

Verily New Zealand is a democratic, free and easy country. At Napier last week a man named Higgins, sentenced at the Supreme Court to three years' imprisonment for breaking and entering, asked the Chief Justice to grant him a change of prison, as there was no light at night time in the Napier gaol. His Honour did not think it was for men like accused to make a selection of the prison they would like to be in. If prisoner was dissatisfied he could make an application to the Government.

Mr. Matthews, Chief Government Forester, has concluded his visit to Te Puia springs, Waipiro. He found the road from Waipiro and the means of access to the thermal region in a very bad state, says a contemporary. He was, however, pleased with the springs, and was satisfied that the Government would be justified in developing them. Sulphur also abounds in the neighbourhood. Mr. Matthews was accompanied by Mr. H. Simmonds, landscape gardener, of Napier, who will undertake the planting of the reserves next year. Mr. Simmonds has gone on to Nuhaka, where he will lay off the track from the hotel to the hot springs there and plant the reserves.

This is of interest to Aucklanders: The news that there will shortly be on the market a contrivance for rendering harmless the breaking of overhead tramway wires will rejoice the hearts of those who live in towns where the overhead trolley system is in force. When a wire snaps under the new device a short circuit will at once be created, and the broken ends may therefore dangle among the passers-by without anyone being the worse. Thus will be removed the principal peril of this otherwise excellent method of tramway working—that is, of course, assuming the new short circuit idea will fulfil all that is promised on its behalf. London is as yet singularly backward in the matter of the overhead trolley wire, there being only two lines of tramways in the whole metropolis which are worked by this system.

The West Coast of Africa has always had a peculiar fascination of its own, particularly the sea-board bounding British West Africa, which includes the Gold Coast and Ashanti, Nigeria, Lagos, Gambia, and Sierra Leone. These are not generally reckoned to be the healthiest of localities, though every year the sanitary conditions are being improved as trade and population increase. The trade of the West Coast as well as the social life thereof, has been the subject of many an interesting story in which sickly traders, puncheon of palm oil, steamy swamps over which the malarial mist hovers like a ghost, sluggish yellow rivers, and miles of angry surf, stand out as the most prominent features. There is a lot of romance and tragedy on the West, but it is a locality where much trade is done, more particularly with Liverpool, and the Year Book of the British possessions just issued gives an idea how considerable this is. It also goes into mining pretty extensively. The aggregate nominal capital of the companies to date, after allowing for defunct enterprises, is £45,492,497, as against £39,660,405 in September, 1901. There are 501 West African companies in existence. A statement of this sort gives us some idea how little we really know of the resources of some of the units of the Empire, for most of this mining is on British territory.

The amazing story of the loss of a quarter of a million of money at Woolwich is emphasised by an incident which has just been related by one of the principal parties concerned in it. A North of England contractor who had business relations with the War Office received notice from Woolwich to the effect that a number of empty crates belonging to him must be removed. He replied that no crates of his were at Woolwich, but the only notice taken of his letter was a further intimation that the crates must be removed at once,

falling that they would be sent off at owner's risk. After further correspondence the crates were delivered to the contractor who had disowned them. The most amazing part of the story has yet to come. When the crates arrived at their destination they were found to be not empty but filled with brass gun mountings. The War Office was at once informed of the circumstance, and the formal and frigid reply came back: "This correspondence must now cease."

On the Kiuwaka station, Hawke's Bay, there are some unusual experiences this lambing season. One ewe gave birth to no fewer than six lambs, though they did not all survive. A peculiar monstrosity was also found in the shape of a lamb with two bodies, eight legs, and two tails, but only one neck and head. The head was the most peculiar part, having four eyes, two mouths and four ears, the ears being under the lower jaws.

The statue which is to be erected near the guns in the Albert Park is completed, and is open for inspection by the public, through the courtesy of Messrs. W. Parkinson & Co., at their yard in Victoria-street East. The statue has been built under instructions of the surviving Auckland members of the New Zealand Fifth Contingent, in honour of a number of their comrades who fell in the war. The Auckland members of the Fifth, on arriving in South Africa, were formed into a battery known as the New Zealand Artillery, and it is the members of this battery who are erecting the statue. The statue represents a trooper in life size, standing on a pedestal. It is a striking piece of work in white marble, and will be an ornament to the park. The trooper is represented carrying a sword and a revolver, the proper arms of an artilleryman, and in these respects he differs from the models of other New Zealanders in the war. Lieutenant Rosworth, who has had the arrangements in hand, is now communicating with Captain Boscowen concerning the unveiling. It is expected that the statue will leave the sculptor's yard after next week, and it is intended to ask His Excellency the Governor to unveil the statue if in Auckland at a sufficiently early date.

