After Dinner Gossip

and

Echoes of the Week.

The Punishing of Children

A correspondent from Invercargill way has just dropped across a copy of the "Graphic," perhaps a month old, in which I was animadverting in red-hot mood on a case of gross cruelty to children, where the defence was that the child was naughty and that the alleged cruelty was merely parental, or rather sisterly, correction, perhaps rather rigorously administered. My correspondent writes: "In the case you mention you are unquestionably right, and no condemnation could be too severe for such callous brutality, but all the same some harm unquestionably results from the ultra-sentimental and rather morbid manner in which any punishment of children is now viewed." He is, he states, a genuine lover of children, but believes that the modern system of coddling is a mistake. "We were all of us," he says, "spanked, caned, or perhaps birched, and it certainly did no harm, and probably the good effects were at the time considerable." The whole problem of children's punishments is thus raised, and much as it would interest me to launch out into a detailed discussion thereof, that is impossible in the space an article in these columns should legitimately occupy. All one can do is to mention one or two of the most interesting and much debated points—corporal punishment, for instance. There is an undoubted reaction against corporal punishment nowadays, a reaction which is probably carried to extremes in some instances, for, as a writer in a recent number of the "Fortnightly Review" remarked: "When in the battle of will or obedience with children you have eliminated corporal punishment from your weapons, you have kept nothing for your final conflict, and have allowed any resolute young opponent to see that his or her ultimate victory is a foregone conclusion." This is unquestionably true, and the sentence contains a word on which the whole crux of the matter lies. That word is the word "final." Corporal punishment must be, to be effective, the last resort. The practice of giving a slap or a small spanking for every trivial fault, or for every small outburst of temper, is bad both for the executioner and the victim. The effect is as ephemeral as the tingling, and familiarity breeds contempt, not merely for the punishment, but for the laws and commands for the disregard of which it is administered. When whipping is resorted to it should be final and conclusive, and while without undue severity, such as will be remembered once and for all. Wherefore it must be obvious that for very young children corporal punishment is out of the question, and further, that it is utterly useless save in the very gravest cases of wilful untruth or deliberate and continued disobedience. What, then, is one to do for minor cases? Echo answers the perplexed and perturbed parent What? For infants, for example, what is to be done? If a dark cupboard terrifies enough to be a punishment at all, it is absolutely criminal, and if the child is not imaginative and frightened of the dark, the so-called corrective becomes a matter of instant scorn. To deprive, or to attempt a diet of dry bread is bound to end in failure with a child of spirit, for it probably will starve itself till it goes to bed hungry, and thus you drive up against one of the laws of health. Scolding or lecturing may have its effect with some, but it is hopeless with the majority. "Call them by what grand name you will," says Edward Cooper, in this connection; "it makes no difference. The grand name does not at all impress the child, who for many generations has called them 'sermons,' 'pi-jaw,' 'raggings,' and so on, and loathes them no less, and listens to them no more, under their new title. Brevity is the soul of punishment. Scoldings and moral lessons will avail very little; they will be received either with polite silence and resignation, or with the stern rebuke once administered by a seven-year-old gentleman whose morning ride had to be delayed by a lecture on the impropriety of keeping dead crabs in all his trouser pockets: "They were alive when I put them in. You are wasting a gweat deal of my pwecious time." As the writer in the "Fortnightly Review" says:—"The conclusion of the whole matter is, I suppose, that punishment is only a valuable part of the education of children when wielded by a perfectly just guardian who is prepared to go all lengths in using it. If the child's naughtiness has no limits, and your punishments have a small sinner will realise this fact quite as soon as the judge; and, having reached your limits, will proceed to enjoy himself. There will always indeed rest a certain doubt as to the power of the Deity to "go one better." "If God wanted me to be good, and I wouldn't be good, which would win?" is an eternal nursery problem. But the earthly guardian's retribution will soon become contemptible. It counts for little enough, I suppose, in any case. Love and patience are the last secret of child management, the innermost writing in the innermost adytum of nursery life—love, which can force a response at last from the chilliest little soul; humble patience which knows how to wait for the harvest.

