

After Dinner Gossip

and

Echoes of the Week.

Tourists and Their Liquor.

To add one's mite to the wealth of ridicule and contempt with which the Licensing Bill has been received on all hands, seems rather like hitting a man when he is down. But Mr Seddon has broad shoulders and a sovereign contempt for criticism, so one may as well enjoy some of the humour which several clauses of the new measure abounds. The point that particularly tickles my sense of the ludicrous is the provision which is to allow a tourist to obtain drinks in a prohibition district in which even private individuals will be prosecuted for keeping beer, wine or spirits in their own homes for the consumption of themselves and their friends. The question which at once arises is, what is a tourist? The dictionary defines it as thus: Tourist, one who makes a tour; a traveller who goes about from place to place enjoying scenery, etc. Now here is a pretty kettle of fish to start with, for there is no indication given as to the length of the tour which entitles a man to be called a tourist. A journey of three miles gives a man a right to be called a traveller. A Wellingtonian in Auckland, or a Dunedin man in Christchurch, would certainly be a tourist; I take it, if travelling for pleasure, and under the circumstances everyone would travel ostensibly for pleasure. We should then see the quaint sight of a city where strangers could indulge in refreshments to their hearts' content, while the inhabitants looked thirstily and enviously on. One would, I suppose, get one's certificate as a tourist when one took a railway or steamer ticket for any town over a certain distance off, and would have to show it before one could obtain the foaming tankard, or whatever one's particular "vanity," as Mr Stiggins called it, happened to be. A tourist, too, will no doubt be allowed to carry a flask; but, if so, what is he to do with it if he happens to go on a visit to a friend; for in a prohibition district to have the smallest drop in the house of a private individual is to render him (or her) liable to prosecution. Of course it may be said that the tourist exemption will cover this, and that tourists will be allowed to give a friend a drink. If so, tourists are likely to become exceedingly popular, and those fond of the forbidden thing will keep a tame tourist on the premises, or rather a series of them, to call week by week. This would, of course, open a new avenue of employment in which a certain section of the community would find congenial employment. They would tour the colony, visiting the houses of those who love their toddy, and standing treat; being, of course, well paid and well pruned for the trouble and subsequent headaches. But, of course, Mr Seddon might soon put a stop to this, and a tourist would be sworn to drink by himself and never to share his flask with his host under any condition whatsoever. There are other possibilities, a host of them in fact, but space will not permit of further reference at present.

Scenery Preservation and Protection.

Everyone will applaud the wise action of the Government in taking practical steps to preserve as Government reserves the various beauty spots with which this colony abounds, and on the spending of a sum of £100,000 on this object if necessary. Action has happily been taken in time, and if wisely administered the funds should allow the preservation of several places whose beauty or historic interest make them a desirable national possession. But it would pay the country to go further, and to spend still more money on the beautification of places naturally lovely, but capable of natural improvement. The extent to which this is done in Switzerland and in Italy is extraordinary, and most unquestionably it pays very handsomely. The Tourist Department have done such ex-

cellent work with the moderate means at their command that I think it would be almost impossible to be too lavish in the funds allowed them, and it would be an investment on which the returns would increase with every year of the colony's life. The number of persons with money to spend and time to employ seeing new places is almost incredible, and fast steam transit has made New Zealand almost as accessible now as was Norway a few years back. By preserving and improving the scenic beauties with which the colony is so liberally endowed, and by making New Zealand one of the finest sporting countries in the world we are adding to our forest assets, and every private and individual effort, as well as every public endeavour, should be unceasingly devoted in this direction.

Colonial v. London Journalism.

