

# After Dinner Gossip and Echoes of the Week.

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### The King at a Bull Fight.

"The King can do no wrong" is a good loyal after-dinner sentiment, but I fancy most readers will be somewhat sorry that King Edward should have let himself be persuaded to be present at a bull-fight, even though, as was cabled, the horns of the bull were blunted so that the affair was, as alleged, a mere exhibition of gymnastic skill. Those who have, like the writer, been unfortunate to see a Spanish bull-fight, will wonder somewhat incredulously if this could have been so, and will suspect that the facts are being glossed over in the hope of stalling off the adverse comment which is sure to pour through the press of the kingdom. Feeling against the bull-fight has always been very keen amongst Britislers, though the Spaniards and Portuguese angrily urge in opposition that our prize-fights are infinitely more brutal, and that more men are killed at football in a season than in five years of bull-fights. But in the prize-fight competitors have fair play. There are no old crews of horses brought in to be deliberately and mercilessly disembowelled, and allowed to drag their entrails round the ring till they drop from exhaustion. That is what happens at a bull-fight. The poor brutes are blindfolded, and when some unfortunate is ripped open in a more shocking manner than usual, the audience applaud as when a singer gains an exceptional note. The women delight in the gore and mess of it all, yet they are the softest, gentlest, most voluptuous-looking women in the world, but when excitement is at its height watch their eyes and read the innate possibilities for cruelty there. They are far worse than the men, but then that is not peculiar to Spanish women—women, I take it, all over the world are more capable of cruelty than men, and also, let me add, less innately modest. And, having uttered these two blasphemies against the alleged "gentle sex," perhaps I had better change the subject and look out for squalls next week.

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### Exit Chapman.

But, by the way, speaking of comparisons of cruelty 'twixt men and women, a man of fiendish and finished capacity for cruelty was put out of the way this week when the poisoner Chapman was hanged. The scoundrel must have had a persuasive tongue and gentle manner, for none of his victims seem to have suspected that he was slowly doing them to death, and smiling secretly as he watched their agonies with the air of a connoisseur, and the eye of an artist, at his business. His enjoyment of the writhings of his successive wives was well disguised under the mask of tenderest affection and solicitude, which he affected with such success, that had it not been for a remark to the doctor which gave his knowledge of poisons away, he might have been alive now and at work on a fourth or even a fifth Mrs. Chapman. Murder for gain, jealousy, or hate, is comprehensible; but imagination shrinks appalled from the task of picturing the pleasure which this human fiend derived from the intolerable sufferings which he inflicted on the women with whom he was cohabiting, and on whom he lavished the endearments of the fondest husband. Yet women have been equally cruel, as witness Mrs. Flannigan and Higgins, hanged in Liverpool for wholesale murders some twenty years ago, and the infamous woman at Home who so grossly ill-treated her own daughter some time ago, not to mention the woman Drake over here, who is now undergoing her utterly inadequate sentence.

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### The Hooligan Nuisance in Theatres.

All theatre-goers in the colony must have been pleased to hear that Christchurch "Truth" has taken a stand against the pit and gallery hooligans who have for years been allowed such license, that they have begun to make theatre-going a perfect ordeal for respectable citizens, their wives, and wo-

men folk. Time after time I have protested in this and other papers against the apathy of the police in the matter, and suggested that an example should be made of some of the ringleaders. The efforts of "Truth" in the same direction would seem to have been equally abortive till the paper got tired of words and took to action, announcing that its special reporters would be in the pit to take the names of the offenders, and that the same would in due course be published. Likewise it compelled the police to send some plain clothes "hooligans," with the result that the hooligans were discreetly "mum" and, according to the telegram, "behaved as if they were in church." The example is one which should be followed in every city where the nuisance prevails. In Wellington there is nothing of the sort, but in Auckland, Christchurch, and Dunedin, the strongest measures are necessary. Not content with inane howlings and howlings, the hooligans openly chaff and deride both women and men while making their way to their seats, and have lately added to these pleasantries the pretty custom of spitting on the heads of those below, while during a recent season in Auckland variety was achieved by flinging lighted matches from the gallery to the stalls. The amount of smoking which frequently goes on between the acts, and even during the performance, is positively disgraceful, and regard for the public safety rouse those in authority to compel an attendance of plain clothes police to put down so dangerous a custom.

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### Infants in Arms Not Admitted.

I suppose some mothers will write me down a selfish animal, but I sincerely long for the day when the legend, "Infants in Arms Not Admitted," will be displayed at the entrance of every theatre and place of amusement in the colony. The rule is now universally observed at all first-class theatres in England, and in the common interest should be followed here. The amount of discomfort caused to hundreds by one restless or querulous infant is inestimable, and leads the thoughts of law-abiding people in the direction as to when homicide or infanticide is justifiable. Nor can it be urged that the parents who bring them really derive enjoyment which would compensate for the sufferings of others. They always appear to me to be profoundly miserable—and, indeed, if they are not, they must be the thickest-skinned of humanity, for if looks and muttered swear-words could kill, they would die many deaths. Then there is the painfully quiet infant, who has been obviously and heavily drugged. It, I think, is even more disturbing than the noisy variety, for one can't help thinking how it must suffer for its parents' pleasures next day, and the idea of the poor brat's awful and unmerited headache is always sufficient to spoil my enjoyment. Of course, it will be urged that unless a certain class bring their children to the theatre with them they can never come. No doubt this is so, but what will you? It is one of the disadvantages of marriage! Hard lines, no doubt, but it oughtn't to be helped.

