

# News of the Dominion.

## OUR WELLINGTON LETTER.

WELLINGTON, November 23.

### Politics

THE Parliamentary session will not end to-day, as was confidently anticipated a little while back, but will go on for probably another week. It will hold the distinction of being the longest and wordiest session of Parliament that has yet been held in New Zealand. This has been discovered by some energetic statistician, who has been reckoning up the pages of "Hansard" of each session, as well as the number of sitting days. Sir Joseph Ward told the House on Thursday that he did not see why the session should not end on Wednesday next, but Sir Joseph proposes and Mr. Massey disposes. Members will be lucky if they are able to catch next Saturday's trains and steamers for their homes and families dear.

The report of the Hine inquiry Committee is proposed to be taken for consideration on Monday, and the Public Works statement on Tuesday. On Wednesday the Premier will ask the House to consider the resolutions which he proposes to submit at the Imperial Conference in London next year.

### The Bookies' Bill.

The principal Parliamentary bone of contention this week was the new Gaming Bill. It looked at one time as if the bill, between the two houses, would fall to the ground and the bookie get a temporary respite from execution. The Legislative Council made certain amendments in the bill which the Lower House disagreed with; then there was trouble. However, a conference between managers appointed by each House smoothed out the difficulty, so the bill will very shortly become law. The Attorney-General, in making a statement to the Council last night, said the purpose the Council had in making the alterations in the bill was to increase the stringency of the provisions with regard to bookmakers, and with regard to the prohibition of bookmakers betting in the streets, public places, and racecourses. The definition of the word "street" was made clearer. In another clause the bill when it left the Council provided that "any person" who offended against clause 2 (street betting) on any racecourse should be put off. At the conference of managers, it was urged that "any person" was too wide, and it was changed to "any bookmaker." Most of the other amendments the Council proposed were agreed to by the managers from the Lower House.

In reply to a remark by the Hon. Mr. Jenkinson, to criticisms suggesting trickery on the part of the Council, the Hon. Dr. Findlay said that criticism overlooked the fact that in the earlier part of the bill there was an entirely independent provision that bookmakers could not make a bet in any public place or racecourse. The subsequent provisions in which the words occurred were found necessary by the original draughtsman to avoid punishing a private individual for betting.

### No Holiday for St. David.

Mr. Dillon, M.P., is a Welshman—the only one in the House—and he valiantly and single-handed championed the cause of his country's patron saint on Thursday night. "The Bank Holidays Act" was under discussion, and Mr. Dillon moved to add March 1, St. David's Day, to the list of authorised holidays. He was the only Welshman in the august House, he said, and he knew that if he talked for an hour he would probably not influence a vote, so he asked the Chairman of Committees to kindly put his amendment and not keep him in suspense.

Then the house became fractious. Mr. Witty—who makes a desperate effort to live up to his name—asked, "Who is St. David, and where is he?" Mr. Massey asked, "Where is he now?" This was apparently beyond Mr. Dillon's power to answer, so he wisely remained silent. The Chairman of Committees got rather tangled up in his ruling; his right to put Mr. Dillon's amendment was challenged. Then Mr. Tommy Taylor must get up, and talk about the "wealthy squatters" and the Wellington members wasting the time of the House. Which made Mr.

Dillon angry, and provoked a complaint by him that if it had not been for Mr. Taylor the House would have risen a month ago.

The House, therefore, threw out St. David without enthusiasm; so the bank clerks will have to be content with making holidays in the names of St. George, St. Andrew, and St. Patrick.

### The Fleet.

The long grey hulls of three of the British warships on the Australasian station—H.M.S. Powerful, and her satellites, the Cambrian and the Encounter—have adorned the waters of Lambton Harbour for the past week or so. The Powerful has now gone to Nelson to pay her first visit to that port—a great thing for quiet little Nelson—and the Cambrian slipped off to Lyttelton to see the Terra Nova sail for the land of eternal ice.

