

Town Planning.

Our cities, like our colonies, seem to have sprung up in a fit of absent-mindedness. They show no definite, well-thought-out planning; streets are narrow, open spaces are few, houses are crowded together, architecture is more varied than aesthetic, and the whole presents the appearance of jumble and confusion. Mr. Myers proposes to grapple with the matter by means of the Auckland Town Planning Bill, which sets up a Town Planning Board of seven members, to be elected by the members of the local bodies, in the way the members of the Education Board are elected by the members of the School Committees. This Board is to prepare a scheme for all those districts that make up the County of Eden, or, if advisable, a still larger area. The principal matters to be dealt with will be streets, tramways, buildings, open spaces, schools and playgrounds, public edifices, baths, reclamations, etc., and provision is to be made that before any scheme comes into force it must be submitted to the Governor-in-Council and approved by him, full opportunity being first given to any person or authority interested to urge their objection.

What It Means.

The establishment of a central Board provides for both unity and harmony. It prevents the future of the city being sacrificed to the idiosyncrasies of any local body. It enables concerted action to be carried on by the various local authorities. In Auckland the mistakes of the past have to be rectified, as well as provision made for the future. Many of the large schools have totally inadequate playgrounds, and the children are left to amuse themselves in spaces hardly bigger than that occupied by their classrooms. The municipalisation of the tramways is one of the essentials to the carrying out of an efficient scheme of residential site planning. Public baths are urgently needed in a semi-tropical climate like ours. We want some control over the erection of buildings, and a minimum area fixed for dwellings, so that such a regrettable feature as the erection of seven or eight houses on one acre may be dispensed with. We want areas set apart for factories, and the total elimination of slum dwellings. No city enjoys a more beautiful setting than Auckland; few cities have done less to make use of natural advantages.

The City Beautiful.

Could anything, for instance, be more hideous than the waterfront of Auckland, or High-street and its immediate surroundings? Where could you find a greater jumble of buildings than in Queen-street—palatial business houses side by side with ramshackle two-storeyed wooden houses. Contrast our public buildings with those of Paris or Vienna. We have no plan, no art, no beauty. The beauty of our suburbs is spoilt by a similar lack of planning. Many of our gullies are disfigured by houses that would be a disgrace to Whitechapel. Each local authority has its own ideas and its own laws, and we have neither symmetry nor grace. The plan proposed by Mr. Myers means money, means the sinking of small jealousies, means the ready and earnest support of the public. But it is worth it. Before it be too late, we must rectify past mistakes, and make Auckland, what it was meant to be, the fairest and most beautiful city in the Southern Hemisphere.

Horological Levity.

Some epidemic appears to be afflicting the town clocks of the Dominion. Our exchange files have for some time back recorded wild outbursts of horological levity, now in one city and then in another. The latest to go—as it were—on the spree is the town clock of Gore, which recently played strange tricks with trusting citizens, announcing the hours (by the chimes) every 15 minutes with persistence worthy of a better cause. Probably the watches which commonly repose comparatively undisturbed in their owners' pockets had more exercise during the usually reliable time-piece's aberration than they have had for some time. We are apt to repose so much confidence in our town clocks that we ascribe to them a kind of Papal infallibility, and it comes as a severe shock to find them given over to such giddy and flighty ways. They seem to be sadly in want of reform.

Our Drink Bill.

The fact that the drink bill in the Dominion last year shows an increase of 2/03 per head of population, as compared with 1908, lends point to the following extract from an article in the "Outlook" dealing with the prohibition question:—"It seems to us that the most important and essential preparation for a condition of national prohibition is a universal era of pledge-taking. Prohibition supposes, on the part of the bulk of the population, a voluntary assent to total abstinence; and it should surely be possible to get thousands of electors publicly pledged between now and election time. The 'catch-my-pal' movement in Ireland furnishes a magnificent example of what can be done in this direction, and it would be a grand gift to the cause on the part of the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand if the founder of that movement (the Rev. Robert J. Patterson) could be induced to spend some months in the Dominion this year. His presence and persuasive words would do much to ensure the total defeat of the Liquor Party. But if the services of the man may not be secured, at least his methods could be adopted."

Fitting the Cap.

When Mr Foster accused us of being over sensitive to criticism, we were led to assume that this was a colonial peculiarity. But a writer in an English paper says that it is a peculiarity of the age in which we live. He says: "Really, it would seem sometimes as though a certain portion of the British public went about searchingly saying, 'Is that a cap? Can I fit it on somehow?' And, having done so, they write to you and say, 'How dare you crown me with a cap and bells?' The writers of novels will tell you a weary story of anonymous letters, sent through the publishers, of people claiming to have been caricatured in their works, people they have hitherto never heard of. When 'Nicholas Nickleby' came out no less than six schoolmasters wrote to Dickens and claimed to be the original of Squeers—a terrible confession, indeed! And today, both in speech and pen, one has to be as careful of these mental invalids as though their lives hung in the balance. It is a bad sign. Robustness of thought and mind is as necessary to a nation as robust physical conditions are. And extreme sensitiveness is not a sign of a superior temperament; quite the contrary. Anyone who has worked much amongst the ignorant and untalented will tell you that 'touchiness' is their most striking vice. A wide education and brain development almost invariably destroy this depressing evidence of innate savagery and ill-breeding. Of course, we know that people sometimes have to be offended in self-defence, but that is another matter. It is the habitual touchiness which is such a very vulgar disease, since it very promptly makes men weak and women ugly. Do let us keep good-humoured and pretty."

