

the loss of the Australian market by the imposition of the new duties. This demand may or may not continue. The impression of commercial experts is that it will not continue. But it came at a very opportune time, and saved the New Zealand farmer from the disaster of over supply in a narrow market. There is now, happily, reason to believe that the recent disaster in the wheat growing districts is not so severe as was at first feared, and, generally, the prospects of the farming community are exceedingly bright. This, we repeat, must have a beneficial influence on the trade of the Colony, and add materially to the prosperity with which it is at present blessed.

Benefits One and Injures Another.

There is hardly any benefit that may accrue to a person or a class of persons which does not spring from an injury to another. This was seen the other day in Victoria, and the incident may lead the Minister of Railways to be prepared for a certain amount of grumbling when he introduces his new scale of freights and fares. The Victorian Railway Department recently introduced a system of family excursion tickets, by which it was made much easier for people, especially of small means, to give their families a little enjoyment at the seaside. The effect of this on at least one watering place was noticeable, and one of the local governing body moved that a deputation wait upon the acting-commissioner to induce him to discontinue the privileges. According to this councillor the effect on the lodging houses and business places was disastrous, as city people preferred taking advantage of the cheap fares to residing at the seaside. And the motion was carried, the councillors who voted for it evidently assuming that the railway system was designed to benefit, and not in any way injure, their particular corner of the universe. If, therefore, the new scale of fares in this Colony makes it advantageous for workers in the cities to reside in the adjacent country districts, where they may enjoy the pleasures and advantages of rural life without sacrificing the conveniences afforded in the towns, it may be expected that the business people, such as shopkeepers, will raise an objection. But it is obvious that such considerations cannot stand in the way of what would be a great public benefit. However much we might sympathise with the coach owners and hostelry keepers, we should never dream of abandoning the idea of building railways. The invention of type setting machines displaces hand compositors, but it cheapens and extends printing. And with respect to the particular reform in railway fares above indicated, we have every hope that it will form a large feature in the new scale. The life of the worker would be much more pure and much more healthy if his hours of leisure were spent in rural surroundings. At present it is only the comparatively well-to-do who can afford to occupy a country residence while their employment is in the town. The extension of this privilege to the workers would have an immense social and industrial influence.

The Water Torture.

We are told by cablegram that an American officer has been accused of subjecting Filipinos to the ordeal by water, possibly with the view of eliciting some information. All such methods of extracting evidence have long since fallen into desuetude in civilised countries, having been replaced in modern courts by the more refined method of cross examination, which, in the hands (or mouth) of a skilful and unscrupulous advocate can, nevertheless, inflict mental pain quite as much to be dreaded as the torture by rack or boot. If the charge against the American officer be well founded, it will probably transpire that his college reading has made him acquainted with mediæval methods of examining suspects. The ordeal by water is a most severe one, its only redeeming feature being that if the victim recovered there was no mutilation. The following is an authentic description of the torture inflicted upon Sir Walter Spens, who was charged with treason against James IV. of Scotland:—"The Governor raised his hand, and at the signal two men, masked, and with bare brawny arms, started out from a dark corner of the chamber in which they had been standing unobserved and seized their victim. He offered no resistance, and they speedily removed his light coat of mail. They laid his neck and his left foot bare. Then an iron chair was wheeled into the middle of the chamber, and Spens was placed in it. Stout cords were drawn across his breast, and secured to the back of the chair; then his arms and legs were bound to the sides, so that he was unable to move a limb. The chair was finally screwed to the floor. The surgeon approached the patient and felt his pulse; it beat with firmness and regularity. One of the two torturers brought two large pails full of water to the side of the victim, with a measure which might hold about a gallon, and a steel tube about a foot long with a wide mouth.

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'The measure, filled with water, was held to his lips and he drank. A second time the measure was filled, but he could not

empty it. One of the men pressed his head back against the bar of the chair while the other forced the water down his throat to the last drop. The whole frame of the victim quivered spasmodically. Every vein seemed to be cracking and bursting. His brain seemed to swell till his eyes became dazed and his lungs seemed to be water-logged. Still he would not confess. A third measure was raised to his lips. He took a few mouthfuls, and then his teeth closed with a convulsive jerk, and he seemed incapable of opening them. One of the executioners, with a sharp instrument like a chisel, forced his teeth open, thrust the steel between them, and forced it down his throat. The third measureful of water, and a fourth, were emptied into the mouth of the tube. The color of the patient changed from a deathly pallor to a bluish tint, his fingers clutched the bars of the chair with a vice-like grip, and his body shook and heaved in convulsive agony. Asked again whether he would confess, Spens, who was unable to speak, made a slight motion of his head to signify "No." Another measureful was forced down the tube. The patient writhed, gave vent to a dull smothered cry of anguish, and burst the rope which bound his right arm. He seized the steel tube, and with more than human strength, he bent it and broke it in his hand. Then he sank back, insensible. Spens was carried back to his dungeon by the men-at-arms, and the surgeon, who had been struck by the fortitude of the victim, set about reviving him with interest in the task. He at first began to entertain doubts of effecting a cure; but at the end of several hours he had succeeded in drawing off the greater part of the water which had been forced into the patient's stomach, and he trusted to the profuse perspiration which over-spread the body to prevent suffusion on the lungs.' This was early in the sixteenth century; if the Americans revived the punishment late in the nineteenth, it becomes easy to believe some of the accounts of the barbarities to which the Filipinos have been subjected.

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.

War Items.

'Ole Jim,' who I was beginning to think dead, has written again, retailing a few items of news from the front. One of them relates an encounter which his son had with De Wet, in which the Boer commander nearly lost his life. The severe censorship exercised in South Africa must account for the fact that this item has not appeared in any newspaper up to this.

dear Quip,—Yule be glad To heer as how My only son, what left As a kaptin in the 9st (ninteeth) Contingement, reechd to The end Of his destnashin safe, as This leevs me the same. He was pemoted and Is a major or Leftenen or smthing, and is a G.P.O. or D.S.O. wich he Rites onto the end of his ortigraft. It was time the home guvment Took notis of the Wescoote where Mr Seddon was a diger. My son ernd the rise Becaus when the ship was in a hurrykin he Made all the hosses lay on there backs and Burnd peaces of brown paper So they wooden smel the ile of the injins And Onct when he was at the Frunt he seen de Wet, and he wood. of Shot him, but he diden no what rainge to fix The site for. He put his gun down onto the velt and Waukd up to de Wet and askt him to holt l end of the Tape wile he mesured the distuns. He got the distuns, and fixt the site accordantly, and Was takin aim when bless me if De Wet diden jist wauk off and take the Tape with him. The bores are oful thevs. No wonder they cant catch the feller. When the prymeer reches the Cape my Son is goin to travel with him to the Cornashin and see All the lords and ladys with vermin on their clokes and cornets on there heds. He let you now how he gets on. Till then

Yours respectfully,

'Ole Jim.'

Dying Aphorisms.

A hankering after the dramatic possesses all great men when they are on the point of being stripped of their greatness. I speak from experience. I went to live at a boarding house. I grew gradually weaker and weaker, till I could no longer hide from myself the necessity of beginning to make preparations for the last sad scene. I had no will to make, I had nothing to leave except what remained of my poor emaciated body. My fellow boarders insisted that I should have it cremated. It was the only sure way to circumvent the landlady; and they told me with tears