On Thursday morning there was an unusual sight in town, a parade of a thousand bluejackets from the warships. The men were landed for a route march through the city, out over the hills to Karori and back. It was an inspiring spectacle, that big body of tars on the march. It reminded one of some previous parades and marches by Navy men in Auckland, years ago, when street-marching by bluejackets was a more frequent sight than it seems to be now. The sailors in this instance had a band, but it was a poor one. Brass bands are now to be found on pretty well every warship, but it seems to me that the old-time drum and fife band is the proper sort of thing for sailormen. I remember one Navy drum and fife band, some twenty years ago or more, in Auckland. It was H.M.S. Opal's band. Many of the "Graphic" readers will remember the old Opal. She was a handsome clipper-bow craft, barque-rigged, with steam power as well, of course, and her crew were real Jack Tars of the old topsail-yard, stunsail days, when agility aloft was esteemed as highly as skill at gunnery. And to see the swing of those bearded sailormen from the Opal, as they marched up Queen-street with their fine fife band shrilling out "Nancy Lee"—it was great! Somehow a brass band can't play "Nancy Lee" as it should be played, to appeal to sailormen. And of all tunes beloved of the boy in navy blue—or, at any rate, the old-time boy—"Nancy Lee" is the one! The captain of the Opal, Commodore Bosanquet—is this not Admiral Bosanquet, who is now Governor of South Australia?—was very proud of that band of his, and he liked to march out with it himself on occasion. Those were the picturesque old days of lofty-sparred, heavily-rigged ships, when a Navy man would have yelled with horror if he had been asked to paint his fine black-sided craft the ugly, wet-sailcloth colour that is the fashion in the Fleet to-day.

### The City Beautiful.

Wellington has hopelessly lost its opportunity of becoming a beautifully laid-out city. So said the City Engineer, Mr. W. H. Morton, at the New Zealand Institute's annual dinner on Thursday night. Mr. A. Atkins, in proposing the toast of "Our Civic Rulers," which he coupled with the name of Mr. Morton, remarked that he thought there was no place more capable of being beautiful than Wellington, if properly taken in hand. Fortunately, he said, there were no slums here, but there was jerry-building, a matter which had been ably dealt with at the last Builders' Conference. Mr. Morton, in responding, cracked a joke about the idea of coupling his name with "Civic Rulers." It looked like sarcasm, he said, for he thought there was no man who had more bosses than he had. In regard to town-planning, he would like to see the man who could accomplish, under our present laws, anything like what was done on the Continent of Europe. Anyone who tried it would be hung, drawn and quartered. He had countered all sorts of obstacles. For instance, when he tried to get a better grade than was proposed in the plans of new roads, he was told that it was ruining the poor land-owner—never the poor public. Wellington was a place that could have been made much more attractive than it was at present, if there had been a system on which town-planning could have been carried out. Unfortunately all the best land passed quickly into private hands, and was cut up piecemeal with no object but the best results for the private owner. The future of the city had not been considered at all. When he looked at the hills behind Wellington Terrace and thought how beautiful they could have been made, he thought it was simply shameful. With proper powers and a competent authority to exercise them, Wellington could have been made one of the most beautiful cities in the world; but to do anything now would involve such a sum of money that a timid man like himself dare not think of it.

To which it may be added that some of the greatest offenders in the matter of which Mr. Morton complained have been the richest men of Wellington. There are streets in the best residential situations in Wellington, the hills at the back of the Terrace, where ugly, staring, verandah-less houses have been stuck up alongside each other as close as they can well be put, with barely room for a passage between each; three or four houses have been built on sections really only big enough for one. The architecture is ghastly; the houses, like huge boxes stuck on end, grievously offend the eye. And for these ugly boxes the greedy owner gets his exorbitant rents, and is happy. If his tenants demur about the stiff rents, he will talk about hard times and high cost of land, and that sort of thing, and declares that house-property doesn't pay.

The deep gully just at the back of Keltburne hill-top, near the cable car terminus, is, I am afraid, going to be a sort of glorified slum. In this small area, it is said, forty houses are to be built eventually, when all the sections—which are very small ones—are sold. Some of them are going up now, very close together. But there is at least one consolation—there is a decided improvement in the architecture of the houses now being built; some of them are really pretty houses. But the change for the better in this respect is to be put down to the credit of the architects, and a single-house-owner, rather than to the man with the big rent roll.

### Washed Ashore.

The trawler Nora Niven, which arrived at Wellington on Friday from Chatham Islands, brings news that the name-board of the ship Garnet Hill was washed ashore on Waitangi beach.

The Garnet Hill is a vessel of 2274 tons gross register, but at Port Glasgow in 1890.

### Hours of Nurses.

There is a spirit of revolt amongst nurses at the Napier hospital, consequent on the extremely long night duties imposed. It is alleged that the health of several nurses is broken down, with the result that one has sent in her resignation and others threaten to follow suit unless conditions are improved. It is stated that in some cases nearly 70 hours a week are worked.

