

News of the Dominion.

OUR WELLINGTON LETTER.

WELLINGTON, October 22.

That Coronation Trip.

M.P.'s and M.L.C.'s and the public generally are wondering who the lucky Seven will be who will accompany Sir Joseph Ward to the Coronation next year. Although no precise invitation has yet been received by the Government, it is understood that the inquiry made by the Imperial authorities amounts to the same thing. The British Government, it is stated, does not issue invitations on these occasions unless acceptance is assured. The preliminary form of the invitation is something to this effect: "If your country is asked to send a certain number of representatives, will that number go?" Eight has been mentioned as the number of New Zealand's representatives, and it is regarded as extremely probable that that number will go. The question now is as to the personnel of New Zealand's delegation to the big Imperial gathering. As there is to be an Agricultural Conference in England, to which all Ministers of Agriculture in the Empire have been invited, it is expected that the Hon. Thomas Mackenzie will accompany the Premier. The Hon. Dr. Findlay is also mentioned as one likely to go. Then as to non-ministers. It seems to be a pretty general opinion that the Leader of the Opposition will be invited by the Premier to form one of the party. This will be establishing a new precedent for New Zealand—but no matter; we are used to making our own precedents by this time. That makes four. The rest of the delegation, it is rumoured, will probably consist of three Government members and one Opposition. Some of the papers are making a to-do about the dislocation of business that will happen if so many leading members go to the Coronation. But a lot of people, including some members themselves, are inclined to think that it would be the best thing out for the country if next year's session were very considerably shortened. And if Sir Joseph induces both Mr. Maasey and Mr. James Allen to accompany him to England—and the chances are that they won't need much coaxing—Parliament's work will go on much more smoothly, and the country will be the gainer.

Those Trivial Returns.

One source of the continual waste of time in Parliament is the habit members have of asking for returns on all sorts of trifling matters. The question paper is full of extraordinarily trumpery questions; many members apparently simply ask them for the purpose of advertising themselves. Yet it is hard to say what credit or fame Mr. R. A. Wright, M.P., is likely to get for the latest question. He moved in the House yesterday for a return "showing the prices paid for uniforms supplied to the orderlies and messengers of the House." Why on earth Mr. Wright wants to know is a mystery; unless he is a tailor—and I understand he is not, but is a printer or something of that sort. But members never seem to see the absurdity of wasting the House's time on such trivialities. Next sitting day we'll have some other Wellington member asking for, say, a return showing (a) the exact weight of the Queen's Statue in Post Office-square; and (b) the exact circumference of the waist of her late Majesty, as per statue.

Shifting the Queen's Statue.

Touching that statue of Queen Victoria, it is to fall from its high estate. The City Council has gone down and inspected it where it stands in Post Office Square, and has inspected also the unclean "deadbeats" who roost on the steps of its pedestal. And the Council has decided that the statue must move on. Exactly why wasn't explained at the Council meeting this week, but it is understood that the big bronze effigy is regarded as an obstruction to traffic in its present position, and that it is undignified to see Her Britannic Majesty's feet made the gathering-ground for loafers and stump-orators. There is another reason, too, which is not publicly voiced, but which exists all the same, and that

is that the statue as a work of art is not a beautiful one; that, in fact, it burlesques Queen Victoria, or, at any rate, does not flatter her; that there is nothing idealistic about it, and that, in short, it isn't the sort of effigy to keep in such a prominent position, at the city's front gate, as it were. The City Fathers have heard visitors poke fun at the ungraceful, Sairey Gamp-like figure, and ask whether it wasn't turned out by some local monumental mason. And they're very sensitive fellows, our City Fathers; criticism, especially in the sarcastic vein, makes them very mad indeed. So the end of it all is that Her late Majesty must move on.

Where is she to go? That is what puzzled the Council. Some suggested that she should be dumped down opposite the Town Hall, but Councillor Fletcher objected, because she would be in the way of the Fire Brigade station. Others thought so, too, so Her Majesty must go further afield. And then Kent Terrace was suggested. Happy thought! The Councillors agreed that Kent Terrace would be an excellent place. It is about a mile away from the Post Office—well out of the way, in fact. It would do splendidly. Very few tourists would be likely to see the statue there, and if they did they would most likely take it for some suburban memorial, and wouldn't be harsh upon it. So to Kent Terrace Her Majesty goes. She is to find a resting-place at the north end of the Terrace, close to the Courtenay Place tram-car junction, where the Oriental Bay and Newtown electric lines diverge. Let's hope she will rest in peace there, and be cheived on no more.

