

The Veterans' Home.

INTERVIEW WITH LORD RANFURLY.

DETAILS OF THE SCHEME.

(By Telegraph—Own Correspondent.)

The proposal which His Excellency the Governor has recently made regarding the establishment of a Veterans' Home in the colony as a memorial to those New Zealanders who have fallen in the Boer War is now being discussed by the press and the public. Several criticisms of the scheme, practically all of them favourable to it, have appeared in the press. There are, however, some points upon which a little further information may be welcome, and with a view to an elucidation of these I called yesterday at Government House, where Lord Ranfurly very courteously accorded me a personal interview.

First of all, there was the question that has been mooted as to whether there should not be two veterans' homes, one in the North and one in the South Island.

"My answer to that," said His Excellency, "is that you must walk before you can run. The first thing to be done is to get one home in successful working order. Such a home should be capable of accommodating forty people. With any number less than that you cannot have economical working, for an establishment for ten would cost practically as much to maintain in the way of attendance, etc., as would a home for forty. Of course, if the movement takes on," he added, "I shall be only too pleased to see two homes established, especially as I think New Zealand will always have a sufficient number of applicants to fill two such homes. The first home to be established should, however, certainly be either in the Auckland or the Taranaki provincial district. These provinces at the present moment contain about two-thirds of the Imperial and colonial veterans in the whole colony. Of the two thousand names, I have already on my list, only two hundred are from the South Island. Then, again, you must remember that it was in the two Northern provinces that these old soldiers fought and bled for the protection of the British and the extension of the bounds of the Empire. Moreover, there is the question of the suitability of climate to be considered, and the rigour of the South, while it may breed a hardy race of colonists, is not so suitable as is the milder Northern climate to the health of feeble and invalid soldiers, many of whom are already octogenarians."

In reply to a question as to the future up-keep of such an institution, Lord Ranfurly said: "My view is this: Given the establishment of a suitable building, provision for attendance and food would be financially a minor matter. Indeed, many of the veterans would be able to provide for their own food, as many of them have either old age pensions or Imperial Army pensions. At the same time there are necessitous cases, in which the veterans have no pensions. It is, however, for the people of New Zealand to say whether they approve of the scheme, and whether they will give practical aid in carrying it to a successful issue. I should not feel justified in seeking assistance from the Mother Country unless I were assured that the sympathies of the colony were entirely with the movement. To effect its successful accomplishment I should say the best method would be for either individuals or districts to subscribe sufficient to endow one or more beds in the memorial home."

Summed up, I gathered that so far as the Governor is concerned, the position is that he does not want to force an institution on an unwilling country. He himself is, however, fully convinced that such an institution is desirable—is, indeed, urgently needed, and certainly there is no one in the colony who knows more, or even half as much, about our veteran soldiers and sailors than does Lord Ranfurly. For some weeks past he has been personally compiling a roll of their names for the whole colony, a work involving a large correspondence, and a very considerable expenditure of time. In the event of the successful establishment of the proposed Home, such a roll must prove a very valuable record. In the meantime, however, as I have stated, until the colony signifies its approval, His

Excellency does not see his way to seek assistance in England, further than the application he has already addressed to the Soldiers' and Sailors' Help Society.

I think, however, I may be justified in saying that he has made out a case such as will warrant the granting of substantial assistance if the project is taken up with any degree of spirit by the colonists themselves. The society referred to is one that must command the respect of the Empire. To give some idea of its composition I may mention that the King himself is its patron, and that amongst the other patrons are H.R.H. the Prince of Wales, General H.R.H. the Duke of Connaught and Strathearn, K.G., and Field-Marshal H.R.H. the Duke of Cambridge, K.G. On the council are H.R.H. the Princess Christian of Schleswig-Holstein (as president), H.R.H. Princess Henry of Battenburg, and H.R.H. the Duchess of Connaught (as vice-presidents).

The Drought in Australia.

HIGH PRICE OF FOOD.

One serious result of the disastrous drought in Australia is the high cost of living generally. Eggs are 2' per dozen, and butter 1/8 per lb, while steak is 10d per lb, and chops 6d. At the same time Australian sheep are selling in London at 3 1/2 lb, and beef 4 1/2 to 5 1/2 wholesale, while in Melbourne sirloin is 8d per lb. At a recent stock sale in Melbourne extra prime half bullocks ranged from £17 5/ to £18. Prime crossbred wethers sold as high as 21'. One firm sold 3000 in the previous week at £1 per head, and a similar number last week at the same price. A new feature of last week's cattle market was the appearance of Adelaide buyers, who purchased for South Australian consumption, and who gave the highest prices for the stock they bought. The present retail prices for beef and mutton are a striking contrast to the rates which ruled a few years ago, when in the suburban butchers' shops, where low cuts were made, might be seen the legend—"5lb of chops, steak or sausages for 1/6." Some people expect bullocks to reach £23 before the winter is over. There has also been an increase in other articles of food. Flour, which twelve months ago was £5 17/6 to £6 2/6 per ton, is now £9 10/ to £10 per ton, and the 4lb loaf has risen from 4 1/2 to 6d. In May last wheat was 2/8 1/2 to 2/9. It is now 4/3 to 4/4. Potatoes are also almost at famine rates. In the wholesale market last year at this time they commanded from 45/ to 75/ per ton. To-day prime samples are worth £5 per ton, and the retail purchaser has to pay at the rate of £7 or more per ton. Victorian butter is sold in the London market at about 1/ per lb. The Victorian consumer is now paying 1/6 and 1/8 per lb for it. Cheese has also advanced, and eggs, at 2d a piece, must be regarded as a luxury.

With reference to a cable message from Sydney that ten thousand tons of damaged wheat were available from New Zealand for starved stock in Australia, and also a supply of mangolds and turnips, Mr Ritchie, Secretary of the Agricultural Department, doubts whether there is that quantity available. He admits that a large quantity of wheat in Central Otago and Canterbury was injured by rain, but not so much as ten thousand tons. He is making inquiries regarding the extent of the supply of root crops for New South Wales over what is sufficient for New Zealand's own requirements. There was a shortage last year. Forty thousand acres less were down in wheat than in the previous year, and about the same in oats. A large supply of turnips is available for New South Wales, but the freight will be too much, and the supply would decay on the voyage.

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