

# News of the Dominion.

## OUR WELLINGTON LETTER.

Wanted—Trees.  
May 28th.

**A**RBOR Day is coming round again and I hope that before it arrives, Wellington people will have decided upon some definite form of giving effect to the purpose for which the holiday is set aside. Of all the New Zealand cities, Wellington is the most bare and most forlorn in the matter of trees. Our ugly hillsides of red clay, our glaring unclad cuttings, our shadeless sea-beaches, all cry out for garments of green. There are greater difficulties to encounter here than in other centres, no doubt; the strong and persistent winds do their best to prevent trees from establishing themselves, and the hideously sombre pinus insignis is the only thing that seems to thrive, probably because of its very ugliness. But there are many trees and shrubs suitable for planting on our windy hills and gale-swept shores; some of the native olearias, for instance, ought to do well. Long ago all the hills round the city and suburbs were clothed in bush of one sort or another, but the first settlers took a pleasure, it would seem, in denuding them, to the very mountain-tops, of everything that would give shelter to man, or bird, or beast. Now the duty is forced upon us of re-clothing our stark and starved-looking hills. Wellington's mountainous surroundings are really picturesque: all that is wanted is a judicious sprinkling of foliage. The broom and gorse—noxious weeds, no doubt, but still weeds of beauty—are the only bits of vegetation that beautify the tree-denuded heights of the back of the city; those who would deny these humble plants a place in the land, should look upon the Timakori Range and the Karori Hills in the early summertime; they would at least admit that the noxious weeds give a glorious splash of colour to the brown landscape. But it is probably the sea beaches that are most in need of verdure and shade. Island Bay, Ohiro Beach, Lyell Bay, and the boldly picturesque coast line at the entrance to the harbour, have not a single tree amongst them to shade the picnicker or relieve the eye. They are grand bits of ocean beach, but they are little purgatories on a blazing summer day. Here is an opportunity for the new Mayor to do something for Wellington that would be of lasting benefit. Let him inaugurate a comprehensive scheme of tree-planting, and make Arbor Day something more than it is at present—an off-day for civil servants.

### Auckland's Government House.

A good many Wellington people sympathize with Auckland in her agitation for the retention of Government House as a Vice-Regal residence. All I have spoken to on the subject, in fact, have given it as their opinion that Aucklanders should persist in their endeavours to keep the historic house and grounds for the purpose which they have served so many years. Wellingtonians who know Auckland are quite prepared to admit that the Northern city is the pleasantest place of residence; and future Governors, I have no doubt, once they are enabled to compare both cities, would like to have the opportunity of spending a few months of the recess by the shores of the Waitemata. Certainly Wellington's new Government House, with all its elaborate fixings, will never possess the beauty of surroundings that is the dower of Auckland's. No doubt the matter will be one of the first things to be discussed in Parliament this session, and I hope to see Auckland's private members keep their end up well. Only a word of advice—let them drop the petty argument of the falling-off in tradesmen's business, the drapery and the ladies' reception hats, and similar peculiarities. This is a matter that concerns Auckland's dignity and historic prestige, and drapery and carpets and the Government House meat bill should not be allowed to enter in, if Aucklanders have any sense of proportion and the fitness of things.

### The Lost "Leader" Found.

As the daily telegrams have informed you before this, the celebrated—or, shall we say, notorious?—picture "Southward

From Surrey's Pleasant Hills" has been recovered by the police, and is being restored to the walls of Wellington's Art Gallery. It was recovered by the simple, if tedious, process of watching for callers at the house of Mr. Wardell, president of the Academy of Fine Arts, to whom the thief, or his agent, had, by correspondence, promised to restore it. The thief asked for £50 and a "square deal"; he got a pair of handcuffs. The man arrested was a rather well-dressed fellow of about thirty, by name, Francis Edwin Tier. He stands remanded until the 1st of June; by then it is expected the police will have completed their chain and coil of evidence. Anyhow, whether Tier is the real thief or not, Leader's fine picture has been recovered undamaged, which is the principal consideration. Now that the Art Gallery trustees have got it back, they may as well make arrangements to more adequately safeguard it and their other art treasures. A third theft of "Southward from Surrey's Pleasant Hills" would be too, too much. It would be less exciting and worrying to give it away, say, to the Salvation Army as first prize in a big raffle.

