

# A NEW ZEALAND INVENTION.

*The Story of the New Zealand Stage System  
and the Hungarian Adoption of it.*

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No. I.

**I**N view of the statement that the Hon. J. A. Cadman is to proceed to Europe to study the Zone System of Hungary, it may be interesting to recall the early history of the two systems, and to point out the difference in their aims, objects, and the probable results of their application.

The Stage System was invented in New Zealand at the end of 1882, and placed before the public on the 3rd January, 1883. The Hungarians started their Zone System in August, 1889, six years and seven months later. Many people now imagine that I am advocating copying the Hungarian system; on the contrary, it is the Hungarians who are copying us, and as I proceed I shall show they have made a very faulty copy. Thus New Zealand should have kept the lead in this matter, but we allowed Hungary to step in and reap the enormous advantage that ought to have been ours. We talk of advertising our colony. Would an expenditure of £100,000, aye, £200,000, advertise us as well as introducing this new system would have done? Who ever heard of Hungary before the "Zone" system was started? Now it is known all over the world.

To illustrate any new system it is probably necessary to know what the inventor is aiming at; and this is no doubt the reason why I am so often asked, "What put this idea into your head, and why do you work at it so persistently?"

To answer fully would be to recount my life-work. I do not believe that great ideas

come to anyone all at once. They are—it may be unconsciously—a gradual growth, built up, as it were, by many circumstances. So in this instance. From early youth how to deal with the poverty question occupied a large share of my thoughts. Later on, I worked among the London poor, and was brought face to face with real poverty. Ah! What a horror it is! What untold misery and crime it brings in its train! No human pen can adequately describe its depths of sorrow, shame, and degradation. Why should this be, in a beautiful world like this, large and fruitful enough for us all? No matter what the conditions, there must always be a certain portion of the community—the orphans, aged, and sick—who cannot provide for themselves; but for those able and willing to work, there ought not to be, and there need not be, any poverty.

I soon arrived at the conclusion that the real cause of poverty is the fact that under existing conditions it is not possible to make proper use of the land. That is to say that anyone, more especially a poor person, wishing to take up and make profitable use of a piece of land, cannot do so. But how to get out of this difficulty I could not see until, in 1882, quite another set of circumstances rendered it necessary that I should study the system of railway administration.

This I found a very difficult task. I did not then know any "railway man" was not aware of any works on the subject, and had nothing whatever to guide me but the New Zealand public records, which were meagre in the extreme. However, I set to work,