

Notes

Child Slavery.

A Wanganui Education Board inspector stated last week that he had recently inspected a school in his district, and, in questioning a number of children who came late, elicited the information that one of them, a girl of twelve years, milked six cows in the morning and evening, and walked four miles to school. A boy of the same age milked thirteen, night and morning, and rode three miles to school; while a child of eight milked ten cows twice a day and rode three miles to school. These revelations disclose a condition of things far too prevalent in dairying districts. We have frequently seen complimentary references made to the magnitude of the monthly cheques drawn by milk suppliers from dairy factories, and it has sometimes occurred to us to wonder how much of what is practically child slavery lay behind this prospective affluence. Parents are sometimes very fond of recalling, for the edification of their juniors, the privations and hardships which they underwent in their youth. But the rigorous outline of those hardships is now softened by the mist of distance. It may be regarded as certain that they did not then enjoy the hardships they now declare to have been so beneficial, and they quite forget to account for the less fortunate or robust ones who were injured in the process. Toil, when it exceeds a disciplinary extent, or is calculated to inflict bodily or mental injury, should not be imposed upon mere children. It may be only for a few years, until the farm becomes established and other branches are added, but in these years irreparable injury may be done to the minds and bodies of the children. To ask a child of eight years to milk ten cows night and morning, to ride three miles to school, and then to expect that child to possess a well-developed body and mind, is to ask an impossibility, and a serious responsibility rests on the parent who makes such demands. An honorable and a comfortable home is a legitimate object of ambition, but to achieve this at the expense of the arduous labor of children is to rob the gain of all its blessings.

The Eternal Want of Pence.

That devotion to the public interest carries poverty in its train is well illustrated in the case of the late Lord Dufferin, who in his latest years was rewarded with a pension of £1600 with which to maintain the position he was entitled to adorn. He devoted forty years of his life to the service of the State. He was Viceroy of Canada and India, and performed brilliant services in each capacity. He was one of the most remarkably gifted men that the Empire possessed during the last century, and he was also one of the most consummately useful. He prevented many costly wars. Yet in his old age he was so poor that he was compelled to sell his name to the company monger, who completed his ruin, and threw his wife on the mercy of £1000 gifts from sympathising shareholders. It is almost a truism to point out that Lord Dufferin was not singular in experiencing public ingratitude. Indeed, it is sometimes surprising to find men, with the warnings of history before them, entering upon a public career that they must know can bring them no profit. The man who enters public life must cast aside all hope of personal gain. And he must also be prepared to find himself cast aside as a useless and worn out instrument as soon as his day of usefulness has ended. This proves that men adopt a public calling from some irresistible impulse, as other men take to literature or science. In letters a few prizes fall to the lot of the fortunate, and an Edison may reap a colossal fortune by his inventive genius, but to the vast majority the way is rugged and the end cheerless. One tithe of the talent and application necessary to ensure success in public life would be infinitely better rewarded in almost any other capacity. A successful general receives the thanks of the nation, and a rich monetary reward. Nelson, Wellington, Napier, Roberts were all munificently rewarded. On the other hand the salary of Mr. Schwab, manager of Carnegie's colossal steel trust, would almost pay the salaries of the whole British Cabinet. There is something inequitable about this. It is not creditable that a man like Lord Dufferin, who did such good service to the public, and who beneficially influenced the history of the human race, should be left to die in what to him must have been the most bitter poverty.

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The unthinking man in lowly circumstances painfully contrasts the apparently large rewards that accrue from public service with his own lot, and murmurs against the apparent injustice. Let him console himself with the reflection that he is probably better off in every way than those he envies. The working man is taken from his side, and raised on the shoulders of a shouting mob to an elevation that seems to confer immunity from manual labor, and an income of six pounds a week. But the working man who becomes a member of Parliament merely exchanges one kind of toil

for another which is infinitely more arduous and incomparably more precarious. His eminent position makes him the mark for envious intrigue and the victim of parasites. He is besieged with applications for patronage that he cannot satisfy, and with demands for money that he cannot comply with. If he is an artisan he cannot follow his ordinary pursuits, and if, on the other hand, he is in trade, his public duties are performed at the expense of his business. The public is an inexorable task-master, and woe betide the man who allows himself to become infatuated with his bonds. Some day another will wear them, and he will then be cast aside, unfitted then by inclination, and possibly by years, from achieving that success that was at one time assured. Men of this kind are not to be envied. Rather is their fate to be avoided. It would seem that when men betray a capacity, which in some cases amounts almost to genius, for public business, they should become wards of the State, for assuredly they neglect their own affairs, and in some cases consign their families to poverty and themselves to oblivion.

Cryptograms.

There are few ciphers so 'refractory,' to use a mining term, that they will not yield to the efforts of the cryptologist to solve them, and yet a good many people still use them in the 'agony' column of the newspaper, in the belief that their communications are hidden from prying eyes. If they only knew that inquirers of even ordinary intelligence can penetrate the mystery they suppose so deeply hidden, they would probably feel slightly uncomfortable. For example, a writer in a contemporary has amused himself by deciphering the following message, which appeared on a recent Saturday in the Melbourne *Argus* :—

'Osmy sdse' dpyx dvap;
'Pslqdae,' d'vll oee; ksmv
rlyxcyc, Will write next week.
Kgrpdeccvyw. Love.

To the uninitiated no doubt this looks very formidable, but in reality it is a cipher of the simplest kind, consisting merely in a mutual exchange of function between one letter of the alphabet and another, as c for r, and r for c, q for f, and f for q, and so on. Apparently the key to the cipher was arbitrarily fixed, but nevertheless it is quite a common method to employ a cipher in which each letter is represented by another at a given distance from it in the alphabet. Thus if two is the interval fixed on, a would be represented by c and so on. In the foregoing example the solution is as follows :—

Take away when wish; 'halfway,' will try; make clearer
Will write next week. Much worried. Love.

There is nothing very serious in it when solved. It is evidently an answer to another message, and might as well have been written in ordinary language. Some people, however, love to make mysteries of ordinary transactions. It will be observed that the writer has made two errors, for which we suppose we must charitably blame the printer. 'Make clearer' reads 'make cleder,' and 'much worried' reads 'much warried.' As our contemporary says :—If it is absolutely necessary to confide an important secret to the advertising columns of the papers, the best thing to do is to make it look as if it were not in cipher. If you can shun the 'agony column' and make your communication seem to be a subscription list for a football club presentation, or a testimonial to the virtues of Somebody's Soap as a combined clothes washer, hair dye, and baking powder, you may by that device possibly evade the curiosity of the inquisitive expert. If you can't do that, your next best plan is either to say your say in plain English in the 'Government Gazette,' or else to leave it unsaid, which is perhaps the safest plan of all.

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 Cable-rigger.

We are an ungrateful people in these parts if we do not erect an equestrian statue in ice-cream to the inspired idiot that controls the European end of the cables. Only that my hair is not my own, I would willingly sell him a lock of it as a sincere token of my humble esteem. Imagine the kindness of heart which prompted him to flash along the ocean-bed the news that the Kaiser's yacht was christened with Moët and Chandon's champagne and not with Rheingold. Up to the time the glad tidings came, the Australasian