After Dinner Gossip and Echoes of the Week.

The Campbell Statue Fund.

The fund for the erection of a statue to Sir John Logan Campbell as a mark of the admiration of his fellow-townsmen for him as its premier citizen and pioneer settler, and also as a slight token of gratitude for his munificent gift of Cornwall Park to the city, has now been open to the public for some considerable time, and the funds in hand and promised reach a sum of £700, about one-half or less of the minimum amount required. The subject is naturally, and for obvious reasons, somewhat a delicate one to discuss openly in the press, but it must be admitted that this result is at first sight somewhat disappointing to all who feel, and feel strongly, that here is a thing which should be done—done quickly and as gracefully as possible. But it is better to boldly face the matter, because when one does so it at once becomes patent that there is no need for disappointment, and that false delicacy may result in a wrong impression gaining ground and bringing about perhaps an untoward result. At first sight then, it might seem to the inexperienced that the dilatoriness of the Auckland public in practically expressing their appreciation was due to ingratitude; or at all events ungraciousness. This is emphatically not the case, and the fact cannot be too strongly insisted upon. Everyone in Auckland is conscious of what Sir John Campbell has done for the city he has seen grow from the titree gullies to one of the finest towns of the Southern Hemisphere, everyone is also grateful, everyone is willing to perpetuate that gratitude and that admiration in suitable form, but, and 'tis over this but that the whole difficulty up to the present has lain, everyone is waiting to be asked. Be it clearly understood no one wants pressing, and the very suggestion of "forcing" for subs. is, as the Mayor said, offensive and indeed the expression was under circumstances in a speech from His Worship scarcely felicitous, but people here have got so used to being canvassed, even for the things they would go out of their way to support without it, that they have sunk into the habit of waiting to be called upon. This is the single and whole fact of the case, and the sooner the committee recognise it the better. It is all very well to say it would be better "form", better gratitude and more decent for the public to take the trouble to go up to one or other of the offices where subscriptions are received, this may be so, but people cannot change the lethargic and lazy habits engendered by climatic conditions and fossilised by custom. In the same way as a merchant waits for the traveller of a firm whose goods he actually wants, so he waits for the collector for the cause to which he positively wants to subscribe. If a proper and legitimate canvass is conducted, the funds for the Campbell Memorial Statue can be collected in a week. One understands the delicacy that has stood in the way of the procedure up to the present, but it is false delicacy, as has been pointed out, and even if it were not, anything would, one imagines, be more agreeable to the person whose feelings it is most desired to consider than having the matter long drawn-out, and the consequent, but utterly wrong impression getting about that the public are apathetic. The public are not apathetic—far from it—but the approach to them must be made individually, not collectively; and, furthermore, it must be made at once!

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Labour Day.

The bulk of our illustrations this week are devoted to the Labour Day procession in Auckland, which was not merely the finest display of the kind ever seen in the Northern city, but was unquestionably far beyond anything of the sort attempted, and carried out in the colonies. The amount of space devoted thus to a single subject may seem at first sight somewhat out of proportion to the importance of the occasion, and under usual circumstances this would be the case, but I am inclined to think this was not a common occasion, for it was the first on which I remember to have seen the day observed as a close holiday by business men, lawyers, merchants, and the majority of tradesmen. This is important for the reason that it shows distinctly that the bad and irritating assumption that only the man who works with his hands has a right to call himself a working-man, and to be honoured by a Labour Day, is passing away. It was obvious, too, and admitted indeed, that but for the co-operation and indeed generosity of employers the splendid display in Auckland on Wednesday could not have taken place. Many of the exhibits were costly, and they were certainly not paid for by employees, while on the other hand it is equally certain that to those employees who entered into the spirit of the thing, and help to carry out their employers' intentions, Labour Day was Labour Day indeed. "It amuses me to see these fellows on an occasion of this sort," said one bystander to me, as the procession wended its way past. "Why, those men have been working earlier and are working harder, than they do on ordinary days." It was true, but the speaker had missed the whole significance of the show, viz., the willingness, the cheerful willingness, to the employers, to recognise the day which honours labour, and the pride and enthusiasm of the employees in their own business, and their personal desire to help to advance the interests of those who pay their wages. If this more complete understanding is not important, well, few things are, and that it should have found such emphatic expression in Auckland is significant also, for in no city in the colony have employers been called upon to grant such increases, such terms and such concessions as they have in that city. It shows that all these have, after all, been considered just, and have been granted—though by force to some extent, yet with no ill-will. But to return to the other point. The general closing on Labour Day in Auckland was, as I have said, indicative of a general recognition of the fact that the title working man belongs to us all in this colony. In the past the honourable distinction has been assumed solely by a class, large indeed, but limited, who earn their living by manual labour, and the rougher and less responsible classes of labour have endeavoured to make the title peculiarly their own. The irritation caused by this has undoubtedly in the past been bitter, and though the recognition of that we are all working men in New Zealand is gaining ground fast, it still exists sufficiently to be mischievous. A general observance of Labour Day by the classes who work hard indeed, but with their heads rather than their bodies, will break up this absurd contention better than anything else, and for this reason the extent to which it was honoured in Auckland this year is worthy of chronicle here, and in the illustrations of this paper.

