

acres; Westland, 358,000 acres; Otago, 1,723,000 acres; and Southland, 1,911,000 acres. It could not be said, then, that Canterbury had had more than its share of the public moneys, and the Government were not going to stop acquiring land for settlement in the province. When land was required, and could be secured at a fair price, the Government would purchase it. As to the manner in which some of the owners of the large estates had undervalued the land, he would produce figures to prove his case. The land tax value of the Levels estate was a little over £2 per acre, and yet the Government were paying £6 9s an acre for it.

One of the measures most adversely criticised at one time was the Advances to Settlers Act, and Mr. Seddon, in the course of a speech last week, showed how beneficial it has been to the people of the Colony. He said that the number of applications received under that Act up to September 25, 1902, was 15,758, representing a sum of £5,500,000. The number of applications authorised was 12,000. The number of advances authorised which were declined by the applicants was 1500. The amount of the applications granted came to £4,046,000, less £694,000, which was not taken up, leaving the amount authorised and accepted by applicants at £3,352,720. Up to the present no losses had been made, and for the three millions authorised the Government held good real estate security valued at over four and a half millions. It was said by the Opposition that the Government would lend money to their friends, and that the taxpayers would have to make good large sums of money but, strange to say, those who rushed the Department and asked for the largest sums were those who had actually feared the Government were going to give the money to their friends.

Speaking at Waimate on Thursday Mr. Seddon said he had to announce in connection with the Government Life Insurance Department, that the accounts for the past year had been audited. The bonus certificates amounted in the aggregate to £290,000, and the reversionary bonuses represented a cash divisible surplus of £167,900. At one time there was a doubt as to whether the Government should take up life insurance, but the position of the Department to-day showed that it was a step in the right direction, and that the people of the Colony and benefited by what had been done. It was the same with the Accident Insurance Department. In spite of all that was said, good results had followed. Premiums had been brought down, and the Department as a whole was working satisfactorily. After the outside companies had cut down the rates too low, thinking they were stronger than the Government and the people of New Zealand, they had come to the Government and asked them to reduce the premiums. Next session the Government would also introduce a Government Fire Insurance Bill, and press it on the representatives of the people. Noting the high charges of private companies in different districts, it behoved Parliament to give relief, and this relief could be granted with safety to the public funds, and with advantage to the people. The Government had succeeded with the Life and Accident Departments, and why should they not satisfactorily work a Fire Department? He had been thinking the matter over, and he had an idea of a new departure. In reading of the bonuses granted under the life insurance scheme, he thought they might give bonuses to the fire insurers. Instead of the profits going to the Government, let them go to the insurers. The insurers would, doubtless, make every effort to prevent fires, and by so doing they would earn a larger bonus. No doubt, adverse criticism would be showered on his devoted head, because the insurance companies were powerful in the country, and had powerful influence with the Press. He recognised, too, that he would not get the bill through without a fight, but he loved a fight.

## OBITUARY

### MR. WADE, LATE OF HOKITIKA.

Throughout the Colony (writes a Hokitika correspondent) the numerous friends of Mr. and Mrs. Wade, late of Hokitika, will learn, with sincere regret, that, prior to their arrival in South Africa towards the end of last year, Mr. Wade developed a malady of the throat which proved to be cancer. To this, despite the most assiduous care, he succumbed on March 19th. Mrs. Wade's sympathisers in her sorrow will be glad to know that she had the unspeakable consolation of seeing her beloved husband received into the Church some five weeks before his death.—R.I.P.

### MRS. M. O'BRIEN, WINTON.

General regret was felt in Winton when it became known that Mrs. O'Brien, wife of Mr. M. O'Brien, had passed away on the 6th inst. at the comparatively early age of 34 years. The deceased had been ill for about a fortnight, and a few days before her death was reported to be progressing satisfactorily, consequently her demise was a great shock to her husband and relatives, and many friends. The deceased was eldest daughter of Mr. and Mrs. P. Deegan, very old and highly-respected residents of Southland, and she was greatly esteemed by all in the district. Both the bereaved husband and Mr. Deegan received numerous messages of condolence from many sympathisers in their affliction, among the senders being Sir J. G. Ward. The funeral took place on Wed-

nesday of last week, the remains being followed to their last resting-place by a large concourse of mourners. The Rev. Father O'Neill read the burial service both at the house and graveside.—R.I.P.