### The Dominion Scouts.

The corps of volunteers known as the Dominion Scouts has not been in existence very long, but it has already earned some fame of a sort. The Scouts, chiefly composed of men who have seen service in South Africa, have had a good deal of notoriety in one way and another, so much so that the name of "Dominion Scouts" provokes a smile whenever it is mentioned in Wellington. What particularly riles the members of the corps, I believe, is the fact that the public will persist in regarding them as small boys, confusing them with the other scouts, the youngsters in short trousers and bare knees. Recently the Defence Minister cashiered one of the subalterns of the corps, as the result of a "scrap" in the Scouts training camp. Now the officer-commanding, Capt. Dalrymple, has resigned. Capt. Dalrymple has informed his corps that the time required for proper attention to the affairs of the company interfered seriously with his business, and he therefore is regretfully compelled to retire. The members of the corps expressed regret at the retirement of their captain—who is a smart and experienced soldier—and gave him a vote of thanks for his services.

### A Sailor Writer.

I hear that the ranks of New Zealand writers are shortly to have an addition from a rather unexpected quarter—the mercantile marine. Captain H. Platts, of the Union Company's steamer Kimi, engaged in the coal trade, has, it is reported, succeeded in placing a novel, entitled "Horace Dauby," with a London publishing firm. The book is, as one might expect from a sailor, a tale of adventure. Captain Platts has been a magazine contributor, but this is his first novel. Captain Will Brooks, whose sea book was published in London recently, was also in the service of the Union Company.

Another nautical writer of these parts was Captain Abram, formerly of the Union Company's service, and for many years master of the Wellington tugboat Duco. Captain Abram had a book pretty well complete, a sea-story with a good deal of the humorous in it, and was endeavouring to place it with a publishing firm a couple of years ago. He was waiting, however, until he had more leisure to recast it, and meanwhile Death claimed him. The fine, bluff, hearty old skipper and all his crew went down with the Duco somewhere between here and the Chatham Islands. He was a kindly, cheery, old sailor-man, with an endless stock of good stories of the sea. I will remember the last I saw of Captain Abram. It was the day before he sailed on his last voyage. He was lighting his pipe in the usual gale of wind that blows down the Wellington wharves. I asked him about his fishing trips to the Chathams, and whether the conditions of life were not trying in those cold and tempestuous latitudes. The old captain laughed, and assured me that he never felt better than when out at sea in those waters. "Blow! Of course, it blows; but the more it blows the better one's appetite is. Nothing much wrong with a man when he can eat well, is there? And as for fish—there's nothing

like those Chatham Islands' fish round in these waters." Captain Abram was a Mark Tapley of the sea.

### The Ship That Carried Butler.

I wonder if any of "The Graphic" readers recalled a sinister bit of history when the daily paper cablegrams told this week of the wreck of the British four-masted barque Swanhilda. The Swanhilda, a brief message from Buenos Ayres stated, was lost on Staten Island, at the bleak and frosty tail of Terra Del Fuego, in the vicinity of Cape Horn. Fifteen survivors of the crew reached Buenos Ayres; the rest, including the captain and his wife, were drowned. Such was the end of a big 2000-ton steel clipper, whose career was marked by at least one bit of notoriety that for a time put her name in everyone's mouth. The Swanhilda was the vessel on which the New South Wales murderer Butler escaped from Newcastle to San Francisco. It was some twelve years ago, as far as my memory serves me. He was arrested on the ship on his arrival at Frisco, and was brought back via Auckland, in the R.M.S. Mariposa, and was in due course hanged in Sydney. Butler's crimes created great excitement at the time. Aucklanders may remember the scenes at the Queen-street wharf when the steamer arrived with the murderer on board in irons. Reporters were even sent over from Sydney to "do" the arrival of the notorious man, and to interview him. Butler had shipped as a sailor on the Swanhilda, and worked before the mast on the voyage to San Francisco.

