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# After Dinner Gossip

and

## Echoes of the Week.

### Presentation to Lady Ranfurly.

The pictures which the citizens of Auckland presented on Saturday to the Countess of Ranfurly are a worthy mark of the esteem and affection in which she and her husband occupy in the public heart. No two finer paintings have been executed in the colony, I believe, and they may be said to show the present high-water mark of art in New Zealand. Doubtless, they will be seen in London by a large circle of persons interested in art, and will draw some attention to colonial painters, and, while one is delighted to honour Lady Ranfurly with the very best New Zealand can produce, I do trust that some works of equally great interest and merit may be acquired for the colony. If, as I venture to think will be the case, these pictures create some little stir in the minds of those interested in such matters, and that inquiries come to be made for works of a similar nature, it may come about that Mr. Goldie and other artists will send their chief pictures to England for exhibition and sale, and that the opportunity for securing some fine examples for New Zealand will be lost. Certainly the encouragement given to art in this colony is not of a character to enable an artist to put either heart or his best capabilities into his profession. "Ah!" you say comfortably, "that is very disgraceful, 'art for art's sake' should be the motto." Bunkum, my dear sir or madam, bunkum, an artist has a stomach to fill and a body to clothe, and his tastes and desires run to beautiful things, which cannot be procured without money; and he cannot paint his best unless these natural appetites and inclinations are in some sort gratified. And, moreover, if Mr. Goldie is to paint more Maori pictures, and if other artists are to emulate him, our encouragement must not be delayed. The picturesque Maori is passing, and the Europeanized native is taking his place. From all other standpoints than that of the artist, the Europeanizing process may be, nay, is desirable, but from the pictorial point of view it is deplorable. In a few years' time Mr. Goldie, or any other artist, will be unable to paint such pictures as those which Auckland has presented to Lady Ranfurly, for there will be no models. Public subscription, aided by Government subsidies, have done several valuable works in the colony, and I honestly think the principle might be applied to giving Mr. Goldie a commission to secure for our art galleries specimens of his paintings of Maori life.

### Auckland and the Citizens' Ball.

When a Citizens' Ball was first mooted as a means of expressing to the Earl and Countess of Ranfurly the gratitude of Auckland for the many good works both have done and for the hospitality dispensed from Government House, I expressed the opinion that a ball, for which the tickets must of necessity be somewhat expensive, would not be an absolutely representative affair, and regretted that some more genuinely popular means of expressing universal admiration and goodwill could not be devised. At the same time, the article referred to recognised the difficulty in the way of other propositions, and warmly recommended that as a ball had been decided on, all who could afford it should be generous with their guarantees and enable those in charge to make the affair a success to be remembered. This was certainly done. No one who was present at that brilliant function can doubt that it was by far the largest and most memorable social success ever attempted or achieved in the history of the colonies. The scene when the magnificent ballroom was filled with brilliantly and gracefully dressed women and their partners could not have been excelled in any part of the world, and will certainly dwell long in the memories of all who were present. And it was a subject for pride that such a display was possible in so young a city. Those who watched the dance must have seen the venerable

figure of the Father of Auckland, that courteous and genial gentleman, Sir John Logan Campbell, and must have thought curiously of the days when he saw the spot on which the dance was held, and when it was in the midst of a well-nigh impenetrable tītī-tree bush. Surely if our advance in the past fifty years has seen the growth of a city able to provide such a farewell to its Governor and his consort, we may feel confident that there lies in this beautiful land an even more splendid and prosperous future for our children, and may feel encouraged to take our share in the work of insuring the same.

### The Servian Horror.

The past week has not been over and above interesting from a news point of view, and the cables concerning the Servian horror have probably attracted the greatest attention. Every fresh detail which arrives concerning that foul and treacherous crime fills one with amazement and horror that such things are possible in a European State in the twentieth century, and that the needs of diplomacy result in the practical ignoring of the murders by the rulers of other countries. One does not know which shocks one the more, the outrageous cruelty of the murders themselves and the sickening mutilating of a helpless woman before she was slaughtered, the truly terrible blasphemy of the new King speaking of the affair as the will of God, or, lastly, the fact that it is necessary for Britain to temporise in this matter, and to fail to summon her representative at the Servian Court to leave the Capital, as a mark of her abhorrence of a deed unequalled in savage brutality in the annals of regicide.

