

SOME three years ago Sir George Clifford, who was then a member of the committee, urged upon the members of the Canterbury Agricultural and Pastoral Association the necessity of stringent measures being taken to eradicate the barley grass pest, but without any effect. This grass has now spread to an alarming extent (says the *Lyttelton Times*). Most of the waste sections in the city and suburbs are now full of it, and it is making its appearance in many of the pastures of this province. Hagley Park South has several large patches of the grass, and the path leading across from the hospital to the Addington saleyards is almost overgrown with it.

THE captain of the 'Lady Barkly' reports that in steaming from Collingwood to Takaka last week, and thence to Separation Point, he passed through slime and dead fish the whole way, the fish being so close together that they were not a footstep apart. The beaches of Golden Bay are strewn with dead fish in places to a depth of 3ft, and such is the stench that some settlers contemplate leaving their homes for a time. At West Wanganui the beaches are strewn with flounders and other fish. Captain Stevens says the waters are thick with slime. Wellington scientists suggest that the cause of the destruction of fish in Golden Bay may be sulphurous exhalations from the bottom of the sea following a seismic convulsion.

THE adjourned annual meeting of the Ashburton St. Patrick's Day Sports Association was held on the 14th inst., when there was a fair attendance of members. Mr. M. J. Burgess (says the *Mail*) occupied the chair. The balance sheet showed a surplus of £8 17s 8d for the past year. The president and vice-presidents now in office were re-elected, and Messrs. H. Cullen and J. Moison were added to the list of vice-presidents. The following committee was appointed:—Messrs. D. Wilson, M. J. Burgess, H. McSherry, James Wilson, W. P. Daly, S. Madden, P. Cookson, J. Mullan, J. Kennedy, F. Cooper, B. Moriarty, D. McDonnell. Mr. L. Hanrahan was elected treasurer, and the appointment of a secretary in the place of Mr. D. McDonnell, who declined re-election, was held over till next meeting.

THE ordinary weekly meeting of the Ashburton Catholic Literary Society was, says the local *Mail*, held on Wednesday evening, when there was a good attendance of members. Mr. M. J. Burgess occupied the chair. A considerable amount of correspondence and other minor business being transacted, the programme for the evening, which took the form of a debate, was proceeded with. The question under discussion was 'Should New Zealand federate with Australia,' and needless to say, this subject was the means of providing a very keen and interesting debate. Mr. J. Moison took the affirmative and Mr. F. Cooper the negative side of the question, and both debaters gave excellent addresses in favor of their respective sides. Several other members having explained their views on the subject, a vote was taken, which resulted in favor of the non-federalist party by a small majority.

ON Monday evening of last week a banquet was tendered to Mr. Gilfedder, M.H.R., by the settlers and other residents of Eastern Bush. The chair was occupied by Mr. W. Darley, and among the guests present was the Hon. Mr. Hall-Jones, Minister of Public Works. In the course of a reply to the toast of 'The New Zealand Government, Mr. Hall-Jones said he had been pleased to learn of the good class of land between Lake Manapouri and Eastern Bush, and he had no hesitation in saying that the time was not far distant when a branch line from the Nightcaps line would be commenced to the lakes. Telephonic communication, at all events, would soon be extended from Eastern Bush to the lakes. In the course of his reply to the toast of 'The Guest of the Evening,' Mr. Gilfedder said that from the first he had advocated a railway through Eastern Bush to Manapouri and Te Anau. At present the settlers around Eastern Bush had no encouragement to grow grain on account of the lengthy haulage. The scenery of the two lakes ahead of them was already becoming well known all the world over as the finest lake scenery in the world, and he now had hope that the time was not far distant when a line would be made which would bring Te Anau and Manapouri within easy access of tourists. In concluding, he said he hoped the next time he was with them they would be gathered together on the occasion of the turning of the first sod of the Otautan and Eastern Bush railway.

DR. F. A. MONCKTON, of Feilding, says in the *N. Z. Times* of January 9: Now that the murder is out, your readers may like to know in plain language the origin, cause, and result of the beer poisoning in England, so that precautions may be taken in time to prevent a similar catastrophe in New Zealand. In the first place, beer is supposed to be made from malt and hops, but malt sugar being expensive, a perfectly justifiable and wholesome substitute can be obtained by making an artificial, or, as it is called, an invert sugar, by the action of sulphuric acid (oil of vitrol) upon starch. This is what some firm was supposed to supply to some 200 breweries in England; but, unfortunately, it was considered more remunerative to use a cheap commercial sulphuric acid derived from iron pyrites, instead of the pure article, such as the Drug Company used to manufacture at White Island from sulphur. To follow out the facts, iron pyrites has various impurities, and among them is generally to be found arsenic. *Hinc illae lacrimae*—I beg your pardon—I mean, hence several thousand persons were poisoned and several hundred died. We all have a right to an opinion, and mine is that much of the British stamina was built up by means of malt and hops, as opposed to the washy light wines used on the Continent. I have seen with regret that for years past there has been a deterioration going on through trade opposition and trade substitution, and in saying so, I am aware I shall be offending the most powerful organisation in the Colony; but when it comes to seeing a risk of arsenic poisoning, if materials used are not scrupulously tested from time to time, I think it would be criminal to hold my tongue. I never knew why the White Island enterprise was abandoned, though there were rumors that a platinum plant was stolen, and of an insufficient market. I think everyone would be pleased to hear of its being resuscitated.

