

GREY MOUTH.

(From our own Correspondent.)

DURING the last fortnight we have been experiencing here the rigours of a truly West Coast winter. Though the gorse wind is not so piercing as on many previous years, it is more than compensated for by the incessant rain, which mostly puts a stop to all outdoor work, and renders the stagnation now existing in this district still more complete. Nor is this the only draw-back such wretched weather causes here. It also blocks up the port, so that there are no arrivals or departures of steamers sometimes for several days on account of the flooded state of the river and a rough bar. About the middle of this month several steamers were hemmed in port for over a week, and several more were kept out, consequently rough and stormy weather here means a great loss to most of the inhabitants. It means a loss of work to several hundred coal miners, who at the brisk period of the year are not constantly employed; it means a loss to the mine owners, of expenses of staff and management, which are always accumulating while there are no adequate returns to balance same; it means a loss to the traders and shippers, to the wharf labourers, and last, but not least, to the shipowners it must mean a heavy loss. But to crown our losses, we had a complete wreck last week which means a complete loss. On the 23rd inst, the s.s. Gerda took the bar about 8 a.m., over which a nasty sea was breaking, though not dangerous to vessels in charge of the tug. Just entering the channel she veered round, refused to answer her helm and in a few minutes was smashed against the north training wall. The Gerda had very little cargo aboard, and being very light was at the mercy of the waves, which drove her higher and higher on the training wall, destroying ten bays of piles, and doing considerable damage to Messrs. Hungerford and McKay's plant, which will be a serious loss to them. The total damage done to the training wall and plant is estimated at over £3,000. This unlooked for disaster will throw about fifty men out of employment until such time as the damage is repaired, but as to who will repair the works nobody can tell. The contractors cannot do it, as they have met with several severe losses in this contract from floods and fire already, and it is scarcely possible to make the owner or charterer of the boat pay for the repairing of it, therefore, the only conclusion that can be come to is that Government will have to step in and repair it. It is unfortunate for the port to have shipwrecks occurring occasionally, but this one could have been avoided had the Harbour Board or Government compelled vessels entering or leaving port to take the Government tug which is almost lying idle near the wharf, as very few boats avail themselves of its services. The port cannot do without a tug boat, and that being the case Government should compel vessels to use the tug at a moderate rate such as would clear expenses, or else it is to be feared a good few more of them will decorate the breakwater and training wall. A great number of people both on Saturday and Sunday visited the scene of the wreck. On Saturday night she divided into two parts, the forepart falling into the river and the afterpart remaining on the training wall, and unless cleared away at once will cause more damage to the timber work.

The unemployed at Richardson and other places have had a long and depressing experience of the Midland Railway muddle, and it is likely that they will have to wait patiently for some time longer, or else bid adieu to the Coast as there is no sign of the Company making a fresh start, with a possible probability that they may never start. With a view of some definite information they have wired to Mr. A. B. Guinness, the Member for this district, and, on his communicating with Mr. Allan Scott, the employees are informed that the contract is not definitely settled, but as soon as the latter gentleman receives advice from home, he will furnish them with the information. The new phase in the Midland Railway contract of taking the line over Arthur's Pass instead of through it by a tunnel as formerly intended is looked upon with distrust by many here, as the carrying of heavy trains of minerals over a steep grade is merely speculative, not counting the lengthening of the journey, and the many other inconveniences which will be met with in travelling over ranges in winter weather.

The Grey-Hokitika railway is still hanging fire, none of the tenders having been so far accepted, although it is now nigh two months since tenders for the New River section closed; no doubt it is being kept steadily in view—the old and hackneyed official answer to enquiries about this railway. The inhabitants on the Coast are very remiss in not forcing the Government to proceed with this work, a sum for the prosecution of which was put on the estimates last session.

The Harbour works after all are not to be brought to a standstill. The Government intend to expend £16,000 more on the breakwater and training walls, a letter to that effect having been read at the last meeting of the official Harbour Board. If the damage caused to the north training wall by the s.s. Gerda is repaired out of this sum, there will not be much left for carrying the other works to anything near a finish.

The Ford's Creek Rush at the Blackball, which I mentioned in a former letter, has, I am glad to say, turned out better than I then expected. There are some ten or twelve parties on gold which is supposed will pay £3 per week, but as the terrace is not extensive there will be only a limited number of claims. Another small rush has taken place at Oance Creek, near Parrytown. A few parties are on payable wash, but the extent of the ground is not proved. It may be only a patch, as several similar patches have been found in that district. The present time seems very favourable for prospecting purposes as the dearth of employment otherwise, compels many to try their luck at gold-mining even though the greater number of them are badly equipped for that purpose. It is a disgrace to the present Government of the Colony, the neglect and indifference with which they are treating the gold-mining industry. A few thousand pounds judiciously expended in prospecting new grounds might be the means of giving lucrative employment to thousands of the unemployed and do much to stay the exodus of the population to the neighbouring and more prosperous colonies. Even the County Council with its poor

revenue and many calls would subsidise prospecting parties and Government come to their assistance, but this they will not do, even if they stop payment in the beginning of the present year to parties who worked under the idea that they were subsidised by the Government and County Council under the prospecting rules in force under the Stout-Vogel Ministry. The inducement held out by the present Government of £10,000 for both Islands to prospectors who should discover a payable field 40 miles from any known gold-field, and other such ridiculous restrictions, look more like a sham than an inducement for the discovery of a goldfield. They are pretty certain the reward will never be claimed, as in all probability the odds against it being claimed are 100,000 to 1. Gold-miners ought to be thankful after that; truly they have a paternal Government.

