

The question whether Mr Seddon has been offered and refused a title at the hands of the King is causing considerable speculation among his political opponents, who would regard his acceptance as a stepping stone to political death. The vagueness of this inference, however, consists in the fact that a title was offered on the occasion of the Jubilee and declined, and probably the same reasons as influenced him on that occasion would be equally active now. It is believed in well-informed official circles that the Premier was offered a baronetcy. The "Times," in a semi-inspired editorial, hints that the distinction offered to Mr Seddon was the new Order of Merit created by the King. At present indications point to Mr Seddon returning as plain "Mr" to continue the same enlightened policy as in the past.

The popular idea that judges assume the black cap preparatory to pronouncing sentence of death in order to mark the tragedy of the occasion should be finally dispelled by the fact that they wear the same sable headgear at Coronations. What the coronet is to the peer the black cap is to the judge—the final of his official costume. Until 1835 the habits of judges were governed by individual tastes, but in that year the occupants of the Bench met and solemnly ordained their attire. It was decreed to consist of a scarlet robe, with an ermine tippet as now, and "a coif or cap of black cloth." The judicial wig is a later innovation, and the black cap as an essential part of the official must be worn on all State occasions, of which the passing sentence of capital punishment is only one.

The late Thomas McShane, who died at the Old Men's Home, Wanganui, lately, served in the 70th Regiment through the Indian Mutiny, for which he received the medal. He was on duty in Peshawar, and witnessed the execution of the ring-leaders of the mutinous 55th Native Infantry, when Sir Sydney Cotton had thirty-six of these men blown from the cannon's mouth. McShane left India for New Zealand in 1861, landing at Auckland on June 19th of the same year. He went through the Waikato war under General Cameron, and also through the Taranaki wars that followed.

When the Anglican minister, who is of the very strict, high-and-dry kind, visits a certain country district, he always lives at the station, and the manager and all hands are on their best behaviour till the ordeal is over. While he was getting lunch a few Sundays since, the manager's little boy (not admitted to dine with the select company) ran into the room, and the following ensued: Boy—"Father, are you going?" Manager (hurlingly)—"All right, my boy, I will be out directly." Boy—"But, dad, are you going out?" Manager (sharply)—"Run away, my boy; I'll be out in a minute, I tell you." Boy is going out and manager smiles, when in rushes still younger son. "Dad, is oo doin' out fishin' today?" Manager (boldly meeting this unexpected flank attack)—"Certainly not; don't you know it is Sunday?" At the same moment he rose and hustled the children out of the room. Parson High-and-Dry looked as if he was thinking a great deal, but he said nothing.

The late Mr. J. M. Jury, of the Glendower estate, Wairarapa, who died lately, aged 88, of whose stirring career we gave some particulars lately, arrived at the Bay of Islands in 1830 in the whaler *Thetis*. Here he and another boy deserted the ship. They put their clothes in a tub and swam ashore, pushing all their worldly possessions in front of them as they swam. After several adventures they fell into the hands of natives, who had been offered a cask of powder for each of them by the captain of the *Thetis*. However, the ship had sailed, so the Maoris determined to keep the boys and trade them to the next ship that came along. The boys ran away to Mr. Mai's mission station. Jury shortly afterwards went

to sea again in the mission vessel *Columbine*. After many other adventures he took charge of a schooner, trading along the Wellington coast for corn, pigs and potatoes, in exchange for guns, muskets, powder, needles and clothing.

A simple labourer from Albury, named Carl Bergan, had hardly emerged from his carriage on the Sydney express on Saturday when he was bounced upon by an impudent swindler. As Bergan stepped on to the platform and gazed up and down with a bewildered air, the cheat spied him, and bore down on him rapidly, with a businesslike air. "You are wanted for an assault and robbery in New South Wales. I am Detective Hunt," said the stranger aggressively, twisting his moustachios and glaring fiercely at him. "You had better come to the watchhouse and be searched," he added, and accordingly Bergan went to a waiting-room. Here the "detective" exhibited his skill as a searcher by removing everything of value from the countryman's pockets. The contents of his purse, amounting to £2, found their way into his own pocket, and Bergan, with a severe admonition not to do it again, was temporarily released and allowed to take up his quarters at the Falstaff restaurant until he received a further intimation from this pretended detective regarding his attendance at the court. Bergan waited throughout the day in vain, and at length it dawned upon him that he had fallen a victim to a clever ruse. He then reported the occurrence to the police.

The real degree of Australian interest in the late South African war can be accurately measured now that the struggle is over, says the "Sydney Bulletin"; and no facts are more valuable in assisting accurate judgment than the recent transport incidents. The Drayton Grange set out from South Africa to Australia with 2000 Australian soldiers penned-up on her decks, and a markedly-infectious and dangerous disease on board, with no proper hospital accommodation, with but a slim medicine-chest (and that wrung from reluctant authority). The *Britannic* was despatched to Maoriland under conditions of crowding almost as bad. The Norfolk was forced to carry an appendicitis patient on from Adelaide because South Australia refused a landing to a soldier who had not been one of her State citizens. All these incidents are significant. If the war against the Boers had been one for right and liberty; if Australian participation therein had been a necessary duty of patriotism; if these returning soldiers are heroes who risked their lives to preserve the Empire and to ward off a possible tide of invasion from these shores—surely Australia would not be so infamous as to allow what, in the Drayton Grange case at least, was tantamount to the cold-blooded murder of her soldiers. To send an overcrowded troopship to sea with an epidemic of measles on board, and with practically no hospital accommodation, is to condemn a certain number of them to death. The English War Office did that in the case of the Drayton Grange, did it apparently out of unnecessary and reckless cruelty, for there was no reason, except the saving of a few pounds, either to overcrowd the transport, or to send her away pestilence-laden. Yet there has been practically no Australian protest, a grumbling word or two here and there, but not the indignant—prompt, relentless, vengeful—which a nation should frame against the murderers of half a score or so of its "heroes." But, alas for the men who went away with the beat of drum and the great throb of cheering throats, it is quite palpable that they are not regarded as "heroes"; that all the talk of politicians and papers to that effect was flim; and that now, having served the purpose of the merchants who had butter and oats and meat and horses to sell, and of the politicians who had titles to gain, they can go bang. They're done with. All the War Office orders have been