We, of course, know why it is impolitic for England or any Power to openly and actively take a hand in the extraordinary troubles and vendettas of the Servian monarchy, and that any sudden or ill-advised move might easily precipitate events which might lead to things worse even than murder. Again, the Balkan States and their sovereigns cannot be compared with other countries, and are perhaps past our comprehension. Certainly the fact of a people accepting a revolution so carried out, with the indifference and spathy which have signalled the Servian people in this affair, is not to be easily understood by Britishers. For those who would like to get some idea of the peculiar political workings, and of the romance of the Balkan thrones, I would recommend Mr Sydney Grier's "Uncrowned King" and "A Crowned Queen." They are, of course, romances pure and simple, but as is often the case, the fiction gives a very admirable idea of the truth. Both books are highly exciting, the second-named, which is a sequel to the first, being perhaps the better of the two.

### A Good Golf Story.

The "Frisco" mail always brings along its crop of golf stories. Here is one, vouched for by one whose veracity is as unimpeachable as his driving. He was on the links at Caister, in Norfolk, and not knowing anyone, picked up a game with an elderly Scotchman who was a tenhandicap man while he was a sixteen. The Londoner was a bit off colour, and on starting for the fourth hole his opponent was three up. Thereupon the Scot innocently suggested that they should have a ball on the match. The other was a sportsman, and, in spite of his heavy handicap, agreed. Finally the Londoner won the game. The Scot looked unapeakable things, and after lunch he was heard to remark to a crony in the pavilion, nodding in the direction of his late opponent: "D'ye ken you young man wi' th' wee bittie moustache? Mon he's verra hot. If ye're wise ye'll no play wi' him; but if ye do dinna bet mon, dinna bet."

### Some Good Yarns of Children.

That always amusing writer "Woomers," in the "Australasian," has some good stories of children this week, which may entice the foregoing prosy pars a little: It was a cold night, a very cold night, and little Minnie, who was anxious to get to bed, omitted her prayers. "The Lord won't take care of you if you forget your prayers," said the nurse. Minnie thought over the chances for a while, and observed, "Well, I forgot them once before, and I lasted till morning." The commercial side is very strongly developed in some children. Even in early youth they are ready to swap a marble for a pony carriage. In this particular instance the youngster had spent a dull and fretful day, and his uncle said, "You don't look happy, Willie; would you be happy if I gave you a penny?" Willie considered the chances, and said thoughtfully, "I think I could be happy for tuppence." How soon, I wonder, does the score for the opposite sex develop in a boy. A friend of mine was out for a walk last Sunday, and, on stopping to examine a house that was building, they discovered a dead man hanging to the rafters. The youngster was quite proud of such a sensational ending to a morning walk. "We don't go walking for nothing, do we father?" he said. "Now, mother wouldn't have found any dead men, would she?"

### Vowels of the Tummick.

All the foregoing yarns are good, but here is one direct from Home which is even better: "The Human Body" was the subject set for an essay at a Board school. A little girl sent in the following. It is absolutely genuine. It shows a most delightful confusion of ideas, yet with a clearness of thought: The human body is divided into three parts, the head, the chest, and the tum-mick. The head contains the eyes, ears, nose, mouth, and brains, if any. The chest contains the heart, lungs, and part of the liver. The tum-mick is entirely devoted to the vowels, of which there are five, namely, a e i o u, and sometimes y and z.

### Joke That Failed.

To convince a customer of his punctuality in business, a certain tailor wagged the sum of £5 to 1/ that an overcoat would be ready promptly at 7.15 the other night. The money was staked and put in the safe. At 7.10 the customer entered the shop. The man of cloth smiled gleefully, but the garment was not forthcoming. The hands of the clock moved slowly onward—7.12, 7.15, still no coat. Then the tailor began to look anxious. At 7.19 exactly a young man rushed in with the coat on his arm. The tailor shook his fist, and said, "You villain, you have lost five golden pounds for me by your laziness!" Without a word the tailor handed the coat to his customer, together with the envelope containing the £5 note and the shilling. "It is a fair bet, and you have won it," he said. The amusing part of the transaction is that the messenger brought the coat into the shop at seven o'clock. In an endeavour to be funny the tailor told him too wait on the opposite side of the street until 7.12, and then rush in with the coat. Unfortunately a friend came along and invited the man to have a drink, as he had five minutes to spare. The result was that the messenger got a little mixed up with the various clocks, and was late. The customer handed the £5 note back afterwards to the tailor, who accepted it on the condition that he should make the winner a suit of clothes as a "memento of the occasion."

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