## The Works of the Ancients.

When a person wants to silence an engineer who boasts of the works of the present day he points to Egypt as the country where the biggest engineering works in the world have been carried out thousands of years ago. It is undoubtedly true (says "Engineering") that Egypt contains the largest structures in the world, and probably will for all time. It is not likely that we shall again see a building with 7,000,000 tons of stone in it, as has the Pyramid of Gizeh, and it will be long before we have an irrigation reservoir of greater capacity than Lake Moeris, which, accepting the figures of Major Sir R. H. Brown, R.E., held 11,800 million cubic metres (tons) of water between high and low water marks. What the Labyrinth was like we do not really know, but Herodotus classed it as a greater wonder than the Pyramids, although lesser than Lake Moeris. We may safely assume that there is now nothing in the world that will compare with it in size. Further, there is a tradition that in the dim past the Nile flowed at the foot of the Libyan hills, and that it was diverted from that course into its present bed, and, if the account be true, the work was of enormous magnitude. Measured by the standard of the quantity surveyor, the works of the ancient Egyptians have never been surpassed, and probably never will be.

The engineers of the past directed the forces of nature on a large scale; but to compare their work with ours to their advantage shows a complete ignorance of the science of engineering. The matter in which they excelled us was the transportation and manipulation of heavy weights—a feat which appeals strongly to the lay imagination. Among the chief examples of such work are the columns of the temple of Karnak. To cut a block of stone in a distant quarry, to work it to a cylinder 12ft. in diameter, float it down the Nile, land it, and place it on the top of a column of similar stones, making a total height of 60ft., was no small enterprise. A still more difficult undertaking was the great obelisk now standing beside the Church of St. John Lateran in Rome, with a height of 108ft. and a weight of 450 tons. But the crowning example of Egyptian engineering was the colossal statue of Rameses II., at Thebes. Before it was broken it was a single block of red granite, 60ft. in height, and it has been computed to weigh 887 tons.

These were notable examples of engineering work, and a modern engineer might be proud of executing them. But it must be remembered that they were done very leisurely, and that labor was abundant. With the simple appliances that we may assume the Egyptians possessed, such as wedges, levers, ropes, and pulleys, great weights may be handled if time is no object. The city of Thebes was in course of building for 2000 years, and in such a place it would excite little comment if a year was spent in putting an obelisk into position. If a weight can be moved at all, no matter how little, it can be transported any distance, provided the same conditions persist for the whole route. The Romans moved two obelisks from Thebes, and re-erected them at Alexandria, showing conclusively that the Egyptians had no secrets in relation to mechanics, and that their methods could be imitated by a practical people with perfect success. Their strong point was the abundance of cheap labor.

## Stonyhurst College Observatory.

Of the four complete sets of instruments in the United Kingdom for observing and recording terrestrial and magnetic phenomena, Stonyhurst College possesses one set. It is quite probable that Stonyhurst will eventually be the only place in the country where these delicate and wonderful measurements can be prosecuted with the necessary exactitude. The electrical disturbance produced by the tram system in the metropolis and its suburbs is proving to be the ruin of Kew and Greenwich as magnetic stations, so that it will be left to comparatively isolated places like Stonyhurst to carry out these extremely important observations. Records have been taken at Stonyhurst hour by hour and minute by minute since 1868. The magnetic needle is constantly varying, and at present in this district it points 18 degrees west of north. Fathers Cortie and Sidegreaves, S.J., are the painstaking and able astronomers and scientists who, in conjunction with the late Father Perry and other Jesuit Fathers, have gained world-wide renown for the Stonyhurst Observatory.

Messrs. Coughlan Bros. have now entered into possession of their New Shamrock Hotel, MacLaggan street, Dunedin, which is one of the most commodious and up-to-date hostels in the city. The house has been renovated and refurbished throughout, and everything deemed necessary for the convenience and comfort of boarders has been supplied, so that the proprietors expect that their enterprise will meet with due recognition from the travelling public. In addition to dining, smoking, and private sitting rooms, the establishment contains 60 bedrooms, which shows that the accommodation is on a very extensive scale. To further popularise the New Shamrock it has been determined to reduce the tariff to the very moderate charge of 4s 6d per day, a departure, coupled with the popularity of the genial proprietors, which should result in taxing the very extensive accommodation to its utmost capacity....