

met with difficulties, and as the amount of profit accruing to the Dominion would not be worth speaking of, it is impossible to understand where the advantage of attempting to keep out Australian silver coins, or introduce new Dominion coinage, would come in.

New Fever Hospital.

The Wellington Hospital Trustees adopted last week, for presentation to the conference or local bodies, plans for a new fever hospital, which will provide accommodation for 41 patients. An estimate of the cost is £10,900 if the building is erected in brick, or 10 per cent less if in wood.

The Cornwall's Immigrants.

The steamer Cornwall, due in Wellington on September 5, is bringing 107 immigrants, 51 from England, 49 from Scotland, six from Wales, and one from Ireland. The men include farmers, labourers, and miners, and among the women are domestics, dressmakers, and nurses. They are booked as follows:—To Auckland, 31; Wellington, 28; Dunedin, 11; Lyttelton, 10; and the balance divided between Westport, Greymouth, Bluff, and Napier.

Wharf Labourers' Grievance.

Some of the delegates to the Waterside Workers' Conference in Wellington complained about the poor lighting provided in the holds of ships which are used as timber or coal carriers. One delegate said that hurricane lamps were of no use, and that "flare-ups" were injurious to the health of the persons working below. In Wellington, it appears, the lighting of holds is chiefly done by electricity, and there is little to find fault with. In other places, however, it would seem that the workers have a genuine grievance. A motion was passed calling the attention of the Government to the matter.

Gazette Notices.

Mr A. W. P. Hewitt has been appointed deputy-registrar of births, deaths, and marriages for the district of Dargaville; Messrs G. Illingworth, W. F. E. Stewart, and W. C. McDermott, registrars of marriages, births, and deaths for the districts of Morrinsville, Te Awamutu, and Cambridge respectively; Messrs J. W. Blowne, of Auckland, and Henry T. Mitchell and C. W. Rogers, of Rotorua, to be president and members of the Wairariki District Maori Land Board; Tamuera Tangata to be resident agent at Mauke (Cook Islands), vice Tararo (deceased); Mr Albert Bruce, of Thames, as coroner within the Dominion of New Zealand.

The colonial auxiliary forces long-service medal has been awarded to Sergeant Charles Bate (Auckland Garrison Volunteer Band), with 20 years and 125 days' service. Lieut. Roy William Cumming (Gordon Rifle Volunteers) has been appointed as adjutant to First Battalion Auckland Infantry Volunteers (Countess of Ranfurly's Own), with rank of lieutenant, to take effect from May 1, 1909.

The Unemployed.

New regulations under the Lands Improvement and Native Lands Acquisition Act of 1894 are gazetted. Their main object is to assist deserving men out of employment or those unable to obtain land to become self-supporting.

A Heavy Fine.

William Alfred Masters, commercial traveller, who arrived from Sydney by the Moeraki last week was charged in the Magistrate's Court with having in his possession 100 tins of opium, valued at about £300. Masters was fined £100, and an order was made for the forfeiture of the opium.

Dominion Defence.

An apparently inspired statement in connection with the Defence Conference has been published in London to the effect that, under an arrangement entered into between Sir Joseph Ward, Prime Minister of New Zealand, and the Admiralty, the contribution offered by the Dominion of New Zealand to the British navy is not to be in the form of a Dreadnought or Dreadnoughts, as at first proposed, but of cruisers.

The cruisers to be provided will, says the published statement, form part of the Pacific squadron, and be employed in New Zealand waters for local defence.

The "Times" emphasises that the statements heretofore, or which may hereafter be made, on unofficial authority, regarding the results of the Defence Conference, must be accepted with due reserve, and cannot profitably be made the subject of detailed comment.

The "Daily Telegraph," without mentioning Sir Joseph Ward's alleged arrangement with the Admiralty, an apparently inspired account of which was circulated through Reuter's Agency, remarks that Australia and Canada are definitely committed to the creation of local fleets.

Other newspapers are silent, evidently awaiting authoritative official information.

No official information regarding the Defence Conference will be forthcoming until the overseas delegates return to their respective dominions and explain the situation fully to their own people and legislatures. The "Times" says: "Not until Sir Joseph Ward is once more in New Zealand will the conclusions of this historic and possibly one of the most momentous of Imperial gatherings be officially revealed."

The so-called inspired statement circulated in London on the 19th inst., to the effect that Sir Joseph Ward had agreed with the Admiralty that New Zealand's offer should take the form of cruisers for coastal defence in lieu of a Dreadnought, is now declared to be incorrect.

