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—By the—

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NOTICE.

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All communications connected with the literary department, reports, correspondence, newspaper cuttings, etc., should be addressed to the Editor.

Correspondents are particularly requested to bear in mind that to insure publication in any particular issue of the paper communications must reach this Office not later than Tuesday morning.

CITY HALL.

FRIDAY EVENING, DECEMBER 3, 1897.

GRAND ENTERTAINMENT
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DEATHS.

MARLOW.—On the 29th inst., at her residence, Stafford street, South Dunedin, Eliza, the beloved relict of Christopher George Marlow; aged 64 years. Fortified by the rites of the Church.—*Requiescat in pace.*

ANSWER TO CORRESPONDENT.

A KERRY MAN.—Some of the verses are extremely good, but the others are not quite up to publication standard.

The New Zealand Tablet.

FIAT JUSTITIA.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 3, 1897.

THE OLD AGE PENSIONS BILL.



MEMBERS of the House, and especially those on the Opposition side of it, are hardly to be congratulated on the way in which they have treated the Premier's Old Age Pension Bill. Almost everyone admits that some sort of scheme is eminently desirable, and that there is an obligation on the State to do something for the hard-working colonist who has reached sixty-five, and begins to feel his physical powers exhausted. The cases in which these veterans of labour have saved enough money to support themselves are extremely rare, and in the great majority of instances they have nothing to look forward to but an appeal to the tender mercies of the various organisations for distributing charitable aid. It is further admitted, by all who have given any thought at all to the subject, that the framing of anything approaching a practical workable scheme is beset with difficulty. The subject has received the attention of the Governments not only of England and of nearly all English-speaking countries, but also of Germany, Denmark, France, Italy, etc., yet no scheme has so far been devised to which some exception cannot be taken. This being the case, it is clear that we are not likely to get any scheme at all adopted unless our legislators approach the question in a sympathetic spirit and with a genuine desire to make the best solution possible of what is admittedly a most complicated and knotty problem. This is precisely what our legislators have not done. Honourable Members, and particularly Opposition Members, have, we might almost say, conspired to heap amendment upon amendment to the Bill, and while some of their proposals are reasonable enough, others are obviously intended to wreck the measure by making it unworkable. Neither is there any real obscurity or confusion in the framing of the Bill to justify this multiplication of "amendments." Mr. SCOBIE MCKENZIE's comment that "no man in the heaven above or in the earth beneath can understand it," is simply one of that honourable gentleman's little epigrammatic exaggerations which contains even less than half a truth. The main provisions of the Bill are clear and simple, and if Mr. SCOBIE MCKENZIE says in all seriousness that he cannot understand them he only writes an indictment on his own intelligence. One of the points which usually furnish a serious obstacle in the way of old-age pension schemes is the question of finance. So far as the scheme now under discussion is concerned the Colonial Treasurer is able to give a satisfactory assurance as to his ability to find the necessary funds, so that all immediate difficulty on that score is removed. The question as to whether or not the pensions should be universal then remains as the real *crux* of the proposals. In this case neither proposal is free from difficulty. If the pensions be limited (as proposed in the Bill) to persons whose annual income does not exceed a certain sum, the persons who apply under those circumstances for a pension are necessarily placed under more or less of a stigma. If, on the other hand, the pensions are made payable to all who are over sixty-five years of age and have resided for a certain number of years in the Colony the expense would be greater than the country could afford. In our view the ideal scheme is undoubtedly the one in which the pensions are universal and every man can