

SOCIAL LIFE AT THE CAPITAL OF NEW ZEALAND.

BY A RESIDENT.



WELLINGTON.



WE are all pretty familiar now with the surprises that usually await the typical "new chum" on his arrival in any of the Australian colonies — when he finds for instance that his bowie-knife, revolver, and repeating rifle are *not* the indispensable adjuncts which he imagined they would be, and that his friends are *not* in the habit of sleeping on packing-cases, and using flour-tubs in the place of dining-room tables.

All these surprises, however, I venture to say, are mild in comparison with the amazement of the young Englishman who comes to New Zealand with the expectation of "roughing it" in a Crimean shirt and blue jumper, and suddenly finds himself landed in the capital, in the midst of the punctiliously correct "society" which surrounds the shrine of Government House. All his ideas of the freedom of colonial life, of which he has heard so much, vanish like dreams at the waking hour. Possibly the poor young man, while fully impressed with the absolute necessity of his bowie-knife and pistols, omitted to bring his dress-clothes, thinking these were the emblems of an effete civilisation, and totally uncalled for in the wild young freedom of the new world. Let him at once repair the terrible omission, for nowhere is a claw-hammer coat more indispensable than in Wellington, the capital of New Zealand. And nowhere else, I may add, are people more exacting in regard to the rigid performances of all social observances.

At what precise period this rigid *régime* was inaugurated I have no exact means of knowing, but I shrewdly suspect that it was about the time of the

removal of the seat of Government to Wellington from Auckland. It could hardly have existed in the early days of the settlement, say thirty or forty years ago, when packing-cases and flour-tubs really were put to uses never contemplated by their original makers, and when "morning calls" took the form of dropping in to borrow a few potatoes, or seeing if you could lend a hand with your neighbour's washing.

Gradually as the town grew, the old colonial heartiness and freedom of intercourse became curtailed, and the more exclusive of the new arrivals formed themselves into a "set," and hedged themselves round with the restrictions to which some of them had been accustomed in the old world, and to which the others no doubt paid great deference as being undoubtedly "the correct thing." With the arrival of the Civil Service officials and the *entourage* of Government House, "deportment" at once rushed up to a premium, and the old colonial "come when you like and welcome" kind of hospitality had to hide its diminished head, for fear of being thought uncivilised and vulgar.

In making these remarks I shall of course be denounced as a Philistine, and accused in all probability of being vulgar and uncivilised myself.

Let me not be misunderstood as decrying all social restraints and rules. In the case of Government House, for example, I recognise the necessity of a strict observance of conventionalities. Of course also as a community progress in what is called civilisation the adoption of certain forms and regulations becomes as necessary to preserve social freedom as do general legislative enactments for the maintenance of national liberty. What I do protest against, however, is the carrying of ordinances, praiseworthy in themselves, to

such an extreme as to invest the whole community with an air of stiffness and restraint. When you make a call expecting to find a cordial hospitable English lady as hostess, it is not pleasant to discover Mrs. Wilfer sitting bolt upright glaring at you with a freezing want of friendliness.

The hostesses for the most part seem as if they had not been very long in the position, and were afraid of committing themselves, and the consequence is that it is difficult to feel thoroughly at ease in their company. As for the young ladies, I shrink from saying anything ungallant, partly because I am deeply sensible of their many charms, and partly because I know they are attentive readers of CASSELL'S MAGAZINE, and the bravest man is naturally appalled at the thought of incurring their resentment.

They seem to me, however, to be either too much of the "prunes and prism" order, or else going to the other extreme, they are distinctly flirty, not to say flighty.

It is rare to find that delightful frankness and absence of reserve which, combined with the most perfect modesty and maidenly self-respect, go to make the ideal English girl so charming. The colonial "young lady," as she prefers to be called, seems to be either looking at you with an air of frigid distrust, or recklessly throwing herself at your head. The English girl treats you with a confidence that in itself compels respect, and when a man thinks of wooing her, he does so tremblingly, feeling that it is a privilege not rashly to be aspired to.

There! In making this comparison I know I have emphatically "put my foot in it." The colonial girls, however, despite their failings, are good-hearted creatures, capable of learning even a harsh lesson; and so, knowing that what I have said is intended for their good, I must endeavour to brave the consequences.

So much for society generally in the capital of New



"IT IS NOT PLEASANT TO DISCOVER MRS. WILFER SITTING BOLT UPRIGHT."

Zealand. It is only fair to add that on the whole the stranger who cares to enter the *arcana*, and takes the trouble to conform strictly to the regulations, has no very great difficulty in gaining admittance.

Provided a young man is not in trade, at any rate in a retail line, and is careful not to offend Mrs. Wilfer's prejudices, he soon finds the means of entering the inner brotherhood.

The ladies dress tolerably well as a rule, but with nothing like the lavishness observed in Melbourne. Government House is practically the only opening which a Wellington lady possesses of "showing off" an expensive toilette.