Further experiments with wireless telephony have been made in Berlin recently over greater distances than on the first occasion, the inventor, Herr Ruhmer, having effected some improvements in his apparatus. The receiving apparatus was this time placed in the neighbourhood of the Karsberg, in the Grunewald, whilst the despatching station was, as usual, on the accumulator boat Germania, off the Pfauen Insel, a small islet opposite Moorlake, near Babelsberg. This was a distance of four and a half English miles, and over this space the speakers at either end could make themselves clearly understood. The clearness and loudness of the transmitted conversations struck everybody present. They were principally achieved with the aid of an "electrical eye," very sensitive to the light, which has now been applied for the first time. The trials will now be continued between two fixed stations, and it is hoped to render possible a conversation over 20 to 25 miles by means of large reflectors of one or two metres diameter. So far only one with a diameter of thirty-five centimetres has been used.

Pakeha doctors are going out of fashion among our Maori brethren. A Maori medicine man has turned up with a hot bath and a barrow load of bark, and he washes disease away in a solution of tree. Everybody gets well after being immersed in the bark bath, and the Maori doctor, who is located at present at Taiporohe-nui, has received enough shark, pig and kumara in fees to tangi over more. A Maori gentleman, who was cured of a bad leg by amputation, faith and hot baths is going to have the same doctor when any other of his limbs are sick. Recently he put the case in a nutshell: "Maori doctor,

he cure every time. Pakeha doctor, he say, 'Put out te tongue! Um! How te powel? Um! Ten and hikipene!'"

A Vienna paper says that the specifications of a new kind of boat have been lodged at the Patent Office there by a Croatian engineer named Cvckovitch. The vessel, called an "aero-hydrostatic boat," is to be a cross between a ship and a flying machine, and is to attain a speed, according to the inventor, which would enable it to circumnavigate the world in 48 hours. The principle seems to be (says a "Standard" telegram) that when set in motion the boat raises itself on the surface of the sea and slides on a film of water or air. It is really a pity that experiments have still to be made, and that this amazing ship exists only in its inventor's brain.

Recent cables from Home have reported a remarkable series of Alpine accidents this season. Dr. Kurstenier, of Berne, publishes in the thirty-seventh volume of the Swiss Alpine Club an interesting article on the Alpine accidents from 1891 to 1900. He says that during that period there have been 275 fatal accidents, of which 95 have occurred in the Central Alps (91 of them on Swiss territory), 37 in the Western Alps, and 133 in the Eastern Alps. Although it may appear at first sight as if the number of accidents is on the increase, Dr. Kurstenier calls attention to the fact that the number of climbers is nearly a hundredfold what it was in the early part of the last century, and he calculates that the annual number of climbers is now nearly 100,000. Dr. Kurstenier classifies the victims of Alpine accidents during these ten years by nationalities—169 Germans and Austrians, 48 Swiss, 23 Italians, 18 English, 12 French, and in two cases nationality unknown.

The women of Austria are coming to the front with rapid strides in the struggle for life. Their latest conquest, the "Daily Telegraph" remarks, is the railway. They had already taken possession of the posts and telegraphs, the State tobacco shops, and sleeping-car company's offices. Now one of their number is become a station-mistress and an official of the Ministry of Ways and Communications. Miss Mizzi Horak, of Vienna, began life as a clerk, a position which she qualified for by joining a commercial school. She next became comptroller of the International Sleeping-car Company, and the Government

have lately appointed her station-mistress of Vilpian, and if circumstances continue favourable she may rise in time to the post of directress.

A young lady, well-educated and in comfortable circumstances, has just completed a five years' experience of general servants' work. She undertook the task voluntarily, because she was interested in the domestic servant problem. Her conclusion is that both sides are to blame for the present unsatisfactory state of affairs. In her own words: "I believe the servant girl problem can only be solved by a Christian education. The employers and servants must be taught to work together. The problem furnishes a splendid field for the energies of our young women. They should know something of the experiences I have had. I know several young girls with good educations who work as domestics because they like it. These are the kind of girls who stay a long time in one place and have no trouble with their employers."

Mrs Hirst, living at Middlesbrough, to whom the King has just sent a message sympathising with her in her illness, was the daughter of Drum-Major Gibson, of the 75th Gordon Highlanders, and married Private Hirst, with whom she went through two Kaffir wars. She served ammunition in the trenches at Fort Hare, and assisted in the nursing of the wounded, for whom her wedding outfit was sacrificed to make bandages. Her father and brother were murdered by Kaffirs while eating their Christmas dinner. All Mrs Hirst's five sons entered the Army, three becoming captains, the fourth a band-master, and a fifth a sergeant of the Medical Corps. One of her sons, Captain James Hirst, is still on active service, and was mentioned in dispatches by Lord Roberts. Another son, who died two years ago, was captain and adjutant at Netley, where a monument has been erected to his memory. Mrs Hirst's only daughter is the widow of a soldier, and has two sons serving the King. The attention of Lord Roberts was drawn to the old lady's record, and he forwarded the information to the King, who graciously replied.

Could gluttony heat this record outside of a pig-sty?

Michael Scholtz, of Brooklyn, has won fame by eating seven and a half pounds of steak at a sitting, though he had forty-two glasses of beer to wash down the meat.

EXQUISITE IN FLAVOR.

Highly concentrated, perfect in solubility, hence the most nourishing and easily digested.

van Houten's Cocoa

is a perfect beverage; light and delicate; invigorating and sustaining; easy to make, and cheaper in use than any other.

Best & goes farthest.