

News of the Dominion.

OUR WELLINGTON LETTER.

WELLINGTON, January 7.

The Marlborough Sounds Trip.

ONE of the events of the New Year holiday week-end was the Union Company's special excursion to the Marlborough Sounds. This was altogether a new experiment for the company, and it panned out very well. The company is not running any excursions to Milford Sound this summer, and the management decided to see what could be done in the way of popularising the much more accessible beauty places on the southern shores of Cook Strait. These beautiful sounds, Queen Charlotte and Picton, deserve to be much more widely known than they are, and the company's excursion decidedly served a useful purpose. For the first time in the history of Pelorus Sound, a 3500 ton steamer (the Mokola) steamed up nearly its whole length, right into the heart of the hills, and the astonishment of the settlers and their families away up as far as the Kerepuru Arm, when the big liner stemmed past their homes, so closely, was entertaining to all, so passengers tell me. Pretty well the whole of the two fine sounds was explored in the three days' cruise, and the great beauty of the land-locked lake-like reaches was vastly admired. Indeed, some of the passengers were so enraptured with the picturesqueness of Tomuon Inlet, the finest part of Pelorus Sound, where the unspoiled forest comes right down to the water's edge, that some of them lost all sense of proportion, and declared that it was "finer than Milford Sound." This, of course, was absurd. There is no comparison at all between the scenic scheme of Pelorus and that of Milford. The tremendous granite walls of Milford Sound shooting straight up above your head for three-quarters of a mile on one side, and nearly vertically quite a mile into the air on the other, could surely never have been seen by those cock-sure trippers. In Pelorus you can't see waterfalls, dipping apparently from the sky, showing out of the mists three thousand feet above you. Nevertheless, Pelorus is a delightfully pretty place, and this excursion ought to go a long way to advertise its charms amongst New Zealanders. Wellington people too often go travelling to the remotest parts of the Dominion in search of agreeable holiday places and camping-grounds when they could get all they wanted within a few hours' steam of the Queen's wharf.

Wellington Harbour Services.

During the New Year holidays the Wellington harbour ferry traffic was large, though, of course, not nearly of such a magnitude as that carried on by the Auckland ferry people. The Wellington Harbour Ferries Company confines its attention to Day's Bay and Rona Bay, and the eastern side of Port Nicholson, and though there are other fine bays which would attract thousands of people, no effort is made to popularise them by means of steam communication. The Ferries Company has a monopoly of the harbour traffic, and it runs a pretty good service to Day's Bay, but Seatoun and Karaka Bay, where there are good wharves, are entirely neglected. Thousands of people would have visited those pleasant seaside resorts during the holidays had there been any way of reaching them by sea. There is, of course, an electric car service to Seatoun, via Kilbirnie and Miramar, but it is such a round-about route, and so infrequent and in many ways so uncomfortable, that the holiday-maker won't like the car except as a last resource. There is very little pleasure in a ride of forty or forty-five minutes inside a stuffy tramcar, packed with hot and more or less bad-tempered humanity, these summer days. There are no top-deckers on the Seatoun line, and consequently no mitigation of the discomfort and crowding. The natural and most pleasurable way of reaching these bays is by sea, and the absence of sea-transit is undoubtedly a great drawback. The Harbour Ferries people give as their excuse for not running their ferries that a service wouldn't pay. This is about

on a par with the excuse of a tea-room manager at Island Bay for not being able to supply strawberries to customers in the holidays. There were plenty of strawberries to be got, but he said that he didn't buy any because he was afraid he wouldn't be able to sell them! I believe great numbers of people would travel over to Seatoun and the pretty bays on the Miramar Peninsula side of the Heads if facilities offered. Breaker Bay, for instance, is a beautiful place, just outside the Heads, and within a few minutes' walk of the Seatoun wharf. I believe the enterprise would pay if up-to-date and comfortable steamers were put in the running and the convenience and pleasure of the public thoroughly well studied. If the Wellington Harbour Ferries won't do it, why doesn't some other company step in? Here is an opening for the Devonport Ferry Company. Won't Mr. Alison come down and spy out the land?

The Heart of Wonderland.