The one great drawback to Wellington as a place of social resort and enjoyment is the paucity of good walks and drives in the neighbourhood.

The city is very picturesquely situated on the shores of a beautiful bay which Lord Normanby, a former Governor, was fond of comparing to that of Naples. The hills which hem it in on every side, although effective as a background, are decided obstacles in the way of locomotion, and hence the Wellingtonian who feels inclined for a drive or a ramble soon finds that there is but a limited choice of routes.

The bay itself grows on the resident immensely. Unfortunately the surrounding hills have been stripped of the native bush, and at first the view may strike the spectator as uninteresting and even ugly. It is only when he becomes acquainted with the ever-changing aspects of the harbour, the strange effects of light and shade, of mist and sunshine, and, above all, the vivid atmospheric hues which light up the waters and the envioning heights at sunrise and sunset, that he begins to understand the affection of every true Wellingtonian for this noble harbour.

There is an excellent rowing club which has been in existence for some years, and a promising yachting club more recently established, so that young



"HIS BOWIE-KNIFE, REVOLVER, AND REPEATING RIFLE" (A. 224).

Wellington has opportunities not only of cultivating a taste for the beautiful, but developing the and sinew.

Rowing and football are undoubtedly the two sports in which the young men of Wellington excel, especially the latter. Cricket is not in so flourishing a condition, owing probably to the absence of good practice grounds.

Hitherto I have dwelt on the lighter elements of social life in the New Zealand metropolis. It must not be assumed, however, that it is destitute of intellectual and religious activity.

Lectures, I am afraid, do not go down well in Wellington unless they are delivered by some one who has made a name for himself at home, and then it is to be feared the people go to see the lecturer rather than to hear what he has to say. There is an excellent museum under the charge of Sir James Hector, F.R.S., and a good Athenæum and circulating library. The Philosophical Institute meets regularly at the museum, and learned papers are read on various scientific subjects. When I remark that recent contributions to the "Transactions" include dissertations

on "The Anatomy of *Septoteuthis bilineata*," "The Revision of the recent *Rhachylossate* Mollusca of New Zealand," and "On the New Zealand *Pycnogonida*," it may be imagined that the subjects treated are not of the light and frivolous order. Those who care for the practical study of botany can gratify their taste in the public gardens, the chief attraction of which consists of some beautiful native bush and ferns.

I may add that churches of all denominations are plentiful in Wellington. And if there are no marvels of pulpit eloquence among the preachers, there are men who are good examples of earnest, hard-working Christian ministers. There are also various organisations open to the benevolently disposed to employ as a means of personal usefulness.

Taking it all in all, life at the seat of Government in New Zealand, although not very thrilling in its episodes, is at any rate endurable.

I will go further, and say that a man to whom a good climate is a consideration, and who has a contented mind, will find here the means of interest and enjoyment.

MONICA :

OR, STRONGER THAN DEATH.

By EVELYN EVERETT GREEN, Author of "Torwood's Trust," "Oliver Langton's Ward," &c.

CHAPTER THE THIRTEENTH. RANDOLPH'S STORY.



RANDOLPH led his wife upstairs to the drawing-room, and closed the door behind them. It was nine o'clock, and the room was brightly illuminated. Randolph was in dinner dress, as though he had been some time at home. His face was pale, and wore an expression of stern repression more intense than anything Monica had ever seen there before. She was profoundly agitated—agitated most of all by the feeling that he was near her again: the husband she had pined for without knowing that she pined. Her agitation was due to a kind of tumultuous joy more than to any other feeling,

but she hardly knew this herself, and no one else would have credited it from the whiteness of her face, and the strained look it wore. As a matter of fact, she was physically and mentally exhausted. She had gone through much that day; she had eaten little, and that many hours ago; she was a good deal prostrated, though hardly aware of it—a state in which

nervous tension made her unusually susceptible of impression, and she trembled and shrank before the displeasure in her husband's proud face. Would he look like that if he really loved her? Ah, no! no! She shrank a little more into herself.

Randolph did not hurry her. He took off his top coat leisurely, and laid his whip down upon the table. He looked once or twice at her as she sat, pale and trembling, in the arm-chair whither he had led her. Then he came and stood before her.

"Monica, what have you to say to me?"

She looked up at him with an expression in her dark eyes that moved and touched him. Something of the severity passed from his face; he sat down too, and laid his hand upon hers.

"You poor, innocent child," he said quietly, "I do not even believe you know that you have done wrong."

"I do, Randolph," she answered. "I do know, but not as you think—I could not help that. I hated it—I hated him; but to-night I could not help myself. What I did wrong was not doing as you asked—persisting in judging for myself. But how could I know that people could be so cruel, so unworthy, so false? Randolph, I should like to-night to know that I should never see one of them again!"

She spoke with a passionate energy that startled him. He had never seen her excited like this before.

"What have they been saying to you?" he asked in surprise.