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The Saving Grace.

There was, by the way, an element in the Labour Day procession in Auckland this year which I have never observed in any of the Southern centres of population on similar occasions, and that was the element of light comedy. Most of the comedy, by-the-by, was "dark," but that is a detail—it was there all the same—and in spite of some adverse comments on the "John Canoeing" (as they call it in the West Indies) which took place, I was rather glad to see it. The saving grace of humour is very great, and though they say it is one of the last things to come in the evolution of a people we New Zealanders seem to be developing ours somewhat early. A long, sober, utilitarian procession is a dull thing to watch, and one welcomed the light comedy touch last week, even though some of it was rather primitive. It struck me as being something quite fresh in a New Zealand procession, and was none the less welcome on that account. If your workingman can "process" with a smiling countenance, and some of him can find the heart to play John Canoe with a black face and motley garments, why, all I can say is that he must be fairly contented with his lot. Which is better—to watch a march of Chartists, each with a long list of grievances in one hand and a billhook in the other, or to gaze at a light-hearted procession of unionists, where the devices of the arts and crafts are punctuated with the Darktown Fire Brigade, a stage Irishman, Topsy up-to-date, a libel on the police force, and similar "get-ups?" The humour displayed en route to the Domain was hardly what one would call subtle, but all the same I should be sorry if it were missing next year, and the reason is not altogether because the firefighters from Darktown made me laugh.

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The Revival of a Taste for Shakespeare.

The winter season just ended, or, to speak more correctly, the season of winter entertainments, has been remarkable in several of our large centres, for a sudden revival of interest for Shakespeare in the more cultivated sections of society. In almost every important town in the colony Shakespeare Clubs, dead or moribund, were revived, and the readings became a recognised and popular feature of the past four or five months. Whatever may have been the cause, the effect must undoubtedly be for good, and the enthusiasts who have helped to work up a lukewarm liking into a warm regard, are to be warmly congratulated and commended. At the same time, it appears to the writer that the taste for Shakespeare readings, having shown itself alive this year, some effort should be made next season not merely to still further stimulate the popular appreciation of these readings, but to vastly improve the readings themselves, and to make them far more complete. Having belonged to societies for the study of Shakespeare in various localities in the colonies and in the Old Country, the writer has found in the most of them a set of weaknesses which do much to prevent a wider appreciation of our great national playwright and poet, and which might be very easily overcome. It may be said almost without fear—or rather hope—of a single contradiction, that every society in this colony, and most at Home, are absurdly haphazard in the way they read. They rush on the execution of a work in a manner which would raise contemptuous laughter if attempted in any other direction. For example: What would be the popular appreciation of our various musical societies if the band parts or part songs were just forwarded to performers at home, and they were left to study, "glance over," or leave them alone, just as they willed, and were then called upon to give their concert, very likely without ever having met in a body once before, and never having tried over the items once together. What chaos would result. Yet this is what is done in even the most ambitious of the Shakespeare societies I know of on this side. The casting is often exceedingly uneven, and little or no attempt is made at a rehearsal even for principals. Now, this is altogether wrong. Why should a man or woman of a society thereof imagine they could attack a masterpiece of Shakespeare sans rehearsal, any more than they would be guilty of the impertinence of setting out to go through "The Messiah" or "Elijah" without preparation. "We are familiar with Shakespeare," say you. I take leave to doubt it, and certainly you are probably more slightly acquainted than are the members of your pet local musical society are with "Handel." Yet they rehearse to some extent at all events—though, alas, often to little enough purpose. But certain it is that any Shakespeare society that hopes to deserve large public patronage must take far more pains than has been the custom. Take a play, cast it and read it over. Then commences the weeding out and the transplanting of parts where exchanges are made. Then go on reading till you judge you have got as near public form as you are likely to get, and then, and not till then, get at the public. The improved estimation in which readings would then be held would, I am convinced, be amazing, and would open hundreds of eyes to the delights of private study of Shakespeare. There are some half-dozen other suggestions which might be made, but this article is already of excessive length, and I must return to the subject on some future occasion.