The Hon. Dr. Findlay, since his return from the Thermal Country, has been talking enthusiastically about the great attractions of the Taupo and Wairakei districts. He has been trout-fishing on Taupo and resting contentedly at Wairakei, and he, like his chief (Sir Joseph), is charmed with both places. In an interview with a Wellington pressman this week the Dr. spoke of the superior attractions of the Taupo country over those of Rotorua in some respects—the fresh and invigorating air, the absence of the smell of sulphur, the inspiring scenery, and the grand fishing. But, he said, Taupo is not visited nearly as much as it should be, because of the difficulty and expense of getting there. "Wairakei and Taupo are at present inaccessible, except by coach, to all who cannot afford the heavy expense of a motor-car. The journey from Rotorua to Wairakei is over what is probably the dustiest road in New Zealand. Travellers by coach in the summer-time, particularly, are put to considerable inconvenience. To visitors from the North this is the only method of getting to Wairakei, and for Southern visitors the route is almost as unpleasant, involving a long drive from the railway at Waiouru over a dusty road, mainly through a bleak desert, to Tokaanu. There they have to take a boat across Lake Taupo, about thirty miles, which involves delay, and sometimes discomfort. Thus it is too much to expect that traffic to these places will increase unless some quicker and more comfortable method of locomotion is provided than at present exists."

No doubt in time the railway will be continued to Lake Taupo from both the Rotorua and the Waiouru ends. Captain Tom Ryan runs a small steamer across the Lake, connecting with the present coaches, and a run across the grand lake in the little Tongariro has all the charms of a yachting trip in fine summer weather. (It's not exactly charming in a winter gale, though!) But when Taupo comes into its own, and gets its railway, it will have big steamers on its waters, and the popular route to Rotorua from Wellington will certainly be via Taupo. At present the average holidaymaker can't afford the time necessary for the Taupo trip, simply because of the long coaching gaps at each end of our great central lake.

Major-Gen. Godley Gets to Work.

I hear that there is just a little dismay in the Defence Department as the result of Major-General Godley's vigorous overhauling of the personnel and the administration. It is said that two well-known junior officers at headquarters have been told that they must get out into the field and learn the practical side of their work. This means no doubt that they will go into the instructional camp to be held at Taubererika, near Featherston, during this and next month. In sundry other directions, the new Commandant has made it evident that every officer under him must be thoroughly well up in his duties. Our Little War Office is wonderfully industrious and punctual and punctilious these days. The staff wear uniforms during office hours now; aforesaid they appeared in uniform or in multi pretty well at their own sweet will.

It is reported that the New Zealand school cadets are to come under the

Commandant's direct control shortly. This will be a move in the right direction. At present the Cadets are a semi-independent organisation, under Major McDonald's command. Now they are to take their proper place in the well-thought-out general scheme of the defence, which provides for the thorough military training of young New Zealand from the cadet stage until manhood is attained.

"The Honeyuckle and the Bee."

A scrap of news from Palmerston North tells of the strange and by no means pleasant experience of a young lady on Christmas Day. It was at Kairanga, a few miles out of the town. The girl was riding along one of the roads when a swarm of bees, apparently in fighting mood, alighted on her, and, before they were dislodged, she was very severely stung about the forehead and on the back of the neck. Fortunately the horse which she was riding at the time was a quiet one, otherwise more serious results might have ensued. As it was, the bees left their mark, and the young lady had a warm but not very merry Christmas.

A Holiday Record.

The train and tramway traffic in Auckland during the Christmas holidays was phenomenally heavy, and easily constitutes a record, when compared to the traffic of previous years.

A "Star" reporter on making inquiries at the railway traffic manager's office last week, was informed that this year's holiday traffic had been 50 per cent heavier than in previous years. The difference has been particularly marked in the business to Auckland from the Wellington end. Likewise, in regard to Rotorua the traffic from Wellington has been greater during the recent holidays than ever before. This is partly due to the fact that the extra expresses running from Wellington have obviated the long delay of nine hours at Frankton which takes place when passengers from the South have to leave the ordinary express at 4 p.m., and wait till 1 p.m. for the Rotorua train. In Wellington, while the extra express has been running, the railway officials refused to issue tickets to Rotorua except by that special train.

Another feature which no doubt had some bearing on this year's holiday traffic is the fact that the excursion fares meant a greater concession this year than last. In January last the ordinary fares between Auckland and Wellington were considerably increased, and those who could manage to arrange their travelling to fit in with that period when excursion rates were offering did so.