"Honoris Causa."

It was recently stated by "The Globe" that the Kaiser had received the degree of M.D. "honoris causa" from the University of Prague. In Germany, we are told by a Paris paper, people take things in earnest, but the writer, who does not add that his conferees frequently draw upon their imagination, proceeds to relate an amusing incident relative to the Kaiser's honour. The other morning the Kaiser was inspecting one of his many regiments of which he is colonel-in-chief. One soldier fell out of the ranks, approached His Majesty, saluted, went back to his place, and put out his tongue. "What has he to say?" demanded the Emperor. "The man is wanting in respect." "No, sir," replied the soldier. "I am unwell, and respectfully ask Your Majesty to prescribe for me." The fame of the new doctor of Prague University, who, by the irony of events, had to sign his name in the album immediately after that of the great—in every sense—opponent of Hismarekian policy, Virchow, has spread beyond the army. Outside the Palace at Potsdam, as soon as it was known that the Kaiser had become a doctor, crowds of the mimed, the halt, and the blind lined up, reminding one of the scenes outside a dispensary. Some even offered to pay a fee for the Kaiser's diagnosis. The Emperor was not only embarrassed, but annoyed, so he ordered the following notice to be put up, "The doctorate in medicine conferred upon the Kaiser is simply an honorary distinction, so His Majesty does not undertake the care of the sick either gratuitously or otherwise."

Who is Lord Esher?

A PARADOX OF PUBLIC LIFE IN ENGLAND—THE MAN WHO GETS THINGS DONE.

By W. T. STEAD.

WHO is Lord Esher? it not the usual form of interrogative. It is more often: Who the devil is Lord Esher?—a phrase which in itself signifies much. For no one couples the name of the author of all evil with any mortal in that fashion without suggesting by the phrase that the person inquired about resembles the devil, or being in some way or other at variance with the established order. There is something wrong somewhere. The man does not fit in with preconceived notions of what he ought to do, or he reveals characteristics contrary to what might be expected of one in his position.

a unique place in the world of affairs, and who in doing so has discarded almost all the usual steps and stairs by which in this country men ascend to the highest positions. He runs after nothing, but all things seem to run after him. He accomplishes everything without any apparent exertion. He is not a soldier, but he has reformed the Army; nor a sailor, but he has done more than almost any landsman to keep up the strength of the first line of defence. His father was a judge who at one time was Solicitor-General in a Conservative Administration. When Lord Esher was Reggie Brett he was Liberal member for Falmouth; but to-day it is difficult even



LORD ESHER.

The Kaiser, in his famous Tweedmouth letter expressed himself somewhat roughly to the effect that in his opinion Lord Esher should confine his attention to the drains of Windsor Castle. From which impetinent allusion to Lord Esher's official position as Deputy-Governor of Windsor, it is evident that there is in this man something that can raise the devil even in such august and most Christian personages as a monarch by divine right. The Kaiser has probably long since realised his stupidity on that occasion, and although he has never made public amends for his somewhat vulgar snarl, when at the late King's funeral he and Lord Esher held friendly converse together for nearly an hour, the subjects discussed it is safe to say were not confined to, if indeed they ever included, the drains of Windsor Castle. The outbreak, however, was only a more prominent form of a very general feeling that Lord Esher is in some way or another an excrescence, an abnormality, to be regarded with disapproval by all conventionally minded men. It is not difficult to understand this feeling. Lord Esher is a man of original genius, who has carved out for himself

for his most intimate friends to say, whether he is a Liberal or a Conservative. He is a peer *maigre* *lui*. If his father had not been made first a Baron and then a Viscount, Lord Esher's whole career might have been different. For with that peerage a blast of death seemed to go forth against his political ambitions. A father can hardly be expected to refuse a peerage merely because at his death it will transplant his son from the House of Commons to the mortuary chamber of the Constitution. As if to avenge himself upon the evil fate which doomed him to a seat in the House of Lords, he seldom occupies it, never takes part in the debates, and hardly ever votes. Lord Esher is an incarnate paradox. In a country where eloquence is the easiest road to power, he makes no attempt at oratory. He lectures sometimes, but he never takes part in the tournament of political debate in which almost all men are compelled to win their spurs. No man ever played less to the gallery. He uses no burning