

## Notes

### Progress in Divorce.

We are evidently getting on in this Colony. Dissolution of the marriage tie (says the *Wellington Times*) is now conducted with promptitude and despatch. In the space of one hour in one afternoon recently five undefended applications were granted. Three cases were also considered in camera. A recent issue of the *Denver Daily News* vouches for the statement that in one year there were 1302 divorces in that city. We are apparently moving towards the free and easy ways by which, in some of the American States, divorces are granted—as boots are soled—'while you wait.' And perhaps in the not distant future some wag may chalk up on some of our railway stations—as one is said to have done in Denver: 'Train stops twenty minutes for divorce.' The 'quick despatch' of business by our divorce courts will no doubt, tend to greatly popularise 'tandem polygamy' in New Zealand.

### The Pope.

Pope Leo XIII.—whom the cable-demon reported a few weeks ago as pretty nearly at his last gasp—seem remarkably lively for a dying man. The latest files of our European exchanges represent him as being marvellously active for a man of his years and in such relatively good health that the office of the physician, Dr. Lapponi, is almost a sinecure. On last Friday the Holy Father completed twenty-three years and ten months of his pontificate. 'His reign,' says the *London Tablet*, 'has risen very high in the scale of duration, being now the sixth in order, and if he is spared till the octave of the Epiphany it will be the fifth longest of papal reigns. The Popes who have reigned longer than Leo XIII. are: St. Peter (33-67), with a reign of 34 years 6 months; Pius IX. (1848-78), 31 years, 7 months, and 22 days; Pius VI. (1775-98), 24 years, 6 months, and 14 days; Adrian I. (771-95), 23 years, 10 months, and 27 days; and Sylvester I. (314-37), 23 years, 10 months, and 24 days.'

### They Brought Conviction.

Many members of the legal fraternity take no pains (when not pleading) to conceal their contempt for the average jury. It is recorded of one noted London barrister that, once, when on circuit, he swilled sundry 'long-sleevers' of cheap and nasty beer in order to bring himself down to the level of the twelve 'good men and true.' Among those who least loved juries is Mr. Justice Jelf. An amusing story, told by him at their expense, appears in a recent issue of *M.A.P.* 'A friend of his, who was once on a jury, formed one of a majority of eleven in favor of a certain verdict; but unhappily the twelfth man was obdurate in taking the opposite view, and no amount of argument would make him budge an inch from the attitude of opposition. Despairing of convincing him, Mr. Jelf's friend lit a cigarette and began to smoke. "I object to your smoking, sir," the obdurate jurymen remarked. "I cannot breathe in an atmosphere of smoke." "I am sorry for that," the smoker blandly answered, and he handed round his cigarette case to the other ten. A minute later eleven cigarettes were pouring forth volumes of smoke. "A quarter of an hour later," Mr. Jelf used to say, with a twinkle in his eye, "a unanimous verdict was returned, but the man was nearly asphyxiated before he gave in!"

### Length of Days,

A correspondent, enclosing the death-notice of a grandame of 103 years old, asks: 'What is the secret of such great length of days?' We 'give it up.' Even the 'doctors' differ hopelessly here. Porridge, says one. Regularity of diet and exercise, say others. Still others place attention to personal and domestic hygiene in the forefront of causes of longevity. And from a thousand mouths comes the cry: Temperance. But (says a writer on the subject) 'one of the most interesting and trustworthy statements in respect to old age is the report on the habits of centenarians, made some years ago by a commission appointed by the British Medical Association. Without going into particulars of the different cases it is valuable to note, generally, the result of this investigation. It seems that most of these old people were small or medium of stature and a spare habit of body; the voice was rarely feeble; most of them had lost their teeth, but nearly all enjoyed good digestion, one old man of 98 years, a clergyman, placing his hand on the organ in question, and saying that he never knew what it was to have a stomach. Nearly all of them had enjoyed uninterrupted good health, and many had never known what it was to be sick. They were all very moderate in eating, most of them using little animal food. Few indulged at all in intoxicating drinks, and those only in notable moderation. They took considerable outdoor exercise, and nearly all possessed the good-natured, placid disposition.' But

good living is, we ween, of more account than long living. And it is well for both young and old ever to remember that no man liveth to himself alone.

