

Public Works Statement and the balance of the Estimates. He quoted from Mr. Wakefield's hustings speeches to show that the provisions of the bill were precisely those he advocated on that occasion, despite his attitude towards the bill now. As regarded the 50 per cent. of land proposed by the bill, they would be ready to have that proposal discussed in Committee. It was quite consistent to do away with the Railway Construction Act and yet take advantage of some of the less objectionable provisions of that measure, as they now proposed doing. The bill was read a second time and ordered to be committed the following day.

Mr. Stout, Premier of New Zealand, has informed Mr. Service (says the *Argus*) that his Government cannot concur in the proposal that they should contribute towards the re-surveying of Bass and Banks Straits, as suggested by the Melbourne Chamber of Commerce and the Merchant Shipping and Underwriters' Association. They consider that according to the custom which has prevailed among the Australasian Colonies it is the duty of Victoria and Tasmania to bear the cost of the work, but, in concluding, Mr. Stout says:—"I trust you will not regard this reply as evincing disinclination on the part of New Zealand to share in all such united action on the part of these Colonies as may affect matters in which they are jointly concerned." In another communication Mr. Stout says that his Government has considered Mr. Griffith's bill to prevent the influx of French criminals into the Colonies, and thinks that it would be better to allow the matter to stand over until federation is achieved.

Charles Hall was drowned at Whangaroa while rafting timber. John Stratford, an old settler, died at Wellington on Sunday, aged 79. He arrived in the ship Cuba in 1838, and was the first *bona fide* settler who stepped ashore in Port Nicholson.

A number of employees connected with this journal (says the *Dunedin Herald*) met on Saturday evening for the purpose of presenting a handsome gold locket to Mr. W. A. W. Wathen, late chief reporter of this journal, who is about to proceed to Australia *en route* for England. Mr. E. E. Muir, on behalf of the companionship, spoke of Mr. Wathen's long connection with the Press of this city, and to the esteem in which he was held by a large number of friends throughout the Province, and concluded by hoping that those present might have the pleasure of seeing the recipient at some future date. Mr. Wathen referred to the kind relations that had existed between himself and his co-workers and hoped to again meet and labour amongst those from whom he was now separating.

The *Mount Ida Chronicle* states that Mr. Coroner Hickson held an inquest on the body of a child named Elliot George, aged two years (a son of Mr. Walter George), at Little Kyeburn, on Saturday last. The evidence went to show that the child had fallen into a duck pond a foot deep. No one saw him fall into the water, and when he was found he was lying on his back with his hands raised in the air. The top of his head was dry when the body was taken from the pond. An attempt was made to secure re-animation. The jury returned a verdict to the effect that there was no evidence to show how the deceased got into the waterhole in which he was found, and that there was not sufficient testimony to prove whether he had died from drowning or from fright.

Three of our townspeople took a trip to the Riverton beach on Thursday (says the *Southland News*), but while there had an adventure which considerably marred their anticipated enjoyment. Two of them (ladies) took a stroll into the scrub, while the other lighted a fire, presumably for picnic purposes. In their ramble the ladies came to an empty hut, around which several small cans, containing what to them was a curious stuff, were lying. Each lady put a piece of the phosphorus, for phosphorus it was, in her dress pocket, and returned to their companion at the fire. It was then noticed that one of their dresses was smoking, and the others, thinking a spark from the fire was causing the trouble, endeavoured to put it out with their hands. But the phosphorus ignited and ran over their hands, burning them very severely. The only injury sustained by the lady whose dress caught was the loss of that article and her jacket. The party immediately returned to town, when the two sufferers had their painful injuries treated by a medical man.

The Wellington correspondent of the *Otago Daily Times* writes as follows:—"The aspect of the political horizon, lately so calm and unclouded, has suddenly and unexpectedly changed. A complication has arisen which may end in nothing out of the way or result in a very serious conflict. The first decided sign of the political disturbance was made apparent to-day, when a meeting convened by Mr. Mitchelson, at which Mr. Rolleston took a prominent part, was held, principally to consider the East and West Coast Railway Bill. About 25 members were present, including one or two, it is said, who have supported the present Government. No definite resolution was passed, but it is understood a strong feeling was expressed against allowing what may be called the Public Works bills of the Government—such as the East and West Coast Railway Bill, the West Coast Harbour Bills, and the District Railways Bill—to pass until the Public Works Statement has been brought down. The Government apparently got wind of this meeting, and determined to take time by the forelock by holding a Cabinet meeting. The order-paper was rearranged so as to make the East and West Coast Railway Bill and the District Railways Bill the first business on the paper. And in order that there might be no mistake upon the matter, the Premier, before proceeding with the orders of the day, made a Ministerial statement to-night, in which he stated plainly that there were certain policy bills which the Government were desirous of pushing on as rapidly as possible before the Public Works Statement or the Estimates were gone on with. He especially enumerated the District Railways Bill, East and West Coast and Nelson Railway Bill, Government Insurance Bill, and West Coast Harbour Bills. In this way the challenge was fairly thrown down by Mr. Stout, and it remains to be seen how it will be taken up by the Opposition.

The steamer *Massighera*, which was despatched in advance up the Nile with a cargo of cables and other gear to be used by the boats in making the passage of the cataracts with the troops, has arrived at Dongola. It is reported that two large armies of rebels are marching on that own.