As readers of these paragraphs may possibly have noticed, I am not one of those who believe in the wisdom or good taste of perpetually blowing our own particular New Zealand trumpet, but I have lately had it brought very forcibly before me that we have good right to be proud of our daily papers in this colony. "Weekly, too,"—you would add, and but for the impropriety of self-praise out of an advertisement, I should have added them, for indeed all our New Zealand weeklies are good; and the matter in my mind, and which is alone of general interest, concerns the daily press—chiefly. It, as I have said, does us credit, and as much for what it declines to do as what it does. That the chief morning and evening papers give a very excellent review of the news of the world without and of matters of local interest is admitted, and this is good, but that they have stood clear of the tactics of the sensational methods which are now the fashion in the great London half-penny dailies, and which are still more grossly noticeable in certain American journals, is even better. In the ordinary course of professional work I have seen much of the papers whose outrageous conduct over the disappearance of Miss Hickman drew from the "Times" the dignified regret that journalism should be so proscribed. The reproach of the greatest of daily organs in the world was well deserved. The papers concerned behaved shamefully over this case, but it was only on a par with what is now a recognised policy in journalism in the Old Country. Sensationalism at any price seems the motto—and the instruction to reporters and contributors is all too evidently "Get news; true, if possible, but get news." Accuracy, absolute and perfect, should be the backbone of journalism. To obtain news early and get ahead of rivals is the ambition of every pressman, but if speed is secured at the expense of accuracy it becomes, or should become, valueless. But the odd part of it is that apparently it does not. The half-penny journals at Home publish much news that is correct, and publish it in very concise form, but some of them, at all events, also, and as it seems, deliberately, publish daily lengthy rumours, suppositions, confessions, and what not, which are palpably false. These are hotly denied or ridiculed by the opposition papers, or are perhaps just simply disproved by the events of the few hours following publication; but no notice is taken of the inaccuracy, no apology made for the publication of false information. All this is called "smart," and is, one understands, up-to-date journalism. All I can say is, long may we remain out of date in New Zealand. The space given day after day to murderers, their private concerns, and alleged new discoveries of their crimes, and to such cases as this of Miss Hickman, arouse positive disgust. A certain inquest was reported a week or so ago with more detail than seemed to me necessary, but other-

wise the daily press of this colony is remarkably free from the chief sins which are beginning to so seriously lower the status of daily journalism in the Old Country.

The Last Straw.

As though there were not weights enough and to spare in the British system of measuring things, the Board of Trade people have just added another to the list. The little stranger is to be known as the half-cental, and weighs 60lbs—certainly a very fine child, but still it will hardly be welcome. A calculating person has come to the conclusion that about one-half a boy's time at school is taken up in committing to memory the long string of weights and measures which find a place at the beginning of the arithmetic book. Who does not remember them, even now, with a shudder, and a feeling of pity for the present day pupil—the victim of British stupidity and conservatism, doomed to a worse task than stonewalling Sisyphus? Why, even now, with all the added experience of use, one can not always say if asked quickly how many gills and pints go to make up each other (whichever it is), or what the difference is between grains and dwts, drachms and minims. It gives one the nightmare to simply try and run through even the names of the multitudinous systems with which the British tradesmen fence themselves round. On the other hand, the 'cute continental has three or four systems of measurements which are simplicity itself, and enable him to do without a minimum of exertion that which would take the average British person much time, and require a great deal of brain fag and voluminous figuring. Why cannot some Chamberlain of weights and figures arise and wake us up to a consciousness of the time we are wasting by clinging to obsolete methods when our neighbours and rivals have cast them off long ago?

The Veil of Futurity Rent.

