

The settler referred to above seems to have been particularly unfortunate. The location of his farm operated to his injury. In reporting, as a Commissioner on the subject of a former complaint, Mr Poynton, a Stipendiary Magistrate, said that owing to the configuration of the ground near his farm on the opposite side of the railway line there appeared to be an increased velocity of the prevailing wind at a particular place, which carried sparks on to the grass paddocks. At that time there had been no fewer than 28 fires on the farm. But Mr Poynton found an alleviating circumstance in the plea that there was no debris left along the line, and that such spark-arresting appliances as the Government provide were in good order. He, therefore, found that Mr Wallace's misfortunes were due to the unfortunate aspect of his land and the luxuriance of his crop of ryegrass. Mr Poynton did grudgingly recommend some compensation to the unfortunate settler (with the reminder that he had no legal claim against the Department) on the ground that 'he had suffered so often and undergone such suspense that some compensation might be given to him,' but this was qualified with the freezing proviso that 'it was not to be a precedent in other cases.' Sir Joseph Ward's idea of reconciling public and private interests lay in the recommendation that persons who live in close proximity to railway trains ought to take precautions to insure themselves against possible loss from accident by fire, and so prevent the Colony being asked to meet claims of this kind. A more logical position might have been expected in Sir Joseph Ward. The burden is still cast upon the unfortunate settler, for he will be penalised by premiums for his extra risk. And the Minister's dictum carries the further unfortunate suggestion that an insurance company is a kind of benevolent society. But, in spite of all the fine-spun pleas of the gentlemen who stand up for the Railway Department, we are entirely at one with those members who urge that the Government should take the same responsibility as private people in such cases, due provision, of course being made for the slight additional 'moral' risk, as insurance experts have it, and should cease at the earliest moment, not only in this but in other departments, from saying, 'Do as I say, and not as I do.'

A Railway in Palestine.

Palestine is usually associated with religious events of long ago, and the thought of a railway through it seems more than a trifle incongruous. Yet for ten years a train has been regularly running from Jaffa to Jerusalem, a distance of 86½ kilometres, or, in British figures, something under 54 miles. The shriek of the railway whistle wakes the stillness of the plains of Sharon. But the sacred gloom of the Holy City itself is subjected to no such indignity, for the Ottoman Government decreed that the terminus of the railway should be fixed at a point a mile or so from the walls. But to the tourist this is no disadvantage, for the approach to the town from the station is one of the grandest sights in Palestine. Says a recent writer: 'The station is built on the east side of the Mountain of Evil Council. You cross this hill, and suddenly lies before you the Valley of Hinnom, with the gardens and pool of Gihon, and on the other side of the valley Mount Zion, with its citadel.' It is not, however, our present purpose to decant upon the scenic beauties and the associations of Palestine. These have been more eloquently described elsewhere. It is as a monument of patience and perseverance against Ottoman stolidity that the railway is distinguished, and it may be regarded as typical of the tardiness with which the Eastern mind recognises the benefits of Western civilisation. The first project for connecting Jerusalem with its seaport originated about fifty years ago, when only camel paths existed between the two towns, and the wild parts between Jerusalem and the plains of Sharon were comparatively little known. The honor of being the first to thoroughly investigate and study the question belongs to a German-American named Zimpel. But like others of similar disposition he received no return for his zeal and labors, and died almost with a broken mind, while others reaped the benefit of his exertions. In 1874-1875 a company of French engineers took up the project and selected another route further north, on part of the old Roman road from Jerusalem to Caesarea, down which St. Paul was escorted. But nothing came of the project. After twelve years more another French syndicate took the matter up and with infinite difficulty obtained a concession from the Ottoman Government. But there are important conditions attached to it. The line must fall to the State after ninety-nine years, and only Turkish subjects are to be employed, with the exception of the engineers, this last concession being probably made because there are no Turks versed in the handling of engines. And so the train has run daily ever since 1892, doing the journey in three hours and fifty minutes. It has begun to return a profit to its owners, although there is goods traffic only one way, namely, towards Jerusalem, but of course at certain seasons of the year the tourist traffic is very large. To the advocates of such railways as the Main Trunk line in the north and the Otago Central in the south, we may commend a study of the difficulties attending

the inception of the Jaffa-Jerusalem line. It may teach them that there are obstacles still more difficult to surmount than the parsimony of governments and the cabals of parliaments.

