

able friend the Minister of Lands will have something to say presently, unless we are prepared to assist settlement by a large expenditure of the consolidated revenue, which means extra taxation. No doubt settlement may be stimulated to a certain extent if Parliament is prepared to give material assistance and facilities for settlement to persons of the small-farmer class possessed of limited means, but, as far as I can judge, this class could not be obtained in any large numbers. It is worth the attention of Parliament to consider whether special settlements, such in some sort as originally founded this colony, might not be introduced at certain places; but the work would be one of some difficulty and would require great care.

The Government have had under careful consideration the fact that in parts of the colony where no Crown land remains there are blocks in private hands suitable for any subdivision required to make settlement closer. They think the provisions of "The Land Act, 1885," for the acquisition of land for village settlements ought to be extended so as to cover the case of providing small holdings suitable as well for agriculture in its ordinary sense as for fruit-growing and spade industry. The Government intend to bring in a Bill to make the necessary alteration; but the principle of the Act—that no land shall be acquired without the owner's consent, and no purchase valid until approved by Parliament—will be kept intact.

Another point in this connection is also well worth the attention of Parliament. There seems to be a tendency in our educational system, excellent as it is, to give our young people a taste for town life as opposed to country life. It ought to be considered whether this tendency cannot, in part at least, be counteracted by a modification in our school course. It seems probable that we might do something towards inducing and developing an inclination for country life and pursuits by following the example of other countries—Scotland, for instance—in making elementary agriculture a part of the teaching given in our national schools. Probably also we should be helping in the same direction, as well as doing what in itself is good, if we could encourage among our scholars a taste for natural history.

Tendency of educational system to give taste for town life.

RETROSPECT AND COMPARISON.

I propose now, with the leave of the Committee, seeing that this is the fourth and last session of the present Parliament, to review shortly the financial operations which this Parliament has from time to time directed or sanctioned since it first met in 1887, and which have been carried out in accordance with its will.

And, in the first place, I will compare the expenditure of 1886–87 with the expenditure of 1889–90, in order that we may see what, so far, has been the result of our efforts at reduction of expenditure. It will be necessary, in order to understand the position, that we should see first what was our expenditure in the financial year 1886–87. We find that the total expenditure for that year chargeable on the Consolidated Fund, including the Land Fund, but excluding the amount paid for interest and sinking fund, was £2,523,656; but, in order to make the comparison with the expenditure for 1889–90 fair, there must be added to this sum £113,912, which in 1886–87 was charged against loan, and spent upon school-buildings, subsidies to local bodies, and a contribution to the permanent defence force; whereas in 1889–90 the same services were wholly charged upon the ordinary revenue. The addition of this sum makes a total expenditure of £2,637,568 for 1886–87. Now, the expenditure for 1889–90, exclusive of interest and sinking fund, was £2,346,158, showing a reduction in favour of 1889–90 of £291,410. Table No. 24, appended to the Statement, gives particulars of the reductions effected in the various classes, resulting in this large saving.

It will be remembered that the Government submitted in 1887 certain proposals for reductions which they thought would lessen the public expenditure by about £300,000. The House did not approve of some of the reductions suggested which were estimated to save £45,000. The estimated reductions, therefore, which met with the approval of the House were £255,000. The Government, however, pledged themselves to make further reductions as far as

Retrospect and Comparison.

Expenditure of three years ended the 31st March, 1890, less by £291,410 than expenditure of three years ended the 31st March, 1887.

Table No. 29.