

# The News of the Week

## Our Gallant Defenders.

THE volunteer system of New Zealand has for some time past been subject to a deal of criticism generally from the man who nothing about it. The expert, of course, takes no notice of arm-chair criticisms, but he at times mentions matters that have a distinct bearing on the subject, and are more damning than the irritating remarks of those who know nothing. In conversation with a medical man a Wellington reporter was made to believe that, although the volunteer force is at fair strength in proportion to the able-bodied male population, and although it was fairly efficient from the point of view of mere ceremonial demonstration, only about two-thirds (in the opinion of the medical man) were physically fit.

As an ex-army man, the physician alleged that it was ridiculous to train men who had not been medically examined, and who would on any severe occasion "crack up." To carry on. In his own words: "There is not an occupation which requires so great a physical strain as that of soldiering during war time. The only possible excuse for the enlistment of volunteers is that they will be called upon to defend their country by force of arms. Only the fit survive during an arduous campaign. In my opinion at least, two thirds of the volunteers of Wellington would be unable to face the stress of a hard fought campaign. The idea that a man has to face only the bullets, the shells, and the bayonets of an enemy is of course idiotic. What he has to fear more than these is the onslaught of disease. No volunteer in New Zealand is expected to undergo a medical examination for service. A soldier is forced to undergo such examination, and in my experience all physically weak applicants are invariably neglected. If a supreme commander having any medical knowledge were by any chance to be Commandant of the forces of New Zealand, he would insist that only the fit carried arms. My point is that the physically unfit in times of war are not only a danger but an absolute nuisance. My further point is that, in the first place, a sick man is no use as a fighting machine; next, that when dead he is simply clay that must be buried, and therefore reduces the efficient fighting strength of an army. I would insist, were I able, that every man who is enlisted into the volunteer army of New Zealand should be rigorously examined as in the applicant for admission into any European army. At present we are admitting a large number of men who would be wiped out as inefficients in a fortnight, and it is not efficient."

## Workers Don't Like Immigration.

A deputation waited on the Premier, Sir Joseph Ward, at Auckland, on Saturday last to protest against the encouragement of further immigration from the Old Country, alleging that there were a number of people out of work in the Dominion. The Premier replied that except in the case of agriculturalists and domestic servants, the assistance of the Government was not, according to the High Commissioner, granted to anyone. Sir Joseph promised that employment would be found on the Government reproductive works for as many as wanted it.

## The Premier Picnic.

The Premier Picnic was held this year as usual at Motutapu, and there was a great gathering of the public. Among the guests was Sir Joseph Ward, who happened to be in Auckland at the time. He gave an address eulogising the work of the friendly societies, and Mr. Massey, Leader of the Opposition, also spoke on the same subject. During the afternoon there was a well-contested sports programme, and the outing was greatly enjoyed by the picnickers.

## The Massey National Testimonial.

The friends and supporters of Mr W. F. Massey, M.P., Leader of the Opposition, decided at an enthusiastic and fully

representative meeting, assembled from all parts of the Auckland province, and held on the 27th January last, to initiate a national testimonial to that gentleman, in recognition of his long, eminently practical and patriotic services to the Dominion of New Zealand. The executive committee appointed to organise the movement and initiate the fund are now taking steps in this direction.

In initiating this movement, it has been felt that, outside of the ranks of Mr Massey's supporters and friends, there are many hundreds, probably thousands of people in the Dominion who will be glad of the opportunity of testifying to their practical appreciation of Mr Massey's sturdy integrity and sterling worth. It has therefore been decided to invite subscriptions of one shilling and upwards to a Massey National Testimonial Fund, and to seek the co-operation of all interested in the movement.

We feel sure that this decision of the committee will meet with general approval, and have very great pleasure in commending the object to our readers. Mr Massey's work as a settler and politician commands universal respect, and in his position as Leader of the Opposition he has rendered good service to the country, and won the confidence of a very large division of the people of New Zealand.

## Breach of Promise.

An action brought by Jane Paterson against William Raith, claiming £1000 damages for breach of promise to marry, was to have engaged the attention of the Supreme Court at Dunedin, but when Mr. Justice Williams entered a settlement was announced by counsel.