### Over the Southern Alps.

At last some attention is to be given by the Government to that most magnificent of all our natural pleasure grounds, the heart of the Southern Alps. Not only is a new tourist hotel to be constructed in the Hooker Valley, near where the present antiquated Mt. Cook "Hermitage" stands, but arrangements are being made to link up the road systems of the East and West Coasts by a good track across the snowy backbone of the Island, from the "Hermitage," over the Copland, or Fitzgerald's Pass. Mountain huts are now being built on both sides of this great pass. I have seen many fine views in the Southern Alps, but none finer than those in the vicinity of the Copland, particularly in the upper part of the Hooker Valley, where an immense glacier sweeps down between two mighty walls from the floor of shining Aorangi. Fitzgerald's, or the Copland Pass—it bears both names—is 6863ft. above sea level, and something more than 4500ft. above the "Hermitage." The saddle itself is perpetually snow-clad, but it would not require a great expenditure to make a decent track on each side of it. When this link is completed there will be a very grand round trip opened up for travellers and for New Zealanders who want to see something of the gorgeous scenery of the Southern mountains. Going up to Mt. Cook from the Canterbury side, one

will be able to cross over to the long lake-dotted forest litteral of the West, and return to civilisation via Hokitika. At present this sort of thing is only for the hardy Alpinist. It is also expensive—a more important consideration still.

### Girl Scouts.

The "New Zealand Times," on Saturday, May 28, published the following letter, headed "False Allegations Against Girl Scouts":—

Sir,—Some persons in Wellington have stated that they object to girl scouting, as they have seen girls out scouting at night with boys.

Allow me to inform the public generally, parents and schoolmasters in particular, that the "Girl Peace Scouts" have never been out scouting with boys, either by day or by night.

Some girl hoodlums, however, who have been calling themselves scouts, have been behaving in a very unseemly manner, but they are nothing to do with the girl scout movement.

N.B.—Girl Peace Scouts go out in charge of scoutmistresses, never alone.—I am, etc,

M. C. SKELLEY,  
District Secretary, Girl Peace Scouts,  
Wellington.

### The Late Mr. Baume's Seat.

Under the heading, "Jumping into His Shoes," the "Times," Wellington, of last Friday, said: "An enterprising northern colleague of the late Mr. F. E. Baume has reserved by telegram the seat in Parliament formerly occupied by the member for Auckland East. It happens to be a comfortable corner position, well lighted."

### A "Living Area" of Land.

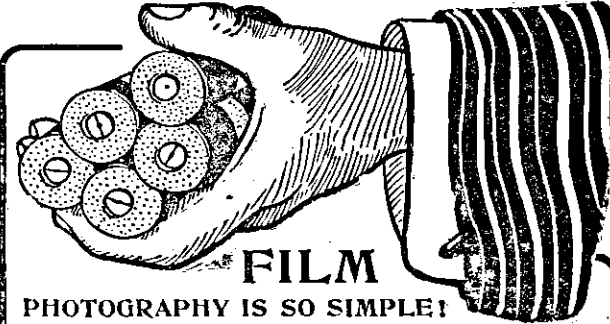
"You may talk about the necessity of a living wage, but I tell you that a living area of land for our selectors is a question that we will have to settle as one of great urgency," said the Wellington Lands Commissioner at the meeting of the Land Board last week. He added that the Board must seek to help the man with a small area rather than the man owning a big property, for it was the former who was most deserving and most in need of assistance.

### Smaller Police "Guns" Wanted.

During the hearing of the Powells case at Palmerston, Detective Quartermaster, in evidence, said that he had borrowed the revolver he carried on the night Sergeant McGuire was killed, because it was possible to carry it in his pocket. The regulation revolvers handed to constables and detectives were too large and clumsy to be carried in a pocket. A regulation revolver was produced, and the truth of the detective's allegations was obvious.

### Our New Citizen Army.

This year the New Zealand territorial force will not be permitted, except in special cases, to capitulate for more men than the number laid down in the old establishments. That is—for companies, 63; and for squadrons, 84. Special ap-



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