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Our Self-Absorbedness.

The almost absolute indifference and lack of interest which the vast majority of New Zealanders feel with regard to Australia and all that concerns her is really rather extraordinary. For the affairs and troubles of the parent country we have some small attention, but for the concerns of our big brother, Australia, we do not trouble to possess aught but the most vague and general information, or to pretend to the slightest show of consideration. True, if any of the States wish a lesson in football, we are willing to show, as what youngster is not, that the younger son is the better and the clever man! Granted, also, that we are roused to enthusiasm by the possession of a mare who can go over to Australia and twice handsomely defeat their great racing champion of the same sex. But when this is done, we too have done with Australia. Truth to tell, we look upon the great Commonwealth with some contempt, good-natured, but sincere and hearty. The big brother is to our mind so infinitely inferior. He has no "vril," as Lytton called it—no push (to our idea); he does not, as we do, devise experimental legislation for the edification or amusement of the Nations; and above all, perhaps, he has not produced a King Richard Seddon to boom Imperialism, to teach Chamberlain a lesson, and to rule the huge territory with a rod of iron. Wherefore, we have never paid much regard to Australia—have never taken her very seriously. Wherefore should we—the world's eye is on us, not on Australia. We are certain, and we don't want to know about anything much except about ourselves, and how rich we are, and how wise, and how much we are admired, and how this or that scramble for the spoils will go. A fico for Australia; the elder brother is a very worthy person in his way, but dull, so very dull, and, as I have hinted, are not the affairs of any Little Peddlington of far greater concern to itself than the most momentous happenings in the world beyond? Little Peddlington wants a pump, we want a railway, or a 'Frisco service, or what not. We are convinced the world watches, and while affairs of such moment hang in the balance, how should we have even a passing thought, even the smallest flicker of interest, for anything concerning big, sleepy, lumbering Australia, whose offer to join the partnership we so promptly and properly declined with a characteristic "Not much!" The above reflections were aroused by the fact that the choice of a capital for the Commonwealth aroused just about as much comment and considerably less interest, or excitement, than would a cable to the effect that the Parliament House cat had been safely delivered of a sextette, or whatever cat families are called. I do not know, after all, that we are called upon to exhibit any particular concern in such a matter. I merely mention it as an instance of our indifference to all that concerns Australia. And of that it is certainly typical.

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A Capital of the Future.

However, apropos of the foregoing, a capital has been chosen for the Commonwealth, and by the will of the people in Parliament assembled, the favour has fallen on Tumut. Well, what's in a name? Tumut is certainly somewhat unlovely, and assuredly not impressive, but after all it will serve, and when Tumut has the riches and population of another London, as it assuredly may have some day, no one will grumble at her name. And after all, even in this connection, Tumut seems superior to several towns and sites which were suggested. Orange, for instance, has disagreeable suggestions of some day being sucked dry, and one would dread the constant and interminable press and Parliamentary witticisms on this point when party spirit or inter-State jealousies ran high. Yass is impossible. It is open to street boy inanities and broad chaff of every sort, and is more unlovely far than Tumut, which indeed becomes beautiful by comparison. Eden-Bomballa, has all the objections of a double name. Bomballa has a roundness and is a nice mouthful, but Eden-Bomballa recalls the Chuzzlewit Eden and suggests sinister comparisions and refutations as to not being "all built yet." And so on through the various names. Tumut is perhaps as good as any in the list of submitted sites. It was chosen apparently as Cardinal Sarto was chosen Pope, because the supporters of either of the two favourites (if one may so call them) would rather vote for a third party than give the victory to their special rival. The report of the delegates was highly favourable to Tumut, which is, by the way, 310 miles from Sydney, and some 70 more from Melbourne. It has at present some 14,000 inhabitants, and is the centre of a very thriving and enormously fertile region capable of supplying the largest of cities with food-stuff, wines, etc. At present the railway does not connect, but it is within the trifling distance of 21 miles, a mere bagatelle. So now, the site having been secured, all that is left to do is to build the capital, the only difficulty in the way being the small matter of ways and means. So far as building goes the following table will give an idea of what is intended—the years in the far column being the estimated time for the erection of the buildings—