Mr. Hanlon, who appeared for plaintiff, said: "We shall not require to trouble the Court any further. The defendant has agreed to pay to the plaintiff a sum of money which she is satisfied to accept in settlement of the case." Mr. W. C. Macgregor, counsel for the defendant, added his assent to the statement.

The sum agreed to be paid is understood to be £400, with costs.

The parties come from Hillend, near Balclutha.

## Maori Councils.

One of the first tasks to be undertaken by the Hon. A. T. Ngata upon his assumption of Ministerial rank will be the re-organisation of the Maori Councils of the Dominion, says the Gisborne "Herald." These Councils, it might be explained, are vested with a measure of local self-government respecting the native race, and carry out some of the duties of local bodies, without, however, the same financial provisions. Although the new policy proposed to be inaugurated has not been affirmed by Cabinet, the Hon. Mr. Ngata suggested that the changes would probably deal with the internal organisation and the granting of extended powers of finance. The Councils in the past have had to depend upon the Government subsidy of £25 (which has been paid for several years) and the dog tax revenue collected from the Maoria. The re-organisation, the new Minister said, could be made to fulfil a useful and important work amongst the native race. The re-election of 24 Councils is now in progress, and Mr. Ngata is arranging to be present at the initial meetings of most of the newly-constituted bodies, which will entail considerable travelling. The Tai-Rawhiti Council will meet during the second week in March.

## Making the Railways Pay.

In the course of an interview with an Ashburton reporter, the Hon. J. A. Millar, Minister for Railways, outlined his policy emphasising the fact that he intended to make the railways pay their own interest. In showing where increased expenditure was necessary, and where increased revenue was anticipated, he spoke in regard to general installation of the interlocking and signalling gear and tablet system, which was now taking place at a heavy initial cost, and which would entail heavy annual expenditure, as follows: "If this work is expected to be done out of revenue, as is claimed by many writers and speakers, it

can't, and has no right to be. There is only one way in which it can be done, that's by an increase of rates. It seems unfair to charge the present users with this expenditure, leaving future generations fully equipped lines free of cost. A certain amount of borrowed money will be absolutely necessary, not for maintenance, but for new equipments, which, to my mind, are a fair charge against the future."

With reference to increasing the earnings of working railways, Mr. Millar said that the purchase of the Manawatu line by the State would effect a material reduction in the cost of haulage. As soon as the necessary crossings and sidings could be completed on it all goods traffic from the north of Eketahuna to Wellington would go via the Manawatu line, thereby saving the heavy cost of haulage over the Rimutaka line. It was eventually intended to use the Rimutaka line for through passenger traffic and for Wairarapa goods traffic only. "All goods for above Eketahuna or perhaps Pahiatua," he concluded, "will be via Manawatu, as the haulage amounts to nearly one shilling per ton less than if they went over Rimutaka."

## Old Age Pensions.

Complaints have been received by the Government from persons living in back country districts, and who are desirous of obtaining old age pensions, that they are compelled to travel in some cases long distances in order to reach the office of the nearest registrar. The Minister in charge of the department (Hon. D. Buddo) has under consideration the granting of further facilities in such cases. The Minister explains that it is not necessary for these people to personally attend the office. Any reputable person known to the registrar can supply the particulars required by the Act, if he is able to do so. Before the pension is granted, he has to make an affidavit that the declaration is correct; but even this provision in the Act is objected to in districts where there is no Justice of the Peace, and in which travelling is difficult. These complaints do not refer to the payment of the pensions, in regard to which apparently there are no difficulties.

## East Coast Railway.

Mr Holmes, Engineer in Chief of the Public Works Department, informs us that the permanent survey of the railway across the Piako swamp is almost completed, and it is interesting to note that, according to the line marked out, the route of the East Coast railway via Paeroa, and across the swamp to Pokeno, would be practically a direct line from Opoitiki to Pokeno. From this observation, it may be gathered that a very strong lever has been placed in the hands of the Tauranga, Katikati, Waihi, and Paeroa people in their advocacy of the East Coast Main Trunk railway taking the course actually fixed for it by nature, and marked out by the Government surveyors. No engineering difficulties, it is said, would be encountered in its construction by that route, and it is only to be expected that when such a direct line can be obtained without any curving or twisting, the local bodies of Katikati, Waihi, and Paeroa will take full advantage of the forthcoming visit of the Minister to Waihi and the East Coast, and press the matter still further, so that if the route is definitely fixed by Parliament, authority can be given for a commencement of works, and the requisite relief given to unemployed miners as recently suggested at Waihi.