Trafalgar Day.

Flags everywhere, on public buildings and shipping and private flagstaffs, reminded everyone that yesterday was Trafalgar Day. The steamers in port made a fine display, with all the flags of the international signal code flying in rainbow coloured strings from their masts. The big liner Rushine was particularly well "dressed."

We have an interesting local link with Nelson's grand old flagship, the Victory. Mr. R. Lee, chairman of the Wellington Board of Education, who addressed a number of scholars at the Hut School yesterday on the subject of the Battle of Trafalgar, served in his youth on the Victory, and about fifty years ago sailed across Trafalgar Bay in her.

Swimmers and Their Costumes.

The recent decision by the Wellington City Council to enforce the wearing of the "Canadian" costume by bathers at Lyall Bay and other seaside resorts, is arousing a good deal of opposition amongst swimmers and surf-bathers. Local swimmers claim that the City Council's view of "proper" costume may be all right for promenading the beaches, but that it is entirely unsuitable for swimming in the breakers, and may even be dangerous. It has been ascertained that the regulations for surf-bathing at Manly, Sydney's great seaside resort, provide for a neck-to-knee costume, without any restriction as to make or shape. The principal objection to the Canadian costume at Manly is its weight when wet. The Wellington Swimming Club has decided to send a deputation to the City Council at its next meeting, and to endeavour to get that body to change its mind. The swimming men propose dressing a couple of their members in the rival swimming rigs, to demonstrate the superiority of the close-fitting neck-to-knee costume for bathing purposes.

The Elusive Huia.

Our enthusiastic naturalists have by no means given up hope of catching that rare bird, the huia. Another Government expedition in search of the shy forest creature is to be organised for the coming summer. Mr. John Stevens, M.P., of Manawatu, came to town this week to interview the Hon. D. Buddo (Minister for Internal Affairs) and Mr. A. Hamilton (Director of the Dominion Museum) on the question of forming a Maori expedition to hunt huia on the western slopes of the Ruahine ranges. Mr. Stevens believes that the huia is still likely to be found in the thick bush about the head waters of the Kawhataua (a tributary of the Rangitikei) and the Manawharariki and Pohangina rivers; the latter runs into the Manawatu, near Ashhurst. He suggests that a party of two or three Maoris, accompanied by a

European appointed by the Government, should search around the head waters of these rivers and then along the foothills of the Ruahine and Tararua range. It would not be any use capturing a single bird; a pair, or pairs, are needed, to be placed on the Government native bird sanctuary—the Little Barrier Island.

On top of this suggestion by Mr. Stevens as to the best locality in which to go huia-hunting, comes the news from Pipiriki, on the Wanganui river, that three huia were seen a few days ago on the coach road through the bush between Pipiriki and Raetihi, at a spot known as "The Dress Circle." This, if true, is very interesting news to naturalists, for the huia was believed to have totally disappeared from this district. But there is always the chance that a mistake was made in the identity of the bird, especially if the discovery was only made from the box-seat of the coach.

Wi Pere's Tarpaulin.

The Honorable Wi Pere, M.L.C., has been livening up the Lords again. His latest bon mot takes the form of a suggestion for the improvement of Parliament House. Wi says the draughts in the House give him fits, or words to that effect; the cold worries him some. Wherefore he thinks the outside walls of the building should be covered with what he calls "tarporena," i.e., tarpaulins, as in the case of a Maori whare he lately saw up-country, which was covered with canvas tarpaulins to keep out the draughts! Just stick a tarpaulin on, and it would do the trick. It certainly would be economical. And if that "tarporena" were decorated by a good theatrical scenery painter it would add enormously to the attraction of Parliament House. Excursions could then be organised by the Government to see the most wonderfully adorned Parliament House in the world. There are a lot of possibilities in the Honorable Wi's suggestion.

The Defence Department Criticised.

There was a very sharp discussion on the Defence Department Estimates in the House yesterday. The debate on the Defence Department, in fact, continued till one o'clock this morning, and some of the officers and their doings and their salaries were keenly criticised. Two officers in particular—the staff officer to the Chief of the General Staff, and the Adjutant of the Nelson district (Major J. G. Hughes) had some pretty severe things said about them. The Government got an unexpected set-back, for a motion to reduce the former officer's salary (£225) by £25 was carried by a majority of one, on the motion of Mr. T. E. Taylor. The general point of complaint Mr. Taylor and Mr. Allen and Mr. Herdman and other Opposition members emphasised was that some of the Defence Department officers were more ornamental than useful, and some were receiving promotion and increases of pay without passing their examinations. Mr. Hogg had a gibe at imported military ornaments. Little Major Hughes had some particularly caustic things said about him. Some time back he was appointed Adjutant of the Nelson defence district, but he hasn't got there yet. He has been away for two years, in fact; he is still in England on leave of absence, drawing full pay. Mr. Allen moved that the Major's salary (£300) be reduced by £10, as an indication that the officer wasn't doing the right thing by the country. The Government Whips, however, rounded up all their flock, and the reduction proposal was defeated by 39 to 22.