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### Bring Back Those Baubles.

Although America repressed her deferment as long ago as at the signing of the declaration of independence that she would have "no durned titles" in the Land of Liberty, the degenerate descendants of George Washington and the rugged men who laid the foundation of "the greatest nation on earth, sir," are in the present age hankering after the forbidden fruit and worrying round after coats of arms, genealogies, and the other attractions of Burke and heraldry for people who have made a little at "something in the city." The Yankee goes about his researches into his forbears' doings and life history in a characteristic manner. He strongly believes in the power of the press, and

is evidently quite willing to accumulate information in a delightfully free and easy style upon matters which have slipped the family memory while the family was busily engaged making dollars out of pork, or some equally aristocratic calling where people usually have crests, coats of arms, and all that sort of thing. Here are some genuine advertisements clipped from an American paper by the last mail, which show how anxious some people are to have their native worth stamped with the hall-mark of a real live crest:—338.—WRIGHT.—Coat of arms wanted of the Wright family from the Rawley Hills, between Worcestershire and the Warwickshire, England. One Peter Wright, in 1714, was owner of the anvil and vise manufactory in England. Had son Timothy, who had son George, who had son James. Information wanted of the family.—A.A.W. 340.—LEITH LYNCH.—Coat of arms asked for on the Leith family of Cheltenham, England; the same wanted of the Lynch family from Ireland, of which Thomas Lynch, of Lynchburg, Va., and Bishop Lynch, of Dublin, Ireland, were said to be members. Thomas Lynch was a patriot of 1776, and a signer of the Declaration of Independence.—WILL. 343.—BEEKMAN.—Would like description of the authentic coat of arms of the Beekman family, of New York.—J.C.B. 332.—VAN ZANDT.—Wanted, the origin of the Van Zandt family of New Jersey and the ancestry of one Mary Van Zandt.—G.A.S. 333.—WIGMORE.—McINERY.—Ancestry desired of Stephen Wigmore and wife, Bridget McInery. They had daughter Catherine Josephine. Wanted, coat of arms of either family.—C.J.W.

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### The Pea Rifle Fiend.

The juvenile pea rifle fiend is, I notice, on the warpath again, his latest prank being a "pot shot" at a passing train, which broke the window of one of the carriages and wounded a passenger, who was (as an exchange puts it with some quaintness) "apparently much annoyed at the occurrence." So one would imagine, and it could scarcely have soched his feelings when, on being prosecuted in the Police Court, the peccant youngsters were merely severely reprimanded. I'm not vindictive as a rule, but I think under such circumstances a few strokes with the birch might have a deterrent effect on other youngsters who perambulate the country with these really dangerous weapons or the almost equally mischievous catapult. I have heard of several really bad accidents lately from both these offensive arms, and the number of windows broken must rejoice the hearts of glaziers. Only last week a fair-sized bullet whizzed in to the drawing room of a friend of mine, shattering a window which cost over a pound to repair and narrowly missing a child who was playing in the room. It's all very well to say "boys will be boys," but some of them are regular young "devils," and will smash windows for sheer enjoyment of breaking glass and the pleasure of a chase from an elderly personage like myself, whose wind is not what it used to be.

### Tops Are In.

Speaking of boys, I notice this week that tops, the whipping sort, are in. Has any reader ever fathomed the problem of who sets the fashion in the matter of street toys? When tops come in marbles go out—go out to the very day, and when tops have had their day they as suddenly and mysteriously make room for hoops. You never see a boy with a hoop in the top season or with marbles when hoops are in season, so to say. Now, who is the man from Cooks, in this fashion, which is as the laws of the Medes and Persians? Opinions are invited.


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### A Business-Like Young Woman.

The following letter will enlist the sympathy of all right-minded people:—To the Editor: Sir,—Would you be so good as to tell me the way in which I can be cured of anything—I mean cured so as to have my picture in the papers with a nice lot of print underneath saying "this is the picture of Miss Minks, who owes her bright and amiable character to the use of our pills." I am not really ill, you know, except for getting a headache sometimes, which a cup of good strong tea does a world of good for. But Mrs. Brass, in this street (she only buried Mr. Brass hardly a year ago, and she is now setting her cap at every young man in the place), she's had her picture in the papers as "a charming and attractive young widow who owes her good health and her undoubted power of fascination to-day to the use of Slink's Shush for Sour People. And I think I ought to have my picture in. I've had a real nice photo. taken, showing me in evening dress; and it would look well in the papers, I'm sure—far better than that stuck-up Mrs. Brass, who is 30 if she's a day, and who powders and paints. But I don't want to be put in as being cured of anything nasty. Consumption or appendicitis or nervous prostration, due to high society, please. Mrs. Brass was cured of something with bile in it, and mentioned her stomach. I don't want, please, to mention my stomach. I don't think it is proper for a respectable single girl, whatever these widows may care to do. But you may say I was fading away like a flower until I took Rock's Gigantic Upbuilder of the Constitution; or that I was ill and languid and had no energy until I tried Buckup's Bitters. I leave it to you, and hope to see the photo., which I enclose, published soon with some testimonial.—Yours very faithfully, Theodora Minks, Tellbody. P.S.—I have brown curly hair, bright, expressive eyes, and an amiable nature; these might be mentioned in the cure.—T.M.

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