The Prime Minister, in reply to a deputation which waited upon him at Rotorua re the Rotorua-Gisborne railway route, said a flying survey could not be made as the line was not authorised from Rotorua, the only part authorised being that between Gisborne and Motu. In extending the railway system attention would be paid to the needs of settlement, and lines would not skirt the coast where it could be avoided.

## The Rhodes Scholar.

The "Macs" are in the ascendant (says the "Dominion"). When Sir Joseph Ward reconstructed the Ministry a few weeks ago, he paid every respect to the sons of Calcedonia who rejoice in this historical prefix to their surnames. But he did not secure all the clever "Macs" in the Dominion, for three out of the five candidates for the Rhodes

Scholarship of this year have Scots names having this prefix. The class, however, differ widely.

Wellington's representative is Mr. Allan Macdougall, who after a brilliant career at the Wellington College and the Victoria College University, obtained an M.A. degree last year. He is twenty-three years of age.

Canterbury College has nominated Mr. Peter McCallum, twenty-three years of age, who was born at Maryhill, Glasgow, and has been educated at Christ's College and Canterbury College. He has secured his M.Sc. degree.

The representative from Dunedin is Mr. Hector Maclean, the nominee of the Otago University, who graduated from the Otago Boys' High School. He is the oldest nominee—twenty-four years of age.

The Auckland University has nominated Mr. W. G. Aldridge, B.A., who is but twenty years of age. He attended the Auckland Grammar School before taking the University course.

This year the Wanganui Collegiate School has nominated a candidate for the Rhodes Scholarship. The selection fell upon Mr. Bruce H. Morrison, a son of Mr. C. B. Morrison, solicitor of Wellington, and a grandson of Colonel Haultain. He is an undergraduate of the New Zealand University.

## More Immigrants.

The Shaw, Savill, and Albion steamer Athenic has a grand total of 678 passengers for New Zealand ports, comprising 9 saloon, 73 second class, and 596 third class. The passengers are booked to the following ports: For Wellington 254, for Auckland 146, for Lyttelton 100, for Dunedin 55, for Napier 28, for Westport and Greymouth each 22, for Gisborne 13, for Wanganni 11, for New Plymouth 9, for Timaru 8, for Bluff 5, for Trefon 3, for Nelson and Oamaru each 1.

## Gold Seekers.

The Government geologist (Mr. J. Neill), who has been appointed to take charge of the gold prospecting parties, is now at Hokitika interviewing Dr. Bell (director of geological survey) in regard to the composition of the parties and as to the general procedure to be adopted. The Karamea district, on the West Coast, north of Westport, is to be the first place examined. The prospecting party there is to start work at once. Mr. Neill will shortly leave for the North to organise another party to examine the Bay of Islands district. It is proposed to reserve certain areas for prospecting, the boundaries of which will be notified shortly. The parties will consist of four or five experienced miners, who will be Government officers for the time being. It is probable that the system of gold prospecting under Government supervision will be extended, and Parliament will be asked to grant the necessary authority.

## A Teacher's Dismissal.

A question of some interest has arisen in connection with the dismissal of Miss Harrison from the position of school mistress at Te Oranga Home. Miss Harrison appealed to the Teachers' Institute to support her in her protest, and at the last meeting of the committee her letter was considered. It was pointed out, however, that the Education Act only made provision for the institute taking steps to forward an appeal where the appellant was a teacher employed by an education board. As Miss Harrison is not employed by any board, but by the Department, it was thought that the institute could not do anything in connection with her appeal. It was decided to forward the correspondence to the executive in Wellington with a view to getting a legal opinion on the question raised. Whether the institute would in any case support Miss Harrison in her appeal is still an open question.

## Police Promotions.

The following promotions and transfers in the police force have been made: Constables P. Lough (Winton), P. D. O'Connell (Leeston), W. Miller (Waipua) are raised to the rank of sergeant, and are transferred to Christchurch, Dunedin, and Christchurch respectively. Sergeant Simpson (Auckland) is transferred to Invercargill, and Constable Kerr (Wellington) is transferred to Waipua.