We laugh at the Maori tohunga and invoke the law to suppress makutu-ism, but at the same time there is enough of the taint of superstition left in our natures as the legacy of our ancestors to make it easy for an incredible number of fortune-tellers, and ladies with foreign names, who read palms, to make a pretty comfortable living among us. Thackeray says we are all hypocrites, some for a good purpose and some for a bad. If we are all perfectly frank we will have to admit that we are, none of us, absolutely free from the influence of that state of the mind which has been termed a "misdirection of religious feeling." We have all heard of the man who used to laugh at the silly people who would never start a journey on a Friday. He was above such things and did not believe in them. He always started a journey on a Friday, and had never had an accident yet. "In fact, sir, I wouldn't start on any other day of the week but Friday!" Zadkiel and other smart folk take advantage of this peculiarity in their fellow-men and make money out of it. The annoying part of it is that one always forgets to take note of these prophecies when they are made. Ninety-nine go by without the remotest suspicion of being fulfilled, and no one bothers to remark the fact, but when the hundredth comes along, and by a lucky coincidence an event something like comes with it, the prophet loudly announces the fact (or fiction), and so preserves his reputation. The other day a weird publication called "Out of the Silence," with a lot of things like oughts-and-crosses and Egyptian mummies about it, reached me. It seems that so long ago as April, 1902, one of the seers whose lucubrations appear in this journal of esoteric lore, predicted trouble between Russia and Japan. He says: "By a process of intuition and deduction we believe the 14th and 29th of August to be focus days of danger—September 12, 23, October 10, 23, November 8, 19, and December 13 are also evil—and so leave our prediction for Time, the great alchemist, to test in his crucible." The prophet evidently anticipates the crucible will "boil-over." Incidentally he remarks that "the Japs will win handsomely and astonish Europe; the Vernal Equinox, early in the coming year at Tokio, being a glorious one, Venus exactly culminating in her exaltation in Pisces, and the sun in conjunction

with Jupiter in Ares." If anything were wanting to make clearer this already crystal clear argument, there is also a seven-line sun with a lot of full-stops, degree marks, stray signs of the Zodiac sked out with a liberal dash of "intuition" and "deduction." In a sort of supplement called "Arrows of the Chasm" he deals out promiscuous trouble, and anyone who wants to test his powers should remember that "in 1905 Don Carlos will come into his own and rule over Spain; February 19, 1905, Emperor of Austria sleeps with his father; 1908, Duc D'Orleans becomes King of France; November, 1908, Mark Twain tries a joke on Charon; August, 1924, Republic in England; May, 1929, Home Rule, Ireland; December, 1929, Lord Roberts meets Nelson." These are a few of the principal events in the seer's calendar. It is only fair to him to state that he prophesied "No Cup for Shamrock" as far back as June of this year. There are other equally interesting events fore-shadowed, but I will leave this new reader of visions at "August, 1924, Republic in England."

Not Such a Fool as He Looked.

The passengers by the Orient liner had come to the conclusion that the young English tourist was a fool, but, as an American put it, they were not quite sure "what size of a fool" he was. In running his eye over the breakfast list he saw sea-pie amongst the dishes, and said, "Haw! sea-pie; I've never eaten it, don't you know. Steward, bring me some, please." The table watched him curiously as the dish was brought, and just as curiously the tourist gazed at the strange mixture put before him. "Take it away, steward," he said decisively. "But you haven't tasted it," protested one of the guests. "No," said the novice emphatically, "and I don't intend to—too much debris." There was a roar of laughter at the table, and the tourist's size in the fool-gauge shrank considerably.

What Deaf People Should Avoid.

The things that deaf peoples should avoid are well summed up in a few brief hints entitled "Don'ts for the Deaf," part of an article on "Hygiene of the Ear," contained in the latest number of the "Review of the Ear, Nose, and Throat Diseases." Turning the leaves of this popular magazine one finds also much of interest in the way of general information on deafness and different forms of catarrh. The routine treatment of the aural specialist comes in for much criticism, and new methods are thoroughly discussed, preference being given to the new treatment based on outward applications behind the ears. This treatment, the Drouet Method, which can be applied at home, is said to have effected a large number of cures in cases where other methods failed. Those who are interested in the subject can obtain a copy of the "Review of Ear, Nose and Throat Diseases," free by post, by addressing the Editor Drouet Institute, 10, Marble-arch, London, W., England. Another special feature of the "Review" is the enclosure of a Patient's Report Form, for the benefit of those who wish advice, for which no fee is charged if given by correspondence.

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