It is very interesting for many to know the Ball Dredges now being put in position at the Three and Five Mile beaches, Okariti, are very near in working order, and by a recent report the manager states that they will fully answer the purpose they are intended for, in fact the amount of sand and gravel these machines will lift in twenty-four hours is enormous, so that now if the beach is as rich as it is supposed to be the lucky speculators may expect quick returns. Should these turn out a success there will be a regular rush for dredges right along the coast, companies having been formed, and leases obtained of most of the ground already. It is to be hoped the dredges will be a success, as they will give a great stimulus to the gold-mining industry both here and elsewhere.

The annual match between the Greymouth and Hokitika football clubs came off on the recreation ground on the 9th inst., and has resulted in a win for the Grey team by six points to nil. The Hokitika men lacked weight and strength, their opponents being far superior in this respect. During the two spells the ball was kept most of the time in Hokitika's ground, proving that the Grey players had the best of it all the time. Both teams are making great preparations to compete with the Dunedin High School Club who are to visit the Coast about the middle of July.

Mr. J. D. Pope, who is at present lecturing on the Coast, delivered two lectures here on Robert Emmet, the youthful hero of 1805. Mr. Pope, who is now styled the Young New Zealand Orator, came here with very good recommendations from every place in which he has delivered this very interesting lecture; his Press encomiums from Auckland, Wellington and other places led us to expect a real treat. Very few people care about lectures of any description, and many of those most interested in the tragic fate of Robert Emmet think they know as much as any lecturer of his too short but eventful life. Such is not the case, however; a good lecturer will portray the lives and times of other men in such a manner as that the mind is irresistibly carried away by his well toned speech and graceful actions, so that in imagination we picture them before us and a lasting impression is left on our minds of the scenes so faithfully depicted. Such, indeed, was Mr. Pope's lecture. In imagination he carried his audience with him to that famous Green St. Dock, where many a noble son of Ireland stood his trial before perverse judges and prejudiced juries for the only crime of loving their country too well, and from which many of them received the awful sentence of death, prematurely launching them into eternity. Hearing this lecture we may picture:—

A crowded court, a breathless bar,
Both judge and jury flushed with rage,
A fearless felon there to mar
And blot with shame Britannia's page;
A hero brave, a rebel bold,
A patriot to make tyrants pause,
A man of gallant thoughtless mould,
A martyr in his country's cause!"

The rendering of Emmet's imperishable speech from the dock is a special feature in Mr. Pope's lecture, and any person wishing to hear that immortal speech rendered by a good elocutionist should, if possible, go and hear this gifted lecturer. Mr. Pope's delivery is at once clear and fluent; he has a sonorous and pleasant voice, and pronounces every word distinctly, throwing a strength of feeling into his subject which completely enchains the attention of his hearers, only occasionally finding vent in bursts of rapturous applause. The lecturer prefaced his principal subject with a brief résumé of the various but unsuccessful means Irish patriots have adopted to throw off the English yoke during the last and present centuries, and asserted that the spirit of nationality never died in the hearts of the Irish people, instancing their periodical though futile attempts to gain their liberty. Still, those attempts show the constancy of the people to the spirit of liberty, and the lessons then taught were not forgotten by succeeding generations. All these attempts have now culminated in one grand national and peaceful struggle for their rights, and one which at no distant date shall crown their aspirations with success, by gaining that for which so much blood has been shed, so much misery suffered, and so many brave men have sacrificed their lives. The lecturer then proceeded and gave an account of the early life and family of the Irish martyr, recounting his deep strong love for liberty, his enthusiastic devotion to his country's cause, and his implicit confidence in its ultimate triumph. He narrated the tender but manly feeling which induced Emmet to seek an interview with his *flower*, the accomplished Sarah Curran, which led to his arrest. After referring to the other leading features in this short but eventful life, he referred to the subsequent life of the faithful Sarah Curran, and gave a brief sketch of Emmet's brothers. The lecturer then recited Emmet's immortal speech from the dock, which more than anything else has taken such a hold upon his countrymen. During the evening the lecturer was repeatedly applauded.—Many persons being unavoidably absent, Mr. Pope promised to repeat his lecture in a few days.

At Mr. Pope's second lecture, M. Kennedy, Esq., occupied the chair. There was a good house, most of those who heard him the first night being present again at this lecture. After delivering the lecture and reciting Emmet's speech, the same as on the previous night, he sang T. D. Sullivan's song, "The Land for the People," "The Dear Little Shamrock," and the "Wearing of the Green," which were received with enthusiastic applause.