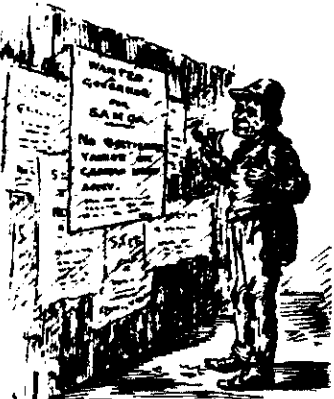


uses in acting as go-betweens and peace preservers among their great neighbours. When, as in this Samoan case, there is friction and jealousy among any two or more of the latter which has to be smoothed down, the little neutral is usually invited in. The provision of the Commissioners



"Deport! there's my chance at last. Faith, I'd make an illegal Governor so I could."

with regard to the nationality of the new Samoan Governor will, I suppose, make it useless for any New Zealander to apply for the billet. Not a few will regret this. It will occur to many that seeing we have supplied Tonga with a Resident, there is nothing to hinder us giving a Governor to Samoa. There are scores of men in the colony who believe they could fill all the requirements. Perhaps if this were represented to the Commissioners they might be induced to throw the position open to New Zealanders.

A THANKLESS TASK.

We New Zealanders do not greatly affect statues. By a supreme effort a bronze effigy of Her Gracious Majesty the Queen has been erected in Auckland, and Mr Gladstone is to have a bust in the Northern City. But these two works seem to have pretty well exhausted the statuesque enthusiasm of the Aucklanders, and the promoters of the scheme to perpetuate the memory of Sir George Grey by means of a statue of the deceased statesman are having a difficult business. The invitation to the public to subscribe, and the offering of manifold temptations to them to do so, in the shape of conveniently placed collection boxes, have both failed to tap the well-spring of Northern generosity, and at last it has been determined that a canvassing committee shall make a house to house visit and



A thankless task.

solicit subscriptions. A list is to be made out of all the likely persons whom it would be advisable to visit, and the canvassers, hunting in couples, will wait upon these gentlemen. The scheme reminds us of the tactics adopted in the mendicant profession. Professional tramps, I understand, are in the habit of putting a distinguishing mark on the houses they visit indicating the character of the inmates, so that when a brother tramp comes along he can at a glance discern what his chances of entertainment are. It is precisely the same idea in a slightly different shape that the Grey Statue Committee have hit upon, and it might prove very successful. A mistake, I think, has been made, however, in revealing the names of the canvassers. That should have

been kept as profound a secret as the names of the citizens whose homes or places of business are to be invaded, otherwise the canvassers will have their work cut out to catch their prey. The appearance on the scene of any of these assiduous fishers of men will, of course, be the signal for general flight. I have always thought the position of a canvasser singularly undesirable, but even the man who essayed to take orders for a new Pietresque Atlas of Australia would probably have quite as enviable a billet as the gentlemen who go forth to solicit subscriptions for such a worthy and aesthetic object as a statue to Sir George Grey. Hitherto they have all enjoyed the confidence of their fellow citizens, but whether they can expect to do so after the canvass is finished is more than I would like to say. Speaking from my own experience, I have known friendships decay on less grounds. Let a man be as Christian-spirited as you like, I defy him to feel as kindly disposed to his bosom friend after the latter has sold him a ticket for a church bazaar as he did before. The transaction is indeed a trifling one, yet nothing that I know of tends to shake one's confidence in the sincerity of your friend's affection and regard as an attempt on his part to make you purchase a ticket for a church bazaar: I am very much afraid that the case will be even worse in this statue business. I should not wonder if social ostracism of a kind is the penalty which the poor canvassers will have to pay for their devoted intrepidity in a good cause.

Notes & Notions.

The story of destitution and death as recorded in the Wellington papers of Friday last reflects little credit on the benevolent institution of the Empire city. The victim was one Andrew Carnaga, who had been laid up with consumption for nine months, and who died on Tuesday last from pulmonary hemorrhage. The lady visitor of the Benevolent Institute had visited the house several times, and had allowed the unfortunate family the munificent sum of 4/ per week and four rations. There was the wife, the invalid husband, who required constant attendance and continual nourishment, and there were five children, and the rent of the home was 7/ per week. To provide for rent, children, invalid cookery, not to mention the necessities of life, the Benevolent Institution (oh, the bitter irony of the name to the dying man and his starving family) provided 4/ a week. Surely there is something very very wrong here. Something which the charitably disposed persons who supply the Benevolent Institute with funds should inquire into. To me it is but one of many instances of the fact that benevolent societies, though well meaning, do more harm than good in the majority of instances and places. It is a case of doing those things they ought not to do, and leaving undone those things they ought to do. They are in hundreds of cases grossly deceived and defrauded, and every now and then in one of other of our principal cities a case arises like the present, which shows an almost inconceivable lack of perception of a genuine case of privation, and a lack of sympathy for obvious suffering simply astounding.

Speaking generally, the decisions and sentences of the Magistrates' Courts in New Zealand are fair and reasonable, and we are free in this colony from those flagrant absurdities and abuses which disgrace the English Provincial Magisterial Bench, and which are so usefully shown up in the legal pillory of Mr Labouchere's fearless journal "Truth." But there are one or two points on which I think the magistrates of this colony show a disposition to be unduly lax, or rather, it would be more correct to say lenient. I refer to cases of cruelty to animals. The real gravity of the crime does not seem to be understood by many otherwise excellent J.P.'s and Resident Magistrates, and there is a tendency either to discharge cases without sufficiently searching enquiry, or where a conviction is recorded to award a sentence which is not at all commensur-

ate with the seriousness, and too frequently the blackguardism of the offender. Two cases are now before me which are an admirable text for the usual lay sermon which I fear I all too often inflict on readers of this column. The value of these instances is that each represents an entirely different stamp of case, both, however, needing severity to be put down.