An incident which occurred during the debate showed that Mr. Tommy Taylor didn't quite approve of the behaviour of some of the Defence Department officials who were in the House, seated behind the Speaker's chair. He said they were "grinning like Cheshire cats," and mistaking themselves like schoolboys. They should show more respect to the House. Mr. Colvin (Chairman of Committees) ruled that Mr. Taylor must not refer to the officials. Mr. Taylor said he hoped his protest would make the Defence officers remember their positions, and "behave as such." And it did, for they grinned no more, and had the doubtful pleasure of hearing more uncomplimentary things said about their Department by various other Oppositionists.

"Too Awful for Words."

Speaking on behalf of the Home Mission last week, at the meeting held under the auspices of the Anglican Synod in the Choral Hall, the Rev. G. O. Criswick shank gave a lurid description of life in

the co-operative camps on the railway construction works. He said he had worked in alms in England, some of which were what was termed "pretty hefty," but although in the railway camps here he had met some of the finest of men, still, generally speaking, he had never seen lives so degraded in the alms of England as he had in these back-block co-operative railway camps. Really, the condition of these railway camps was too awful for words. Sometimes he felt that the poor beggars had a good deal of excuse. They lived in small tents, and had nothing to do from 4 p.m. to 6 o'clock the next morning but twiddle their thumbs, as it seemed to him in Taranaki about 3844 days in the year. (Laughter.) Men had told him they read the advertisements on the jam tins backwards in order to pass the time. He asked would not half of those present want to get drunk if compelled to live under such circumstances? He considered it scandalous these men should have to live such lives without some provision for their recreation. (Applause.) One of the biggest curses a man could have was a remittance. He saw that plainly in the life of the co-operative camps. Referring to a home missionary's life, the speaker said he went about his work in a costume that was a cross between a third-rate groom and an undertaker—(laughter)—and every day was either a feast or a famine. He had 1210 square miles of country to look after, which gave an idea of what a home missionary's life was. In conclusion, the speaker earnestly appealed for more men and money for the Home Mission work in the back blocks.

Newmarket Workshops.

In the House of Representatives last week, Mr. C. H. Poole again urged on the Minister for Railways the need for a searching inquiry into the conditions obtaining at the Newmarket workshops. There was, he said, grave dissatisfaction in connection with the administration. There must be some reason for the state of unrest which prevailed. The men asked that their identity should not be revealed, because it would mean trouble to them, but he received numerous letters that the greatest dissatisfaction existed.

The Hon. Mr. Millar replied that he did not know what reason there was for discontent at the Newmarket workshops. There had been complaint some time ago that the men were being driven too hard, but there was nothing in that at all. Mr. Poole's statement was news to him, but he would instruct the Engineer-in-Chief to have inquiry made on his first visit to Auckland. The manager in charge of the workshops was one of the best officers in the service, and was a man who got the full measure of work out of his staff. That had been characteristic of him in other places where he had had charge before going to Newmarket. Perhaps he had succeeded in getting a little more out of the men than they had previously given.

Mr. Poole: The men do not protest against work.

Hon. Mr. Millar: We will have inquiry made into the complaints and ascertain if anything is wrong.

The Puhanga Canal.

A commencement has been made on the work of cutting the big Puhanga canal, opposite Kerepehi (or Hauraki Plains). The canal will be 40ft wide, and, when completed, will bring the two points within a mile and a-half of each other, instead of as at present five and a quarter miles.

Two Thames contractors, Walter Oulton and William Duffy, secured the work, the price being £2900. It is anticipated that this large cut will prove an important factor in preventing the river backing up in the rainy season and flooding the land.

Splendid progress is being made with the drainage works, under the supervision of Mr. J. B. Thompson, engineer-in-charge.

Graduated Income Tax.

The measure providing for the levying of the graduated Income Tax, introduced in the House of Representatives last week, makes large increases in existing taxation. The Act passed last year (the usual annual measure) simply provided for two grades of Income Tax, exclusive of companies' taxation. "On every pound sterling derived or received from business, from business employment, or emolument,"