Houses of Parliament	£750,000	7 years.
Governor-General's Residence	75,000	3 "
Post Office	100,000	3 "
Custom House	50,000	2 "
Secretariat	80,000	3 "
Military Academy, Barracks, Commandant's Residence, Arsenal and Factory	200,000	4 "
Treasury	50,000	2 "
Courts of Justice, Law Offices, Federal Records House, &c.	300,000	5 "
National Hall, with Art Galleries and Library	150,00	6 10 "
Minor Departments, e.g., Finance and Trade, Fisheries, Health, Statistics, Patents, and Copyright, Audit, &c.	80,000	3 "
Premier's Official Residence	10,000	1 "
Minister for War	7,500	1 "
Treasurer	7,500	1 "
Attorney-General	7,000	1 "
Laying-out City, &c.	250,000	
	£2,117,500	

All things considered, it is a modest programme, but it is safe to prophecy it will not be carried out for four times that amount. Now if?—but that is another story after all—and this article is already too long.

A Fallen Idol of Finance.

A year or two ago Mr Pierpont Morgan, the millionaire financier of the United States, was regarded by his countrymen almost as a god, and everyone was eager for a share of his favours. Now ruined shareholders in his great organisations, regarding him as the cause of their miseries, are threatening to take his life. The depreciation of the values of the stock of these great trusts has been enormous. In the United States Steel Corporation the decline has been no less than £30,000,000 for the twelve months. There is a long list of smaller trusts which have gone into liquidation. It was feared not long since that the mammouth trusts were going to rule the world. Legislation against them was introduced into Congress, and some of it became law. The High Court of the United States also struck a heavy blow at trusts when it declared it illegal for a person who had acquired large interests in several companies to use his voting power to compel amalgamations. The promoter has virtually to acquire the whole of them before he can amalgamate. But apart from these things the general laws of finance and commerce have operated to define the limits at which amalgamation of businesses is possible on a basis of profit-making. When the great oil trusts were founded in America the cost of production was enormously reduced. Instead of each well having its separate pipes all the produce of many wells was brought by gravitation to the seaboard in one great pipe, and in this and other ways amalgamation reduced cost. It was thought that the same thing could be definitely repeated, and that the bigger each business was made the less would be the proportionate cost, owing to savings in management and economy of large processes. But experience has proved that a great deal of what is gained in saving expense of oversight is lost in efficiency. The master's eye is needed, and huge concerns get beyond the power of any man's ability to oversee. The promoters—where they were honest — hoped that the high prices they gave for individual concerns—far above their value—would be compensated for by corresponding economies both in management and production. The hope has been disappointed. Even in prosperous times the returns from the capital invested in these great trusts has only averaged about 1½ per cent., and a great many have utterly failed. The day of the great world trust which is to buy up the globe and manage it on American principles is still distant.

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A Church Matter.

Bishop Julius is noted for his unconventionality. On more than one occasion he has caused a lifting of the eyebrows among church people and followers of other creeds, but his latest act in appointing an archdeacon for a definite period of six years, instead of for life, a system which hitherto has been part and parcel, as it were, of the Anglican creed, will fall as a bomb-shell in orthodox circles. Surprise is a mild term for the feeling excited by the announcement of this innovation in the diocese of the Bishop of Christchurch. It really marks an important epoch in the affairs of the Church of the Province of New Zealand commonly known as the Church of England. It speaks well for the future of that Church when it has leaders who realise that fresh circumstances need fresh methods, and in dealing with such instances have the courage to break customs of such ancient usage that some people have come to regard them as laws, and accept them with the same finality. Bishop Julius has informed a newspaper representative that the new departure has been decided upon in order to prevent the possibility of the position of archdeacon being held by any person who from age or other causes might be rendered incompetent after the lapse of years to properly discharge the attendant duties. It is also intended to prepare the way for "considerable changes which are likely to take place in diocesan administration in the future," and the innovation appears to have the approval of the rest of the bishops. But for the fact that this new departure is to be [illegible] for further