

area and population than any other part of the Empire, but as the only Premier that evinced his personal interest in the men to the extent of sharing their voyage and their vicissitudes, and as far as possible visiting them in the field. It may be remarked that the Premier's visit to Africa lends some color to the statement so persistently made some little time ago to the effect that he would be ennobled and offered the Governorship of one of the African Colonies—probably Orange Free State. It seems natural that if such a step is contemplated, Mr. Seddon would like to see what the country is like before committing himself.

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Without a doubt Mr. Seddon will be the greatest colonial figure at the coming Coronation. Others may be entitled to nominal precedence by virtue of their place in the chronological order of the foundation of the States which they represent, but Mr. Seddon will most efficiently represent the true colonial spirit. For he has charged himself with a large message. There is to be a Conference of Premiers, and Mr. Seddon will introduce and advocate a system of commercial reciprocity in British countries. This is a much larger undertaking than the tariff offered by Canada to all who would reciprocate, for it involves a survey of all the resources of the different parts of the Empire, and the adjustment of an arrangement to suit. It will be, in short, a family council, at which it is natural to expect that more business would be done than by a tedious and perhaps fruitless correspondence. Mr. Seddon also goes home fortified by the full and unanimous approbation of the Colony. Even his bitterest political opponents concede that the representation of New Zealand could not be in any other hands. If it had happened that by one of those chances so frequent in politics he had been ejected from power within the last year, he would still have been the man to represent the Colony on this occasion. This is for the reason that it was he who became identified with the wave of feeling that spread over the Colony. On one or two occasions it seemed as if his usual tact was in fault, and that he was on the verge of making a serious mistake, but after events showed that he had accurately gauged public feeling, and he scored again. He has done this so frequently, and so completely has he been accepted as the exponent of Australasian colonial aspirations that jealousy has already been expressed in Australia, where leading newspapers have complained that the Commonwealth is being dragged at his chariot wheels.

Diseases.

It is at this season of the year that the sins of omission and commission with respect to sanitary affairs bear fruit, and in several of the larger centres of the Colony, as well as in some of the smaller ones, the presence of such diseases as diphtheria and scarlet fever warn the community that the sparseness of the population affords no justification for neglect or defiance of the laws of health. When a case of diphtheria or scarlet fever breaks out, the medical men immediately set about a search for the cause, and in every case cause and effect can be clearly associated. In a certain rural district in Southland some years ago, an epidemic of diphtheria blighted many families. All the surroundings were apparently conducive to health, and for some time the cause of the outbreak baffled experts. But at length it was remembered that a certain paddock of remarkably luxuriant and apparently inexhaustible grass had been very heavily manured with refuse from a boiling down establishment. This paddock was situated by the road that led to the school, and here the cause of the disease was found. Typhoid fever has broken out on a farm where the sanitary conditions seemed ideal, and the cause has been found in an unsuspected drain. It cannot be too strongly or too frequently impressed upon the public mind that all such diseases arise from dirt. They are common to all lands, and may arise in all climates. The frigid cold of the poles or the torrid heat of tropical regions may alike engender them. In New Zealand we are exceptionally fortunate in having no malarial diseases. Nor are there climatic conditions that engender disease. If, therefore, disease comes it is purely from insanitation, and neglect of sanitary laws ought to be punishable in the common interest. No doubt there does still exist considerable ignorance of those laws, yet the elements of them are simple enough, and may be summed up in the one word, cleanliness.

Cheap Railway Travelling.

The Minister of Railways, Sir Joseph G. Ward, has intimated that he will make still further reductions in railway rates and fares. The Colonial Treasurer has already said that the Government will be satisfied with a return of 3 per cent. on the principal outlay, and that all above that will be returned in the shape of concessions. Cheap communication is as beneficial to the community as cheap postal facilities are, and any outlay on such is a wise investment. And in this connection we have a suggestion to offer to the Government. The recent concessions in fares were

partly delusive, for the price of a return ticket remains at about double the price of a single one. This is in conflict with common commercial usage, which makes a concession in such cases. But we would go still further, and urge that a concession should be given to those who travel greater distances. For example, if the fare for one mile be twopence, the fare for one hundred miles is a hundred times twopence, or 16s 8d, and for 300 miles 25s. It would seem to us to be in accord with common commercial usage if a sliding scale were adopted. [Furthermore, passenger rates are altogether out of proportion to goods rates. Railway engineers compute the cost of haulage by the number of units of steam necessary to haul a ton a mile. It costs no more to haul a ton of human flesh and blood a mile than a ton of granite. There are of course some extra equipments required by way of carriages, etc., but against this it must be urged that the human freight loads and unloads itself. And we are also aware that some attempt is made to adjust freights with some relation to the value of the goods carried. For example, coal is carried more cheaply than drapery, and rough stone more cheaply still. The bane of precedent is too apparent in many official matters. There is too great a tendency to follow methods in use elsewhere and adapt them to local circumstances instead of striking out on original lines. Railway travelling should not be a luxury set apart for the comparatively well to do.]

In Lighter Vein

(By 'QUIP'.)

Correspondence, newspaper cuttings, etc., intended for this department should be addressed 'QUIP', N.Z. TABLET Office, Dunedin, and should reach this office on or before Monday morning.

'THERE'S nothing like a little judicious levity.'

R. L. STEVENSON.

The Premier.

The time is drawing near when the Premier is to sail away for the 'Big Smoke.' Like the powder-monkey:

'Soon he'll be in London town,
And see the King with the golden crown.'

He is leaving with part of the Tenth Contingent. On the day of his departure, then, if you should perceive a tremble and a heave, and see the pavement coming up to meet your head, you will know the cause. Richard will have stepped off the Colony. At present he is busy packing. He is taking his tooth-brush, his secretary, and his celluloid cuffs. And report has it that he was seen the other day in the backyard of a boiler-maker's shop getting measured for half a dozen handkerchiefs and a new umbrella. I don't believe it, however. It is more likely that he will surprise the natives by appearing as a count or an earl, or a noble of some sort. The whole outfit, including ermine and a coronet warranted to stand the rain, can be bought for one hundred guineas. A hundred guineas is nothing to a man who has been allowed £1500 for expenses and full salary besides. As I am anxious that New Zealand should be properly represented, I wish to give a hint to Mr. Seddon regarding his department. Masters of etiquette prescribe the rules necessary to be observed when in the presence of royalty or other exalted persons. It is most earnestly to be hoped that Mr. Seddon will buy a handbook on the subject and study it in his spare time on the Drayton Grange. I don't want a Government billet for mentioning this. May I be considered a bob-tailed army mule if I haven't more patriotism than that. I'll not take a billet from the Government until they adopt Marconi's system of wireless telegraphy. Then they can appoint me a lineman.

Art.

I sincerely trust King Edward will be considerate enough to allow the Premier an hour or two to himself sometimes. After saying 'kia-ora' to the Prince of Wales, the most important piece of business Mr. Seddon has to do is to take a run round to the South Kensington Museum, or Guy's Hospital, or wherever it is that they regulate the art classes, and offer the man in charge an expert poultry plucker's salary to come out here and improve colonial art. To all appearances the Colony contains only four or five subjects for painting. You see the whole five of them in every house you enter. If the space over the mantelpiece isn't spoilt by a framed conglomerate of small velvet bags, supposed to represent fox-glove, it is occupied by a mirror with that everlasting swan painted on it. I haven't any down on swans, though swans have down on themselves, but I feel inclined to wring the long neck of that fellow on the mirror every time I see him. In other parts of the room you see panels of poppies and tiger-lilies and arum lilies with a big