Your own correspondent is informed that New Zealand will provide a Dreadnought as originally offered, and also continue to pay the present naval subsidy of £100,000.

New Zealand's Dreadnought will be attached as the admiral's ship to the China-Pacific station, and will make occasional visits with the fleet to New Zealand.

The Home Government will build and pay for as part of the same command two cruisers, three destroyers, and two submarines; these to have their headquarters in New Zealand waters.

It is not correct to say that the Commonwealth contribution is to be limited to cruisers. The Australian unit will include the provision of submarines and destroyers, and possibly also a battleship for Australian waters, in which case Britain may give a partial subvention.

These altered arrangements will virtually give three or four units or squadrons in Pacific waters.

A Definite Scheme.

The Hon. J. A. Millar, Minister for Railways, speaking at a social given to him in Dunedin, avoided controversial matters, his most important statement having reference to Sir Joseph Ward's home-coming after the conference with British naval and military authorities. He said that no doubt some definite scheme for the defence of the Empire would be dealt with during the coming session. Those who watched European affairs knew that the struggle of the future would not be a struggle for territory, but a struggle to retain trade, and unless Britain was prepared to defend her trade she was going to lose it. Not knowing Sir Joseph Ward's proposals, he could not make a definite statement, but no doubt there would be a long debate in Parliament upon the question of defence, and without doubt the question of compulsory training would occupy Parliament, and if the country had no desire for a standing army, the people must admit that it was the duty of every adult male to know something about how to handle a gun.

The Acting-Minister of Defence (Hon. G. Fowlds) was entertained by the Christchurch Garrison Officers' Club on Monday night. Speaking on defence matters, Mr Fowlds said he was himself a man of peace, but he entertained a profound respect for the men and women who were devoting time, comfort, and convenience to their country. The Dominion had indeed reason to be proud of those who were leading in its defence. There was at present an almost universal cry for universal military training, and the trend of opinion throughout the English-speaking world was certainly in favour of the adoption of a scheme of defence of this character. He considered, however, that those who had been strenuously advocating the adoption of such a scheme in New Zealand had made a very grave mistake in depreciating the efficiency of the volunteer forces. Both officers and men in very considerable numbers had made great sacrifices in fitting themselves for the defence of their country, and they had attained a standard of efficiency which should be acknowledged rather than depreciated as it had been

in some quarters. He was certain that if military training were made compulsory the backbone of the defence system would still be the volunteer force, for in neither quality nor capacity would pressed men rank equal with volunteers.

AUCKLAND.

Great Fire in Auckland.

DAMAGE ESTIMATED AT ABOUT £70,000.

One of the most destructive fires experienced in Auckland for years occurred on Monday night, August 16, in the four-storey Queen-street block, belonging to Mr. Arthur M. Myers, and known as the Strand Arcade. The place of origin is variously stated, but the alarm was given at 7.40 p.m., and so fiercely did the flames rage that it took the combined city and suburban brigades to quell the blaze and confine it to the Arcade. The fortunate absence of wind helped the firemen to prevent the flames from spreading, and even as it was the Albert and Thistle Hotels on either side, and the Albert Brewery at the back, had the narrowest possible escapes. The really heroic efforts of the fire-fighters triumphed in the end, but not before the whole of the Strand Arcade building had been reduced to cinders, together with the contents of the numerous shops and offices in various parts of the building.

News of a fire spreads even more rapidly than do the flames, and Queen-street and all surrounding points of vantage were soon filled with excited crowds of people. Roars of cheers from the rapidly-swelling crowds greeted the turning on of each fresh lead of hose as the gallant firemen took up their hazardous positions on the brink of the roaring furnace. All the available police were soon on the scene, and, aided by six companies of Volunteers who responded to the call for reinforcements, the crowd were controlled and moved out of the danger zone.

Meanwhile the leaping sheets of flame, rolling masses of smoke, the crash of falling masonry and splintering glass, combined to make an awe-inspiring spectacle, such as, happily, is but seldom witnessed. Soon the crowds were the witnesses of a gallant rescue. Mr. E. Crouch, indent agent, who had entered the building to secure some valuables from his office, was cut off by the flames, and stood on the top fire escape balcony, frantically calling for help. Mr. J. H. McCarroll and Mr. T. McPherson dashed to the rescue, but the former, who tried the stairway, was beaten back by smoke and flame. Mr. McPherson, however, amid ringing cheers, managed to reach Mr. Crouch from the outside, snatching him from his terrible position into safety. Thereafter the crowd cheered continuously, principally for the firemen, for whom no place seemed too dangerous, too hot, or too high for them to climb to.

