

The News of the Week

IN THE DOMINION.

The North Island railway returns, with 411 less miles of track, were nearly £12,000 in excess of the South Island last month.

The proposals to borrow £41,000 for road construction, £95,000 to instal the Shone system of sewerage, and £6000 for recreation reserves, submitted to the rate-payers by the Gisborne Borough Council last week, were rejected.

The Wapiti (North American elk), which were imported from America in 1905, and liberated at Doubtful Sound in the South Island, are reported by the Hon. T. Mackenzie, who visited the locality recently, to be well and increasing in numbers.

A cargo of Westport coal is to be taken to Honolulu by the Union Company's steamer Kamona, consigned to the British Admiralty. It is presumed that this coal is for the Cambrian, which has just left New Zealand on a voyage round the world, and will touch at Honolulu.

An attempt is to be made by the Auckland Education Board to encourage the teaching of swimming in the public schools. The suggestion is made that the headmasters should be induced to give instruction, by being offered special inducements, from the capitation grant.

A gang of seven men was arrested in Auckland last week in a house which contained a quantity of goods missing from several business places, which have been broken into lately, and remanded for eight days. There has been quite an epidemic of burglaries in the city during the last fortnight.

The Takapuna Jockey Club's summer meeting was brought to a conclusion last week. The total amount put through the totalisator was £28,097, an increase of over £2000 over last year's figures. In addition to this, licences were issued to 45 bookmakers, the fees for the meeting amounting to £1461 10/.

The brigantine Rio Loge, which left Kaipara on January 6 for Dunedin, has not turned up yet, and considerable anxiety has been felt for her safety. It is probable that the Government will send a steamer out to look for the missing vessel. The master, Captain Spence, has his wife and two children on board with him.

It has been decided to form an art students' society in Auckland, principally with a view of establishing a life school. A committee was appointed last week to interview the Technical School authorities to see if they would assist in the project. The new society will be open to students of any age, and in all branches of art.

A youth named James Gossett was committed for trial at Auckland last week on a charge of stealing about £180 from Messrs. Heather, Robertson and Co., by whom he was employed as Customs Clerk. Detective Millar handed in a written confession made by the accused, and said the latter had admitted that he spent the money backing racehorses.

Tourists are frequently credited with strange ideas about the Dominion, but the limit was reached last week in Wellington when a mild-mannered globe-trotter asked to be directed to the place where he could shoot tigers. He seemed annoyed when the Tourist Department official told him they were permanently out of season in New Zealand.

The Railway Department draws attention to the by-law which operates from 1st February, 1909, wherein it is provided that the maximum weight of any sack containing wheat, barley, or oats to be carried by railway shall be 200lb. Any sack of wheat, barley, or oats containing a greater weight than 200lb. shall be charged for at four times the ordinary rate of freight.

The memorial erected to the memory of the Rev. J. F. Churton, first incumbent of St. Paul's, Auckland, which was dismantled at the time the church was removed during the excavations at Fort Britomart, has been re-erected in its altered form at Family Place, as near the old site as possible, and on Sunday last it was formally handed over to the city by Mr. R. R. Hunt, on behalf of the subscribers.

The value of property in Queen-street, Auckland, has advanced rapidly of late years. A block with a twenty-two feet frontage to Queen-street, and a depth of about 100 feet right through to High-street, was sold last week, and, with

the buildings on it, realised £12,200, at which figure it became the property of Mr. J. Eadean. The price works out at over £500 a foot, a rise of £100 upon the last sales in the vicinity.

In accordance with his promise to have a Royal Commission set up to inquire into the alleged charges of bribery in connection with the Ohinemuri Licensing Committee of some years ago, we understand that the Prime Minister has asked his Honor the Chief Justice to arrange for two of his colleagues of the Supreme Court Bench to accept the office of Royal Commissioners for the purposes of the inquiry.

In order to test the validity of the right of the inebriates detained at Pakatua Island, Auckland, to vote at the General Elections, a test case will be brought in the Magistrate's Court, Onehunga, this week. The inebriates all exercised the privilege at the last election, and the question has arisen from the fact that the voting on the licensing question was fairly close in the Manukau electorate. A good deal of interest is being taken in the matter locally.

When the Minister of Marine was in Whangarei he was asked by a deputation to have a light placed on Whangarei Heads. The Minister pointed out that the Government were at present erecting a first-class light at Cape Brett, and another at Tuahine Point, and when these two were finished he intended to ask Parliament for the necessary funds for two more lights, one of which would be placed at Whangarei Heads. It would not, of course, be of the highest power, but would be ample for coastal requirements.