INTERCOLONIAL.

A cable message from Sydney on last Thursday stated that the coal-mining difficulty at Newcastle is practically settled. Only two of the mines are not working. There is an unprecedented demand for coal and a famine exists at Adelaide and Melbourne, where the price has gone up to £3 a ton.

By the G.M.S., *Grosser Kurfurst*, which touched at Fremantle recently, the Rev. Father Lynch arrived for the diocese of Perth and the Rev. Father Fenelon for the diocese of Geraldton. Father Lynch was accompanied by his sister, a young lady who will enter one of the convents as a postulant. On board the same vessel, bound for Sydney, was the Rev. Father Agidi, M.S.H.

The incoming of the new century was marked in Melbourne by the celebration of a Midnight Mass in St. Patrick's Cathedral. From eight o'clock people began to make their way to the church, and by eleven the doors had to be closed, as there was then present a congregation of fully 10,000 persons. By midnight there was a crowd of 5000 outside who were unable to gain admission.

His Grace the Archbishop of Melbourne has made the following clerical changes in the Archdiocese: Rev. G. A. Robinson, B.A., from Gisborne to Camberwell (rector); Rev. H. O'Callaghan, from Camberwell to chaplaincy of the Little Sisters of the Poor, Northcote; Rev. J. J. Egan, from Collingwood to Geelong (assistant); Rev. J. Shiel, Geelong to Collingwood (assistant); Rev. J. Merner (recently ordained), as assistant to the Rev. J. J. Gallivan, Gisborne.

One of the longest, steepest hills around Adelaide is called O'Halloran Hill (writes Winifred). Major O'Halloran has long been dead, but there is still an evidence of his thoughtfulness left on the eminence that bears his name, and was originally part of his estate. At the top a post stands with a fingerboard, on which is written 'Mr. O'Halloran's Well.' The well is some distance in from the road. In days gone by, tired travellers caught sight of the sign-post with delight, and hastened to the spot. Even in these times, when it is not necessary to carry a water bottle, and when inns are in plenty along the road, pedestrians appreciate the fresh draught from the crystal spring to be got from O'Halloran's Well. A wag has added to the inscription on the sign-post, under 'Mr. O'Halloran's Well,' the words, 'Glad to hear it: I hope the missus is likewise.'

There is an appalling state of affairs in Queensland from drought. Mr. H. Chatterton, superintendent of the Mitchell rabbit board, journeyed over 600 miles by camel, and for the first 500 miles did not see 300 cattle alive. He only came across four water holes with surface water. The country was almost devastated from the south-western corner of the colony to about 10 miles east of the Diamantina River. Fodder bushes are dying, and a water hole eight miles south of Birdsville, which has never been known to be dry before, has completely dried up. In the far south-western country nine stations are entirely without surface water. No horse or bullock team has been at Beeloota for over two and a half years, or at Birdsville for over four years. In one water hole he saw 1500 dead cattle; in another 700. At Birdsville it was impossible to obtain either fresh or tinned meat. Mr. Chatterton declares that unless the Government help the squatters the whole south-western country will be thrown back on the State.

The Victorian Old Age Pensions Scheme, which at present is only of a temporary character, has just come into operation. The regulations provide that a pension shall not be payable to any person unless he has attained the age of 65 years, or is permanently disabled or in permanent ill-health, caused in either case by having been engaged in mining or any unhealthy or hazardous occupation. Chinese and other Asiatics are excluded from participation in the benefits of the scheme. The pension will be such an amount as will make the total income of the pensioner not more than 10s per week. It will be diminished, however, by 6d from every complete £10 of the net capital value of all accumulated property owned by the applicant—excluding furniture and personal effects—which does not return income to the extent of £25, after deducting from the capital value all lawful charges existing on the property. It is also provided that where husband and wife reside together they shall be deemed to be equally interested in property held by either of them, and that the income of each shall be deemed to be not less than half the total income of both. Money obtained by way of sick allowance or funeral benefit from any registered friendly society or similar institution will not be counted in estimating the income of any applicant.

Simon Bros. (boot warehouse) call attention to their very extensive and choice stock of new goods. A visit will repay you.—*.

Southland readers will find it to their interest to consult Dr. A. E. Smith, dentist, of Dee street, Invercargill, whose advertisement appears elsewhere in this issue. Only one kind of work is done by Dr. Smith, and that is the best. At the same time his charges are strictly moderate.—*.

Federation is undoubtedly the question of the hour! With New Zealand the query is to federate or not? And we say most emphatically No. New Zealand, if she joined the great and noble Commonwealth—(which we are strong believers in as far as Australia alone is concerned)—has everything to give and nothing to get. It would be like buying a 5lb box of blended tea at 2s per lb, worth only 1s 6d, in order to get a shilling feeding bottle as a bonus—especially if one has no babies in the way of needing that delightful accessory to peaceful home life. A great federation is growing up in Otago and Southland among intelligent householders. It is the 'Hondai-Lanka Federation,' and consists of those who use this most exquisite of exquisite teas. To one and all of those sensible folks the Hondai-Lanka Tea Company wishes a happy and prosperous New Year.—*.

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