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NOTES FROM THE HOUSE

PROCEEDINGS IN PARLIAMENT

The debate on the Address-in-Reply was resumed on Tuesday and continued on Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday. Nearly all the Opposition members who spoke during the week strongly condemned the co-operative system as employed on public works, and declared it to be wasteful and expensive.

On Thursday afternoon Sir William Russell, in the course of his speech, condemned the manner in which the railway accounts were kept, and as a consequence it was not possible to analyse them. He contended there was an annual loss in the management of the railways. The working expenses were increasing rapidly, and whilst our expenses had grown to 68.10 per cent. those of our only competitor, the Manawatu Company had increased to only 53.97 per cent. He quoted figures to show that while the profits last year from the Government railways amounted to £22,961 more than that of 1901, we had to pay £53,257 in interest on the extra capital embarked. There were no provision for wear and tear, and renewals were paid for out of capital. He contrasted with this the policy of the Manawatu Railway Company to show that the profit of that Company was larger, whilst it paid for renewals out of the current revenue.

Sir J. G. Ward, in replying to the criticism of the previous speaker with reference to the railways administration, said that the accounts of the Department were kept entirely by the accountant, and he had never been instructed as to how he should charge anything. Responsible officers of the Department had certified that ordinary renewals were paid out of the revenue, and not out of capital. Sir W. R. Russell had forgotten to tell the House that the proportion of working expenses in English companies was 68 per cent, which was the same figure as shown in New Zealand. If the users of the railways had to provide out of revenue for the cost of all new works it would mean that every rate on the railways would have to be raised by 59 per cent, and that the life blood would be crushed out of the users of the railways. It was said the Government had not done anything for the agriculturists, whereas in one branch of the service—the railways—concessions to farmers had been granted to the extent of £415,000. This was independent entirely of concessions in passenger fares to the amount of £144,000. Sir J. G. Ward quoted figures to show the growth of the dairy industry, and attributed this growth to the grading system established by the Government. Sir W. R. Russell had said there were to be no remissions of taxation, but he had ignored the fact that the Government had already given a remission in taxation to the extent of no less than £1,500,000.

The debate was adjourned on Friday until Tuesday, and is expected to last during this week.

LOBBY GOSSIP.

A measure of some interest to widows has been introduced in the Legislative Council by the Attorney-General. It provides that the estate of every man who dies intestate, leaving a widow and no children, shall, where the value is not over £500, belong to the widow absolutely. Where the value of the estate is over £500, the widow shall be entitled to £500, and shall have a charge on the estate for the sum with interest at the rate of 4 per cent. per annum, besides being entitled to her share in the residue of the estate as if the residue had been the whole of the estate.

The Hon. John Rigg has been elected Chairman of Committees of the Legislative Council, and the Hon. Mr. Walker, ex-Minister of Education, Speaker of that House.

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TIMARU

(From our own correspondent.)

July 13.
On Thursday evening last a most enjoyable entertainment was held at St. Andrews in aid of the local church funds. The Rev. Father Tubman and several Timaru friends were present. The room was filled to overcrowding, and the various singers were warmly received. The concert was opened by an overture (piano) by Misses McGuinness and Egan, followed by Miss E. McGuinness rendering 'Called back,' with violin obligato by Mr. Coombs, this item being heartily encored. Miss Egan was very successful in 'Close those dreamy eyes,' while Mr. D. McDonald in 'The deathless army' had to respond to an enthusiastic recall. Mr. J. Coombs was, as usual, warmly received on rendering a violin solo, and Mr. Barrie Mareschal in his dialect stories had ample room to show his power of mimicry. Miss Mara and Mr. F. McDonald contributed a short sketch entitled 'A pair of lunatics.' The Barrie Mareschal Company wound up the entertainment with the comedy 'O'Callaghan on his last legs.' The comedy was admirably played, the audience thoroughly appreciating the hearty humor of the play.

The Rev. Father Tubman returned thanks to the audience for their patronage and to Mr. Barrie Mareschal and company and the other ladies and gentlemen who assisted for their voluntary and generous help. The generosity displayed by the St. Andrews people in connection with the erection and maintenance of their handsome church should be an object lesson to many parishes.

In my report of the Hibernian social I omitted to mention that Father Tubman proposed the health of two young friends, Messrs James Kane and Cassidy. He was pleased to see two young Catholics so distinguished as to recently receive medals from the Humane Society for saving life. Bro Cassidy suitably responded.

A very heavy fall of snow, which lasted, occurred here on Saturday morning—about four inches of snow fell in a few hours. The fall is reported to be much heavier in the country districts, and must cause serious inconvenience in the Mackenzie country. Several telegraph posts snapped with the accumulation of snow on the wires, and many narrow escapes from accidents happened. The arrival of the early train from Christchurch on Saturday morning was worth witnessing. The engine was covered with snow up to its funnel, through the cowcatcher ploughing it up as the train progressed. Masses of snow were collected on the roofs of the several carriages, the whole effect being unique. All trains were late, and communication by wire with Fairlie was stopped.

The Government Inspector's reports on the parish schools were all round very satisfactory, showing the different standards to be well up to the mark, and the tone and general order of the schools very good.

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