Canada offers the Cape Government men and money if the Imperial Government refuses to assist them in stopping aggressions by the Boers. Information from Cape Town states that the Government have annexed the Transkei.

The damage done to the Parliamentary Buildings in Quebec by the recent explosion of dynamite is so serious that fully half of the buildings will have to be rebuilt.

The French fleet has been prevented from entering Tamsui on account of torpedoes having been laid across the entrance to the harbour, and in consequence of this they have blockaded the port.

The Powers have accepted the invitation of the German Government to hold a conference in Berlin for the purpose of discussing matters relating to the settlement of the Congo.

The Marquis of Salisbury and Lord Kelso state that it is unlikely the Lords will recede from the position taken up by them in regard to the Franchise Bill. They consider that neither portion of the proposed reforms will be operative or have any legal effect if passed separately. The redistribution scheme published by the *Standard* utterly effaces the representation of the rural population. The Marquis of Hartington has admitted that the scheme published by that paper was drafted by a committee of the Cabinet.

WEDNESDAY.

In the House of representatives yesterday, Replying to Mr. Guinness, the Hon. Mr. Stout said £20,000 would be required to make the track from Barrytown, Grey county, towards Brighton, and Government did not see its way to undertake that cost.—On the motion of Mr. Bevan, the Hokitika Steam-tug Bill was introduced and read a first time.—On the motion of the Hon. Sir Julius Vogel, the District Railways Leasing and Purchasing Bill was reported, and on the motion for its third reading, Mr. J. W. Thomson and Mr. Rolleston spoke against the bill. The Hon. Sir J. Vogel, in reply, said that not only would this bill not entail any burden on the public, but it would be a relief to existing burdens. In reality the bill had been received with great favour by the House. Government was bound to see this matter satisfactorily settled. The public funds were largely invested as a security, and on that account alone they were bound to do all they could to put the concern on a satisfactory footing. It could not be said that the shareholders would come well out of their works; on the other hand, the ratepayers would come well out. The House divided—ayes, 41; noes, 21.—On the motion of the Hon. Mr. Richardson, the Public Works Act Amendment Bill was read a second time.—The Hon. Mr. Stout moved the second reading of the Land Act Amendment (No. 2) Bill. Farmers in certain parts of the country, with holdings of from 200 to 300 acres, experienced great inconvenience from having no place on which to run their stock. This bill was meant to provide for that want by allowing these men to secure small runs in the adjoining hill country. The motion for the second reading was carried. In Committee, the Westport Harbour Bill was considered and reported with the amendments made by the Select Committee on the bill. In Committee on the Grey-mouth Harbour Board Bill, in replying to a proposal made by Mr. Guinness, the Hon. Sir J. Vogel said that Government had determined to stand by the amendments recommended by the Select Committee. Mr. Guinness said in that case he would offer no objection to these amendments. In clause 8 the borrowing powers were made £150,000 instead of £100,000, the amount fixed by the Committee. The bill was reported with amendments.—In Committee on the Government Insurance Bill, Sir G. Grey appealed to the Government to report progress with the view of allowing the bill to remain over till next session, so as to give the Colony an opportunity for considering the whole subject. The Hon. Mr. Stout said that the matter had been before the Colony for the last year, and the whole subject must have been before the public mind. Sir G. Grey replied that it was unfair to the country and the policy-holders to push it through. It created an altogether new department, which could not have been contemplated. In further debate, the Hon. Mr. Stout said that if they allowed reasonable progress to be made, then he would agree to progress being reported. Sir G. Grey said that he was determined that the bill should not proceed, and rather than allow it to be proceeded with he would talk all night. The Hon. Mr. Stout said there was no wish to unduly rush the bill. He positively refused to withdraw the bill, and if necessary would ask the Government supporters to remain all night. The motion for reporting progress was put.—ayes, 9; noes, 37. Clause 4 was passed, when the Hon. Mr. Stout moved to report progress, which was agreed to.

The plague of rats reported by telegraph from Nelson has been experienced also at Picton, where a late visitor (says a *Wanganui paper*) stated he had killed nearly a hundred whilst out for an afternoon stroll, attended by three fox terriers. The rats are quite a distinct breed from those infesting this and other waterside towns, being a much smaller animal, with almost black skins. They seem to be identical with the indigenous animal which has long since been supposed to be extinct in many parts of the Colony, owing, it is said, to the hostility of the Norwegian invader, whose depredations in this town and district are at times most annoying. The rats at Picton seem to come down from the hills, and are said to do so only when very severe weather is experienced, being probably starved out by their ordinary food supplies getting covered up by snow. They do not affect the houses of the settlers, but content themselves in the fields, where they do a lot of damage to young crops, the succulent tops of which they seem very partial to.

Thomas Henry died at Kaikora on Monday as he was being conveyed to Waipukurau Hospital to receive medical attendance. He had been found in Oreo Bush, and being in a thoroughly exhausted state was taken to the Patangata Hotel, the proprietor of which communicated with the police at Waipawa. He was brought to Kaikora, but died at the railway-station while waiting for the train from Napier. An inquest was held yesterday afternoon, when the jury returned a verdict of "Death from exposure and starvation, accelerated by drink." Deceased had been frequently before the local Court for drunkenness, and some two or three months ago was remanded for medical examination on a charge of lunacy, but was afterwards dismissed.