Messrs. A. Clark and Sons, Ltd., the well-known warehousemen, who have had premises in Shortland-street, Auckland, for a number of years, are building a large warehouse at the corner of Wellesley-street West and Elliott-street. The tender of Messrs. W. C. Johns and Sons for £17,435 was accepted by the architects, Messrs. E. Mahoney and Sons, last week. Ferro-concrete piers, floors, and divisions, representing an extra £5500, are not included in the above figures, and there will also be a considerable sum spent in electric lighting, elevators, etc.

Captain Bollons, of the Hinemoa, which has just returned to Dunedin, states that there was no foundation for the statement made by the master of the President Felix Faure, wrecked in March of last year, that the French sailors found the provisions at the depot uneatable. The Hinemoa went to reprovision the depot, and Captain Bollons found tins and cases of food untouched, and all of this perfectly sweet and sound. The Hinemoa brought back some biscuits from the old stock, and though seven months had elapsed since the tale was told, they are said to be equal in condition to what one would buy at a city store.

The balance-sheet of the New Zealand Insurance Company, Limited, for the year ended 30th November, 1908, is published, from which it appears that the net income from premiums, interest, and rents, amounts to £647,300. The credit balance after payment of the dividend of £15,000 in August last, is £70,203 out of which the directors recommend placing £45,000 to the reserves, and £1500 to the investment fluctuation account. From the available balance of £23,793, the directors recommend the payment of a dividend at the rate of two shillings per share, absorbing £15,000, making 10 per cent. for the year. The paid-up capital, reserves, and undivided profit, now amount to £747,793, after providing for the dividend recommended by the directors.

On not infrequent occasions complaints have reached the Dominion of the way in which frozen meat cargoes have been handled in discharging operations at London. There is generally two sides to a story (says our Wellington correspondent), and the version of an officer for many years engaged on one cargo steamer releases the Old Country in a measure of the stigma placed upon it. He fixes the responsibility for the trouble at this end, pointing out that loading under difficulties in open roadsteads from lighters is often attended with damage to the carcasses, and that in a heavy swell the slings may knock against the side of the ship and upset the equilibrium of the frozen mutton. Then carcasses tumble out of the canvas

into the hold, and the result is bruised flesh and broken shanks. Hence the complaints regarding the handling at London is, according to the officer, above reproach.

A Big Turnover.

Interesting abstracts from the accounts of the Auckland Savings Bank for 1908 have just been published. For the first time in history of the Bank, the transactions for twelve months exceed £2,000,000, deposits amounting to £1,023,727, and withdrawals £1,018,832. There were 41,572 depositors of £1,145,849 on the 31st of December last, and a pleasing feature of these totals was that 27,430 were depositors of less sums than £20, and 5,220 were represented by between £20 and £30, showing that the Bank encourages thrift among the poorer people. The interest paid on deposits was four per cent. Some interesting comparisons may be drawn from the accounts of the expansion of the Bank's business. The total deposited in the Bank at the close of 1899 was £653,509, and at the end of 1908 it had grown to £1,145,833. In 1899 the amount deposited in the Penny Bank was £3,029 16/11, and the number of accounts remaining open on December 31 was 7,167, the amount at credit of depositors being £7,329. Last year the accounts totalled 13,340, the amount deposited was £5,099 9/5 and the total at credit of depositors at the end of the year was £13,213 1/1. The charges for management grew from £3,026 in 1899, to £5,560 in 1908.

Civil Service Retirements.

I am informed, with regard to retirements from the Civil Service at the age of 65 years, that they will be put into force without exception in future. Cabinet has decided that all officers in the various State departments of 65 years or over shall be retired from March 31st with three months' leave on full pay.—(Wellington correspondent.)

Another Son at Government House.

Lady Plunket, wife of His Excellency the Governor, Lord Plunket, was accompanied of a son at Government House, Palmerston North, on Saturday last. Lady Plunket and the child are both progressing most satisfactorily.

The Luxury of Striking.

Thirty-seven coal truckers, who went on strike at Kaitangata, Otago, owing to a misunderstanding over the reported victimising of a fellow trucker, were fined thirty pounds. In answer to a question, the judge of the Arbitration Court said each of the men was liable for the whole amount, and they would have to arrange among themselves as to the payment. It is said that about half the men concerned have left Kaitangata since the disturbance.

Seventeen men, who struck at the freezing works of Borthwick and Sons, at Dakipaki, Hawke's Bay, because they were not allowed "smoko-o" time, were each fined one pound with costs at Hastings last week by Mr. S. E. McCarthy, S.M. The morning after the strike the men's request was granted, and they insisted upon an apology from the manager for having called them "cous."