On the Auckland railways in particular the traffic has been very heavy, and on December 26 and January 2nd great crowds visited the Thames races and the gala at Te Aroha. Likewise between Auckland and Henderson the conveyance of picnic parties was very large, and would no doubt have been even larger had the weather not been so satisfactory for water excursions.

The tramways traffic in Auckland constitutes a very big holiday record. The full figures are not yet available, but the returns for the traffic on Christmas Eve show that a total of 165,311 people paid fares on the Auckland cars on that day. This number is greatly in excess of any previous one day's record, and is 15,074 better than the year before, when 148,447 people used the cars on Christmas Eve. The increased business done by the Tramway Company is attributed to a growing population, the large number of visitors in town, and the fact that the company now has more cars for coping with the traffic. It is a pleasing matter to record that, despite the stress of the holiday traffic, no accident on tram or train has had to be recorded in the district.

Kauri Gum Trade.

The past year has been a comparatively quiet one in the kauri gum trade, and the annual returns compiled by Mr. H. Edmonds show that there has been a slight falling-off in the production and the exports. A satisfactory point about the year's operations, however, has been the fact that practically the whole of the shipments have gone on order, and the amount sent to London for a speculative market was almost nil. One of the factors in the quietness of the demand for gum has been the high price ruling for turpentine and other oils used in conjunction with the gum

in the various manufactures for which it is employed. An interesting feature of the return is the diminution of the amount of gum taken by America, the difference being nearly 1,500 tons against the twelve months that have just closed. This may be partly ascribed to the increased use they are making in America of substitutes which come from other countries. Following tables give the details of the amount of kauri gum produced and exported:—

PRODUCED DURING 1910.

Month	Tons
January	672
February	682
March	967
April	890
May	635
June	548
July	591
August	590
September	635
October	675
November	675
December	602
Total	8079

EXPORTED DURING 1910.

Month	America	Europe	Total
January	271	281	552
February	202	279	481
March	208	181	389
April	698	324	1022
May	373	390	763
June	384	429	813
July	430	383	813
August	437	532	969
September	231	638	869
October	163	288	451
November	283	247	530
December	201	471	672
Totals	3830	4150	7980

During the year 1909 the amount produced was 8,130 tons, and the amount exported was 8,659 tons, of which 5,203 tons went to America, and 3,344 tons to Europe.

Gold and Silver Exports.

The value of gold and silver shipped from New Zealand for the year 1910 was £1,800,318 and £171,562, as against £2,006,900 and £180,872 for 1909, a decrease of £110,582 and £29,310 respectively.

Westport Coal.

The coal output from the Westland district last year was 831,114 tons 16cwt, as compared with 719,073 tons 8cwt in 1909, an increase for 1910 of 112,041 tons 8cwt. Towards this total the Westport Coal Co. contributed 616,535 tons 8cwt, the Westport Stockton Co. 161,950 tons 16cwt, the Seddonville State mine 62,628 tons 10cwt, Stockton Company's increase in 1909 amounted to 610,689 tons 7cwt, the Westport Coal Co.'s to 58,724 tons 13cwt, and an increase of 3310 tons on the latter company's previous best year, 1908. The State mine's output decreased by 447 tons 7cwt.

New Defence Scheme.

Three vacancies caused by the non-acceptance of positions as adjutants under the new defence scheme by Captains Roache and Blair and Lieutenant Couper have been filled by the selection of Captain King (Nelson), Lieut. Robinson (Petone), and Lieut. Gibb (Auckland). Sergt.-Major Lambert, Wellington, and Sergt. Walker, of Millerton, have been selected to fill vacancies as non-commissioned officers.

Lieut. W. H. Gibb, who has been selected from Auckland, is in the employ of the Education Board. He has always taken considerable interest in volunteering. In December, 1908, he was appointed lieutenant in D Company of the First Battalion Auckland Infantry—the No. 2 New Zealand Natives.

Wireless Installations.

The steamer Maitai, which arrived last week, was fitted with wireless telegraphy at San Francisco. Communication was maintained for 1200 miles out from the Californian coast. A message was received from the Mariposa 800 miles away, and sent another 300 miles to San Francisco.

After leaving Karotonga, the Maitai picked up an ethergram from the Ulmaras outside Dunedin, a distance of 1200 miles.

She brings wireless instruments for the Wellington Post Office station.

The Boy Immigrants.

As fully 250 applications were received from farmers for the services of the 60 boys who are being brought out to New Zealand on the Athenic by Ma-