## In Lighter Vein

(By 'QUIP'.)

\*. Correspondence, newspaper cuttings, etc., intended for this department should be addressed 'QUIP', N.Z. TABLET Office, Dunedin, and should reach this office on or before Monday morning.

### School Break-ups.

It seems to be a special dispensation of Providence in favor of newspapers, that the school break-ups occur when Parliament has closed down and things are generally flat, stale, and unprofitable. But for the columns and columns of names, distinguished in literature and the arts, which fill the papers about this time, newspaper men would have to kill the Czar or Bourke O'Brien, or some other celebrated man, on an average, two or three times a month. And I think it is immoral to kill any man more than once, except, perhaps, a poet. I always read the school reports through, beginning with the maid or youth who is dux and gets a medal, and ending with the tiny kindergarten tot who gets a flaming red and yellow picture-book as third prize for general proficiency in the A.B.C. The reading is a little sad. One cannot help thinking how many of these young lives, so full of bright promise and high hope for the future, will disappoint and be disappointed—especially among the boys, the majority of whom aspire to be tram-conductors, and who, in all probability, will never achieve anything better than being lawyers or doctors or bishops.

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On the other hand it is somewhat amusing to see the number of subjects that the teachers introduce, in order to be able to give each child a prize, because, you know, every child whose parents are not dead or confined to bed, must get something. They even teach spherical trigonometry and natural history and heaven knows what besides to youngsters who are still interested in the fact that Ned has a Cat, and that the Cat sits on the Mat—like most cats, in everybody's way. The other day, a curly-headed White Island bundle of innocence in a snowy Kate Greenaway frock, black stockings, and white two-strap shoes, brought home a prize for natural history. The little maid is my next-door neighbor. 'Oh!' said the delighted mother, 'how did you win that?' 'I thaid an elephant had five legth,' lisped the bundle. 'But an elephant has only four legs.' 'Yeth; but the other girls said it had six, so I got the prize.' After all, then, the whole thing is comparative, and school reports are simply columns of comparisons. Comparisons, I have heard as odious; so I'll say no more.

### The Concert.

There is generally a concert in connection with a break-up. My daughter took part in the one at White Island last Friday. For two days beforehand she spoilt the landscape around our place by going about with the front of her head loaded with five or six dozen curling-pins, all pointing in a different direction, and resembling in appearance magnified and corpulent wood-worms. And the back of her poll was made 'a joy for ever,' being richly bedight with four or five festoons, partly of rag and partly of hair. At the concert she played a duet with another maiden. They punished the instrument with great violence, their backs all the time turned to the audience. This arrangement was decided upon because the other girl's parents had threatened to take her away from the school unless she were allowed to sit at the piano on the side next the audience. Of course we did the same about our girl. We had to stand by our rights, you know. The compromise was an improvement, because if you were a lee-tle deaf, you could not hear the players doing the 'One-two-three-four' business in an emphatic and aggressive stage-whisper. The lady pupil-teacher was there in all her glory. She affected the new 'straight-front.' She has kahki-colored hair most of the year, and she had it gathered into the summit of her cranium and tied in a wee-shy little knot that looked like the knob on the lid of a tea-pot and was simply there for convenience in putting the hair on or off. On the starboard side of the knob there was a bunch of something yellow. I think it was some toi-toi, but it may have been a sheaf of ripe oats. She played two or three items with more than the average rapturous swaying of the body and lifting of the curved and ringed little finger towards the ceiling that distinguishes the true artist. Another pleasing item on the programme was a dance by some children. There were no steps in it, but that is nothing. It was marvellous to see the way these youngsters tried to see who could 'keep together the soonest.' And the way they left the piano be-