Michael Hegan don't know what he's about," said the farmer. "I was told by a rare scientific man in Mellbin' that the seramin' av thim burds was a sure sign o' comin' rain. Let me tell you I'll have this drought broke in two days." Rain fell that night, and Hegan insists it was "all along of" his beautiful peacocks.

An English girl, staying in Adelaide, told me (writes "Winifred") that she was much amused by an elaborate proposal of marriage she had received. "I would like to have it framed," she said, "to show it on my return to England; only, of course, I could not do such a thing. He owns a station, and when he had finished telling me the usual things about myself, and my charms, and his appreciation of them, he went on to enumerate the advantages his station possessed over the surrounding ones. I have water laid on through the house, and sufficient for a shower-bath daily. I have an ice-chest and a splendid cellar, where, to tell you the truth, I sleep on hot nights. There are fruit trees, and, given a good season or two, they should soon bear. The thermometer

this summer has not got beyond 110deg. in the shade." These are only extracts," said the girl. "There were other allurements of the same sort, but I managed to resist them all, and refused."

There is evidently no intention on the part of the Premier to accept the kindly advice tendered him to re-construct the Government. Replying to the toast of the Ministry at a banquet to Mr Field, M.H.R., at Levin last week, the Premier hit out straight from the shoulder, when he said some people would reconstruct the Ministry out of existence, but he did not believe in placing his Ministry in the hands of these undertakers. Ministers were his colleagues as long as they had the confidence of the people and gave satisfaction. It was for the people to judge. His Ministers were all working in accord. He believed, if the time came, the whole of them would hand in their resignations at the slightest hint that they would help him in strengthening his position in giving effect to the will of the people. It must be left at that. On the subject of the much-discussed Speakership of the Lower House, the Premier said some people wanted to know who was to be Speaker, he would like to know himself.

Jurymen are often suspected of little tricks to escape service, but they seldom give themselves away so beautifully as did the foreman of a jury at the Auckland Supreme Court last week. Judge Conolly was reproaching the jury for wishing to retire to consider their verdict in a case in which he said there was not the slightest doubt. The foreman of the jury, in evident embarrassment, replied, "Perhaps I have no right to mention it, Your Honor, but there is a feeling among the jury that if they do not retire they will be liable to be chosen on the next jury." His Honor said the jury had no right to retire in order to avoid service, although he had no power to prevent them from doing so. The foreman's confession was followed by the collapse of the jury, and a verdict forthwith. They were released from service.

Lord Kitchener is in trouble by his frank declaration of his preference for bachelor over married officers as his comrades and subordinates. It has been pointed out that facts within his own knowledge and within his own circle are in contradiction with his theories. For instance, among those who were in his inner circle of friends and colleagues were General Ian Hamilton, General French, and several others who are married men. And whenever you speak to anybody who has known Lord Kitchener during all his life the old friend gives an enigmatic smile. Then comes a mysterious hint that if Lord Kitchener be still a bachelor it is not his fault, but the want of discrimination on the part of some fair one—unworthy to take up the proffered glove of the brave and obscure young lover that Kitchener once was. Be that as it may, Lord Kitchener is now a bachelor, and is loud in his praise, as we have seen, of the bachelor state. Which drives Mr G. R. Sims and me into the discussion of an old question.

Is it good or is it bad for an ambitious man to be married? It is evidently a question to which there can be no single and satisfactory answer. It depends much on the man; it depends a little more on the woman. If anybody says to me that he has never known any ambitious man who was not helped by his wife I can cite many an instance to the contrary. If, on the other hand, an equally self-confident person makes the statement that no ambitious man ever got on who was not a bachelor. I can give chapter and verse to the contrary and by the score. Dizzy would have ended in the Marshalsea if he had not found a wife who was able to pay his debts and help to make him a Buckinghamshire squire. It was through his wife that he could become an electioneer not frightened by sheriff's fees and other such items in the career of the Parliamentary aspirant.

Mr. George "Tattersall" Adams managed to handle last year £350,000 of gamblers' money, notwithstanding the Commonwealth Act, which prohibits his correspondence passing through the post. The Tasmanian State Government will levy £1500 by way of income tax on Adams' gambling transactions in 1902.

The natives of the Hervey Islands are believed to be the most expert shark hunters in the world.

On the island of Aitutaki—one of the Hervey group—the natives have a most daring method of trapping the monster.

Around the island are numerous submarine caverns in which the sharks live and breed. The shark-catcher dives down to these caverns carrying with him a slip knot attached to a strong cord, the end of which is held by his companions in a boat above.