placed, all the titles gathered in, all that was to be made out of the war by the interested Jingoese made, and now they are anxious to forget the men who volunteered to do the killing and the farm-burning. If the Drayton Grange had kindly sunk with her 2000 souls on board ere she reached the Westralian coast, there would probably not have been a sincere tear in any representative Jingo eye. And the more men who die of pneumonia or appendicitis or overcrowding, the fewer there will be to limp about after the promised tramway billets which they won't get, and to look reproachfully at the men who had promised to enshrine them for ever in the grateful hearts of the nation. The Australian representative Jingo attitude towards the returned soldiers is that of a man towards the women whom he has dragged on to the streets. He wants them above all things to keep out of his sight. They're done with!

Pilot White tells this yarn. "I went out fishing one day," he said, "with Captain Taw, and he told me that once at Levuka he caught a shark, cut it open, and threw the 'internals' overboard. Then he chucked the body over, and that shark swam round and found its 'internals' and swallowed them." I said to Taw "That's a pretty good shark, but I had a better one. I caught him at Tryphena; he was 8 ft long, and I hoisted him aboard with block and tackle. Then I cut off his head, and chucked the whole concern over. Well, do you know, that head swam round till it came to the body, and then swallowed it holus-bolus." The two sharks mentioned were no doubt a cut above the average shark, but we have it on good authority that there is at present living in the Waiokoe gorge a settler who had a tame shark which used to trim his corns for him.

The telephone girl is rarely credited with either suavity of manner or gentleness of voice. Nevertheless, bland young ladies are not an absolutely unknown quantity. The bride of a wealthy American, at present enjoying a European honeymoon, won the adoration of her husband by the sweetness of her voice as she followed her occupation at the exchange. The marriage was almost arranged before the parties most concerned saw one another. San Francisco was the scene of this modern romance, and history has it that ever since the gentlemanly "hello girl" became not only a happy, but a distinguished bride, other female operators have cultivated a charm of conduct which has sorely puzzled the uninitiated public.

Colonial girls have always been handier than their English sisters, and every effort is being made in educational circles to make them more so. For instance—Mr. Coxon, the laundry expert, who has been giving the ladies of Wanganui some valuable instruction in the art of ironing, gave a most interesting and practical lesson to the girls of the upper standards of the Wanganui Girls' School. Mr. Coxon initiated the youthful students into the mysteries of starching and ironing gentlemen's shirts and collars of all shapes and sizes. He not only demonstrated and explained every step of the proceedings, but insisted on some of the young people doing the work themselves; and it was

most pleasing to see what, with a little expert teaching, could be done by a small child. The class met at Mr. Sherriff's Studio, and the children cannot fail to have gained some advantage from his simple way of explaining and from the actual work being done before them. Miss Blyth desires that her thanks should be publicly conveyed to Mr. Coxon for the very valuable instruction he so kindly gave the girls.

If you go to an auction, and purchase a block of land, can you afterwards declare that you bought under a mistake, and repudiate the bargain? All depends upon the circumstances. If you were misled through anything said or done by the vendor or his agent, the auctioneer, you are not bound, even though the vendor or the auctioneer was perfectly innocent of any intention to mislead, for the Courts will not allow a vendor to make an advantage out of his own wrong, or permit a purchaser to be trapped, though guilty of no fault. Of course, if there is any fraudulent misrepresentation on the part of the vendor or auctioneer, the contract goes at once, if the buyer wishes to avoid it. But take the case of a mistake, for which the purchaser alone is morally responsible. What then is his legal position? Here is a recent illustration from the Court. An auctioneer advertised for sale, on a given day, three separate and distinct lots of land. In front of his rostrum the order of sale was announced in large letters, and it was stated also in small handbills. Before selling, the auctioneer read out the conditions appropriate to lot 1, and this was duly knocked down to a bidder at about the reserve. The auctioneer sent his clerk to find out the buyer's name and address, and in the meantime began the sale of lot 2. Then the clerk told him that the buyer declared that he had made a mistake; that he supposed he was buying lot 2; that he was deaf, and did not correctly hear the opening statement of the auctioneer; that he was a builder, and wished to buy lot 2 for speculative building purposes. The auctioneer, however, declined to stop the sale of lot 2, and informed the buyer that he must abide by the bargain. The auctioneer then signed the contract as agent for the buyer, the latter refusing to carry out his purchase. In an action against the purchaser for specific performance of the agreement, the Court held that the bona fide error of the defendant was no answer to the claim. If a buyer were allowed to set up his own mistake as a reason for not completing, there would, as the Court pointed out, be great temptation to purchasers to commit perjury, if they repented of a bargain. So the builder had to take lot 1. It may be noted that under some conditions the Court will so far recognise honest mistake on one side only as to alter the kind of relief given to the vendor. If it would be unconscionable and unreasonable for the purchaser to be bound by his bargain, the Court will order him to pay damages, in lieu of having to accept the property. For instance, if the buyer had given twice the reserve price of the lot, or had in some other way made an extravagant and ridiculous bargain, so that it would be pretty obvious that the vendor must have guessed that the buyer was under a misapprehension, damages only will be awarded, and these would, of course, be assessed on the

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