### New Industry at Rotorua.

The Hon. T. Mackenzie, Minister in charge of Tourist Resorts, interviewed last week in regard to the vote of £90 placed on the Public Works Estimates for the establishment of the fish-curing industry at Rotorua, stated that the vote is required for preliminary arrangements in connection with the smoking of trout for commercial purposes. There have been frequent complaints of late that the lakes are overstocked. A start is to be made during the present season. Regulations are shortly to be drawn up to govern the new undertaking, and a staff of men will be employed in catching and curing trout for market.

### By Sea or Rail.

Where there is sea competition the railway rates have to be reduced, remarked the Prime Minister to a suggestion that differential railway rates were charged against the North Island lines. As compared to the South, the classified scale was the same in each island, except in cases where the Department had to fight against sea competition. "We cannot shift the sea 100 miles from the railway nor the railway 100 miles from the sea," he added, "and the experience from the arguments used is that New Zealand is too near the sea."

### Votes for Women.

In the House of Representatives last week Mr. T. E. Taylor asked the Prime Minister whether, in view of the fact that the full Parliamentary franchise

is now exercised by the women of New Zealand and Australia with very marked advantage to the cause of political reforms affecting the highest interests of the people, he will endeavour to have the question of securing equal political power for the women of Great Britain made an issue for consideration by the approaching Imperial Conference, so that the Parliamentary franchise within the Empire shall be uniform?

"To give effect to the request conveyed involves interference by New Zealand with the internal politics of Great Britain," replied Sir Joseph Ward. "Constitutional rule forbids this, and, though I am personally an advocate of woman's suffrage in this country, respect for the rule in question prevents my taking the course suggested."

### Cheap Marriages.

"Will the Government take steps to reduce the fees now payable to registrars for the performance of ceremony of marriage?" asked Sir Wm. Steward.

The Hon. Buddo replied: "There is no fee payable for the registration of marriage in New Zealand. A marriage before a registrar costs £2 2/6, made up as follows:—Notice of intended marriage, 2/6; certificate authorising the marriage, £1; solemnisation, £1. If these fees were abolished, the revenue would suffer to the extent of £10,000 per annum. Our fees compare very favourably with those of other British countries for similar services. There are nearly a hundred registrars of marriages paid by fees, and provision would have to be made for remunerating them in some other way. Moreover, it is doubtful if the giving of further facilities for marriage by civil contract would meet with general approval. I need only add that I am considering the question of reducing the amount payable where separate districts are concerned."

### Waikī Miners.

A special meeting of the Miners' Union was held on Saturday evening to consider notices of motion relative to the matter of cancellation of registration under the Arbitration Act, and withdrawal from the Federation of Labour. Mr. Parry presided, and there was a good attendance. It was resolved unanimously, with the exception of one vote, that the necessary steps be taken with a view to cancelling registration, and that a new system of balloting be adopted. A motion to withdraw from the Federation of Labour was lost, only four votes being cast in its favour.

A meeting of the Union Committee endorsed the action of the Auckland Labourers' Union in prohibiting subcontracting, and deplored the fact that members of miners' unions had ignored the resolution passed to that effect.

The Waikī Union has now issued notices to members to adhere to the resolution.

### Southward, Ho!

Since his arrival in Christchurch, Captain Scott has been the recipient of almost countless messages of goodwill and many generous offers of support for his Antarctic expedition. As the task of supervising the preparations has made many demands upon his time, the captain has not been able to acknowledge personally more than a small proportion, and, in consequence, has sent the following letter to the Press for publication:—

"On my departure for the Antarctic I wish to express my appreciation of the treatment which this expedition has received from the people of New Zealand. The grant of £1,000 which has been made by the Government cannot but be considered a most liberal contribution, having regard to the population of the country, and it is more esteemed since it was promised by Sir Joseph Ward at an early date, when the enterprise was in its most serious need of support. Following this noble lead, and since its arrival in New Zealand, the expedition has been the recipient of a continuous stream of gifts in kind, and even in money. So numerous are these contributions that I have been unable to express my gratitude to individual donors, though I have endeavoured to return thanks through those gentlemen in various districts who have generously given their services to organising the supplies offered, in accordance with our requirements. In the absence of direct thanks, I trust that the givers will believe that I fully realise the help which they have given. Finally, I would say