Selecting an unwary shark, the diver slips the noose over the creature's tail, and then returns to the surface in order to assist his friends in hauling up the fish. The shark presently finds itself being dragged to the surface tail first. Before it has time to know just what has happened, however, it receives a blow from a hatchet that ends its career.

The most daring diver of Aitutaki, a man who had killed scores of sharks, passed through a thrilling adventure on one occasion. Diving down to one of the submarine caverns, and finding in it several sharks lazily resting themselves after feeding, he stepped inside and with lightning rapidity slipped his noose over the tail of the nearest shark.

He was about to quit the cavern when to his disgust the great fish moved right across the mouth of it. The diver, knowing the ways of sharks, immediately proceeded to stroke it on the side, and succeeded in inducing it to move so as to give him room to pass out. (Like various other animals, sharks enjoy being stroked, but the operation has to be very carefully performed.)

But imagine the diver's horror when just as he was about to emerge a great shark from without thrust its hideous head into the cavern, completely blocking the entrance.

To get out was now impossible, for even an old shark hunter would not dare to stroke the head of a shark.

It was a frightful time for the diver, and he gave himself up for lost, as suffocation now appeared inevitable. But after two minutes' delay, which appeared to the distressed diver like an hour, the shark passed quietly on and permitted him to escape.

When he rose to the surface he was nearly unconscious, and the blood spurled from his eyes, ears, and nostrils.

Yet the plucky fellow, after resting for a few hours, actually descended to the cavern again, and succeeded in capturing all its inmates one, by one.

The State of Ohio has been witnessing a political fight conducted on a novel plan. Mr Johnston, a candidate for Congress, has been touring the State on a big red motor car. Behind it came ten large waggons carrying a huge circus tent to accommodate 6000 people, and behind the waggons is a brake in which sits a brass band. The cost of this novel electioneering campaign is said to be £500 a day, but as Mr Johnston is a millionaire he does not worry about the expense.

Society circles in Chicago were greatly amused lately (reports the "Daily Mail") over an incident which occurred at the house of Miss Margaret Lord, one of the wealthiest residents. Mr Charles Sumner Pike, author and poet, made a wager that he could act as butler at her house for one evening without betraying himself. He dressed himself on Christmas eve in regulation butler's costume and a powdered wig, and stood at table. None of the guests, with most of whom he was well acquainted, recognised him. At dinner he was kept busy serving the dishes, answering to the name of "James." Miss Lord purposely led the conversation to Mr Pike's literary work, which some of those present severely criticised. One guest finally asked, "Who is this Pike?" The hostess said, "James, step into the library and get Mr Pike's photograph." The supposed butler brought the photograph, and Mr Pike's personal appearance was unfavourably commented on. Miss Lord then remarked, "We will now adjourn to the drawing-room, and I will introduce you to my butler." The result was indescribable. It was then announced that Mr Pike had won his bet.

Chinese is an ideographic language. It conveys the idea and not the word for a thing, as the figure "8" represents the idea and not the word. The Chinese have invented more than 40,000 marks for their writing, but it requires only about 3000 marks for mercantile correspondence, and it is said to be easier to learn than the words of an ordinary foreign language. Russian is more difficult for an Englishman than Chinese. It takes much longer to learn the spoken language because of the variety of dialects, but anyone can learn enough of the writings to answer ordinary purposes in a few months, and have his knowledge perfected by a linguist within about a year.

I have known plenty of cases of politicians who were ruined by their wives, or by other women (says T. P. O'Connor). Some of these tragedies become public property; others—and perhaps some of the most tragic—and have passed unnoticed and unknown. I knew when I first entered the House of Commons a distinguished politician; he had been a Cabinet Minister once, and everybody expected that he would be a Cabinet Minister again. But somehow or other he fell into sudden obscurity; came seldom to the House of Commons; and in a year or two grew suddenly old and more or less of an invalid; and in a short time had passed from the ranks of men who had to be counted with when a new Prime Minister had once more to make up his Cabinet.

The latest as to the Tasmanian trains is that a weeping widow made her way to the guard at a side station, and said, "Can't you hurry up the train? I've made all arrangements to bury my husband, whose body is on the train, and I've sent an advertisement to the Hobart papers saying that the interment will take place at ten this morning. It's now two in the afternoon." "Well, mum," said the guard, "you had no right to bring a dead man down by the ordinary. Why didn't you take the express?" "But he wasn't dead when we started," explained the doubly afflicted woman.

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