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The Spirit of the Vikings.

Scatterbrained and foolhardy are some of the milder of the terms applied to the exploit of that daring spirit Buckridge, who sailed from the Waitemata last Sunday in his tiny craft and commenced his long, lonely voyage round the world. It is not an every-day act, this feat which began at Auckland and is to have its termination (let us sincerely hope) at St. Louis, but because it is uncommon, that is no reason why some people should thoughtlessly dismiss it with one of the adjectives at the beginning of this paragraph. If they thought for a moment they would be glad and proud to belong to a race that could produce such men as Buckridge and Voss, and to be the kin of the people to whom plucky old Captain Slocum and his cutter Spray belonged. These daring undertakings may strike some of us as being foolhardy, but underneath them is a cause which give the thoughtful hope for the future of the Anglo-Saxon, and make them cling to the belief that the Caucasian is not yet played out, and that the British Empire has a few more years in front of it, even if Mr Chamberlain doesn't get preferential trade through yet awhile. These exploits are the ebullitions of a spirit which is only found in strong and vigorous people, and they are never to be found in a decadent race. If it weren't for men of the Buckridge, Voss, and Slocum type the map of the world would not give the schoolboy half the trouble it does to-day. Had they lived in other days their names would have been handed down as Jason, Columbus, Drake, or any of the thousand others that stud the drama of all time, but unfortunately these intrepid sailors live in an age which admires daring of a more sordid and circumspect nature. We are getting so conventional and so commercial that we are apt to forget the Viking strain which made England mistress of the seas. It is only when a Voss or a Buckridge comes along that we have time to lift our noses from the ledger—some to remember with pride of what stock they come; others to remark, "What a foolhardy escapade!"

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4,203,976 Acres of New Zealand Land.

One is perpetually hearing from certain quarters that there is in the colony a vast, a growing, and an almost insatiable land hunger. A circular which reached this office last Saturday from the Crown Lands Department shows that there are now open for selection 1,330,042 acres in the Auckland district, 74,521 acres in Hawke's Bay, 89,088 acres in Taranaki, 85,200 in Wellington, 300,680 in Nelson, 944,099 in Westland, 103,925 in Otago, and 1,247,142 acres in Southland. Well, surely this should satisfy desire for some time to come—for there is land of all sort and for all purposes, and there is a practical choice of whatever part of the colony you will. But as a matter of fact, is the alleged land hunger one-half of it genuine? Is it not grossly exaggerated? Amongst the people you meet every day in the country as well as in the town, mind you, do you find many expressions of desire to acquire land, or of genuine determination to go and settle thereon? When some favourite sections are balloted for dozens of members and connections of a single family will send in applications; but this means one only is genuine, and there is a good deal of reason to suppose that a good deal of speculation is indulged in, and applications lodged by persons who have no idea of settling permanently.