Main Trunk Timetable.

The approximate times for the through train services are now fixed as follows:—On the Northern journey, the train will leave Wellington at 11.45 a.m., reaching Marton at 4.40 p.m., Taihape at 6.50, Ohakune 9.5, Tannarunui 11.50, Te Kuiti 2 a.m., Frankton Junction 3.30, arriving at Auckland at 6.58 a.m. next day.

Running South, the trains leave Auckland on Sundays and daily (except Saturdays) at 9.15 p.m., reaching Frankton Junction at 12.27 a.m., Te Kuiti at 2.0, Tannarunui at 4.30, Taihape at 9.38, Marton at 11.20, arriving at Wellington at 8.25 p.m. the next day.

There will be direct connections between New Plymouth, Napier, Masterton, Wanganui, and Auckland.

Mr. Millar has approved of the following conditions for the reservation of seats and sleeping berths on the express mail train from Auckland to Wellington, and vice versa, to come into force on February 14:—

Passengers, first-class and holding tickets for not less than 100 miles, may reserve seats in other than sleeping cars on the production of tickets, and payment of 6d, and at intermediate stations

such passengers may apply to the station-master where the journey starts and will be allowed any vacant seat if available upon payment of sixpence, but the guaranteed seats will not be reserved for less than 100 miles.

Sleeping berth tickets will be issued at Auckland or Wellington to first-class passengers on payment of 10/. At intermediate stations passengers must apply to the station-master, and pay 10/., and if required for telegraphing. Such berths will be allotted by priority, if available, but no guarantee will be given.

Through passengers will be given first consideration.

No guarantee is given to provide berths for all applicants. Where vacancies exist, passengers may obtain the same from the guard.

Sleeping berths are not transferable, and holders must ride in the sleeping cars, which will, where possible, be reserved for such passengers. The Department may put other first-class passengers in such carriages until berths are to be made, when they will go elsewhere.

On the North-bound trains, berths will be made at Taihape, and on South trains passengers will call at Ohakune for breakfast.

The Dominion's Water Power.

The future policy of the Government with regard to the utilisation of the water power of the Dominion was referred to by the Hon. J. A. Millar last week at Whangarei, when replying to a request of a deputation that the Wairua Falls be set aside for the purpose of local bodies.

Mr. Millar said while the Government did not wish to stand in the way of the waterpower of the various streams being utilised to the best advantage, it did desire to prevent undue monopolies being acquired. For instance, the right to the Waipori Falls, at Dunedin, was acquired some years ago by a private individual, who afterwards sold it to the Dunedin City Council for £10,000, though his total outlay in the matter had been the cost of his application to the Warden. The Government would not allow the waterpower to go begging when it could be utilised in cheapening the cost of running the industries of the Dominion. An amendment would be made in the existing Act, by which the rights to the power would be granted to local bodies and private individuals, subject to proper safeguards. When a private individual was granted these rights the maximum charge that he would be allowed to make would be fixed so as to enable him to obtain a reasonable interest on his outlay, but at the same time not permit him to become a millionaire through the transaction. Local bodies would be treated on somewhat different lines. He thought that the proposed amendment would enable the falls in question to be made use of as desired by the Whangarei Borough Council.

Royal Humane Society.

The Royal Humane Society met last week in Christchurch. A letter of commendation was awarded to A. W. Paget, for having rescued a man from drowning at Auckland on Dec. 27, 1907. Certificates were granted to John Proul (Auckland), William Jones (Napier), Constable Clark (Auckland), Constable W. R. Reynolds (Pictou). A framed certificate was granted Mrs. Hararaka Temepara (Tolaga Bay) for rescuing or attempting to rescue persons who were drowning.

Silver medals were awarded in the following cases:—William John Munro, who rescued a man from a whiplow, Tamboerikau river on January 12, 1908; Douglas Hamilton, who rescued a woman from drowning in the Roadstead at Gisborne, being in great danger from being crushed between two steamers in the open roadstead; Alfred E. Bates, who attempted to rescue a man from drowning in a heavy sea at Catlin's Bar on August 17, 1908.

A silver medal and framed certificate was awarded to Reginald Tuck, who saved a woman from drowning in a stream near Hamurana Springs, Roturua.

A bronze medal was awarded to William Wallace for having rescued a boy from drowning at Hokitika, and a similar reward was given to Fritz Exman, who rescued two boys, and attempted the rescue of a third from drowning at Kareka, Auckland. A bronze medal was awarded to H. H. Waughop (Christchurch) for having rescued a number of persons from drowning at the life saving competition at New Brighton, on January 8, 1908. Certificates were awarded