Meanwhile from the blazing pile poured showers of sparks and cinders, while every now and then could be heard the heavy thud of a gas explosion and the tearing crash of falling floors. Fears were entertained for the safety of the front wall, and then a side wall overtopping the Thistle Hotel was seen to sway, and then with a deafening crash tons and tons of masonry smashed the roof of the hotel. Two firemen had narrow escapes, and Mr. McPherson, the hero of the previous rescue, received serious injury. Several others were hurt, principally from falling glass, masonry, and beams.

After 9 p.m. the firemen began to get the upper hand, but for hours afterwards the ruins smouldered and crowds watched the vigilant firemen and the play of the never-ceasing hoses until long after midnight.

All the following day the roadway and the opposite footpath were thronged with interested spectators, the crowd being so dense at times that the tramway service had to be run at reduced speed. The building presented a melancholy sight, great cracks and fissures running through the blackened brickwork, and many were the comments on the danger threatening firemen and others whose business took them under those towering walls.

The total damage is estimated at between £60,000 and £70,000. The damage to the Arcade itself may be set down at about £30,000.

The insurances show that the losses are spread over a large number of offices, those that had taken large lines having

reinsured down to comparatively small amounts. The New Zealand office, whose total amounted to £7850, had this sum reinsured to £1500. The total insurances on the building destroyed and the contents are about £30,000.

Workers' Homes.

The Acting Premier, referring to the subject of workers' homes in the course of a speech at Gisborne, said his colleague, Mr. Millar, was inclined to think the workmen's homes up to the present had been rather a failure, and proposed to obtain an amendment of the Act. Some of these buildings were tenanted, and Mr. Millar was inclined to think it would be wise to provide that able in the end to make them their own. Those taking up these homes should be given a right of purchase, and the question of tenancy.

Cut Out.

Keynell and Gunn have decided to cut out New Zealand from their theatrical itinerary henceforth, and confine their operations to Sydney and Melbourne, with a company in each place, and a third touring the Commonwealth. Heavy shipping charges, recurrent travelling expenses, and the quiet state of things in New Zealand, have led to this decision.

No Ground for Calumnies.

We are told (says the "Sydney Evening News") that New Zealand is poverty-stricken; that her people are oppressed by a heavy burden of taxation; that, in spite of prohibition and local option, she drinks too much. We are also assured that her population is decreasing by reason of emigration to the more favoured and prosperous Australian States. It is, in fact, widely asserted that our enterprising neighbour is financially, socially, politically, and in most other directions, in a bad way. Her Premier, however, when in Sydney, flatly contradicted all these rumours, and emphatically stated that there was no ground for such calumnies with regard to the young Dominion. And (the "News" continues), we believe that Sir Joseph Ward was thoroughly justified in this repudiation of hostile criticism—New Zealanders are not the kind of people to suffer deterioration. Their climate, their national record, their superior type of politicians, absolutely forbid any supposition of the sort. And, at any rate, their representative in England has taken the lead of Australasia, as evidenced by his speeches, in statesmanship and patriotism. The King, in the conversation which followed on the audience given to Sir Joseph Ward, also gave the Premier a message for the Dominion, expressing the Royal satisfaction with its progress and its patriotic aspirations. Edward VII. and his advisers may not know everything; but they know enough to withhold congratulations and appreciation from any decadent State.

New Queen-street Wharf.

An important stage in connection with the harbour scheme undertaken by the Board was reached on Friday, when the Ferro Concrete Company of Australasia, Limited, completed their contract portion of the new Queen-street Wharf, which is being constructed in ferro-concrete. As an intimation to those concerned that it was very dry work the workmen hoisted a flag and surmounted it with a barrel.

The general manager of the company (Mr. W. A. Robertson) told a "Star" reporter that the work was commenced about two years ago. Operations at the start were delayed for about eight or nine months owing to certain works being carried out in connection with the breastwork, and then the preparations for the reception of the American fleet meant another delay of quite two months. The first section of the wharf being that portion on the western side and extending from Queen-street to the first tee, with an area of 75,000 square feet, was completed some time ago, and the completion of the remaining portion at the top end of the eastern side marks the termination of the original contract. This section is shorter but wider than the first and considerably larger, the total area being 78,000 square feet. The company also constructed the new ferry tee on the western side of the wharf, the area of this work being 33,100 square feet. The wharfrage accommodation put down by the company in connection with the Queen-street