We will take the worst first, and I think all will agree that as an instance of juvenile scoundrelism and brutality it would be (happily) hard to beat. And, lest it should be thought that in my earnestness over this matter I might exaggerate, let us take the plain report of the local paper. It records that at Patea Court last week two boys named Hodge were brought up on a charge of cruelty to an animal. The facts according to the Press were that one of the boys held a horse while the other tied a tin can with some stones in it to its tail, and then let it go. The horse began to gallop, and the tin to rattle, and the horse galloped along the road about three chains to where the road stopped, and the horse tried to jump over a wire fence, and was caught and thrown over, being seriously injured by the fall. The boys beat it with sticks to make it get up, but this was unable to do (having broken its back), and after taking the tin away the boys left it to its fate. It remained there for two days, when it was found necessary to destroy it. The Court was quite satisfied defendants were guilty of the charge. Unfortunately the Act did not allow them to order a good birching or that would have been the sentence; and if they fined heavily, the hardship would fall on their mother. Under the circumstances they had decided in inflict a fine of 10/ on each defendant, with costs 13/.

Comment so far as concerns this terrible story of blackguard cruelty itself is obviously needless. It is enough to shock and distress the most callous, while to those who love animals it is simply past thinking upon. But there are one or two points in the evidence and in the decision of the magistrate which seem to be worth consideration. Surely, in the first place, it is monstrous to a degree that the prescribed form of flogging cannot be resorted to for such dastardly and cowardly actions. If the magistrates concerned are right, the sooner the law is amended the better, and I commend the matter to the attention of our legislators in Parliament assembled. If they get this one Act altered, the session—be it long or short—will not have been wholly useless. But even supposing there was no power to flog these culprits, surely some more fitting punishment could have been found than a nominal fine. What! someone will doubtless say, would you send them to prison? Yes; most certainly, I would answer, in the absence of reformatories (whose absence is a national disgrace) they should assuredly go to prison. Who will maintain that the crime of these cruel cowards is not infinitely more serious than every standpoint—moral and social—than the picking of a pocket or stealing of a horse; yet we have recently seen some severe imprisonment sentences for these latter offences.

It does not seem to strike many people that brutality to animals, and callousness to their suffering, is, if encouraged, likely to end in cases of social ferocity and brutality. To beat and kick a horse to death is a long step on the road to crimes of vio-

lence, of cruelty to women and children, and even to murder; and the imposing of absurdly lenient sentences palliates, if it does not encourage, hideous crimes such as that chronicled in the Patea Court. If it were understood that a sentence of two or three months' hard labour with a couple of judiciously placed and very severe floggings would be awarded to any even moderately bad case of active cruelty to animals, the evil would be very soon stamped out.

In the foregoing paragraph I used the phrase active cruelty to animals, and I did so advisedly, because the other case I wish to refer to concerns a case of what may be termed passive cruelty, and while entirely lacking the horror and criminal characteristics of the last, yet is no bad instance of the tendency to a careless callousness to the needs and necessities of animals, and lack of the thought which is far too characteristic of many country districts. The facts shortly stated are that Mr Bromell, on the 28th February, sold a section to Mr Rollet, and on that mustered the sheep thereon, also purchased by Mr Rollet. The section was an outlying one, each of the gentlemen named living about fifteen miles therefrom. Ten of the sheep mustered were declared to be the property of Mr Charles Ricketts, a neighbouring farmer, and these were placed in a pen by Mr Bromell and kept separate from the flock. Word was sent by a Mr John Harford to Mr Ricketts that his sheep were on the property, and asking him to remove same. The evidence was contradictory as to whether Mr Ricketts was told that the sheep were in a pen, or, as he stated, that they were in a paddock. Anyway, being busy hop-picking, etc., he did not send for the sheep, which remained in the pen, and the other parties having dispersed no one apparently was aware of their condition. Then pen was but one-eight of an acre in extent, and there was no water. Sometime afterwards, a Mr Carl Davis, in passing over the land, noticed that the sheep had not sufficient food, and without knowing any of the circumstances he removed them into an adjoining pen, where there was herbage. No one seems to have gone near the place again till the 19th of April, when Mr Rollet went up to muster his sheep, and was surprised to find the sheep in the pen, three of them dead, and the remainder very much starved. The Magistrate dismissed the case. It appeared clearly enough to him that there was not any intentional cruelty upon the part of anyone, and it was, he considered, a moot point who was responsible for the neglect, which was evidently caused by a misunderstanding, or an omission to give full particulars.

Now, while quite agreeing with the Magistrate that there was in this special case no intentional cruelty on the part of anyone, and that the question as to who ought to have seen after the sheep was not over clear, I do think that this was a case of reprehensible carelessness all round. No doubt all the persons concerned are utterly capable of a callous, far less a cruel action, but that through want of thought or forgetfulness on part of one or more they did severally and jointly cause great cruelty and outrageous suffering to several animals is unquestionable. Want of thought causes half the suffering and half the crimes in the world, and when it reaches a certain

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