The Orient Troopers.

The 'boys' who returned from South Africa by the Orient have been compelled to undergo the unpleasant experience of being recalled into camp and quarantined because of a case of suspected smallpox discovered after the South Island men had been landed. At the time of writing the case is still only 'suspected' to be one of smallpox. Yet while a doubt existed the authorities, it seems to us, could follow no other course than to recall the men. And we observe with pleasure that the men obeyed the summons with general and soldier-like alacrity, recognising no doubt their moral obligation to the community. To the uninitiated it may at first sight seem ridiculous to recall the men at all, seeing that having turned them loose to mix with the community the damage, if any, had been done. But it is not generally known that smallpox does not become contagious until the eruption begins to appear, so that there was still time to arrest the evil should any of the troopers, unhappily, carry in their systems the germs of the disease. In any community a visitation of smallpox is a disaster; in New Zealand it would be a dire calamity, because of the general unpreparedness to meet it. If there is one scientific fact established beyond the possibility of a doubt, it is that vaccination minimises almost to the point of disappearance the severity of smallpox. Yet vaccination has been permitted to fall practically into desuetude in this Colony. It has been affirmed without contradiction that only 17 per cent. of the juvenile population have been vaccinated. This neglect of a wise precaution has arisen from several causes, among which are (1) the immunity of the colonies from smallpox; (2) a well-founded repugnance to arm to arm vaccination; and (3) conscientious objections on the part of a small number to the practice.

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At least two of these reasons are untenable. Past immunity gives no security for the future. The trade of the colonies is rapidly spreading to the East, which is the cradle of plagues, and any vessel which comes from an Asiatic port may bear among her passengers or merchandise the germs of disease, as la grippe was brought to the Colony some years ago in drapery goods, and has never since been eradicated. Arm to arm vaccination is not only discouraged, but absolutely forbidden by law. A vaccinator who employs any but the pure lymph direct from the heifer is liable to severe punishment, and, in the event of any communicable disease arising from the practice, would be so much discredited as to be professionally ruined. In the old days innumerable diseases were communicated by means of vaccination. With pure lymph the risk is so small as to be negligible. As for the stubborn few who profess to entertain conscientious objections, they are probably influenced by gruesome stories of bygone calamities, or, it may be, are personally aware of some case or cases where injury has arisen. Yet even for such the law makes provision, by enabling them to escape the dreaded operation by making a declaration, which absolves them from the obligation. The general result of the present scare will no doubt be a general awakening to the need for vaccination, and the legal obligation to undergo it. A few convictions here and there will remind parents that they cannot defy the law with impunity, and the punishment which may be inflicted will not be resented by the public, who have to bear the risk caused by neglect. But there will not be much boisterous hilarity in the various quarantine camps during the next week or 10 days. The vaccination of an adult is not always a trifling matter. It is not helpful to the temper, and the slightest contact with the scarified spot produces such inconvenience as to cause irritation. Some of the later contingents never smelt hostile powder in the late war. At least they will now be able to point to honorable scars as souvenirs of their expedition to South Africa. Let us hope that the present scare may have consequences no more serious.

DIOCESE OF DUNEDIN.

At 11 o'clock at St. Joseph's Cathedral on Sunday a Mass of Thanksgiving for the King's Coronation was celebrated by the Rev. Father Murphy, Adm., in the presence of his Lordship Bishop Verdon. The music of the Mass (Mozart's Twelfth) was rendered by the Cathedral choir and orchestra.

His Lordship the Bishop preached, taking his text from the second chapter of the First Epistle of St. Paul to Timothy: 'I desire therefore first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions and thanksgivings be made for all men: for kings and all that are in high station, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, in all piety and chastity.' A few weeks ago, said his Lordship, the preparations that were being made for the ceremony of the Coronation of our King were suddenly stopped, and a great sadness was felt over the whole British Empire when it became known that his Majesty was seriously ill. The critical condition of the Royal

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