

Interprovincial

The meteorological director reports (says the *New Zealand Times*) that the aggregate rainfall for February was considerably below normal over the North Island, but in the south, with the exception of portions of the East Coast districts, it was nearly everywhere in excess. In Westland the percentage above was greatest, several stations recording over 100 per cent. in excess of the mean of previous years.

Farmers in the Ashburton County who are fortunate enough to possess good crops of turnips are being besieged by stock-raisers to sell, and are even asked to make their own prices (says the correspondent of the *Lyttelton Times*). Several sales have taken place in the Methven district, for instance, and at the very good price of £6 10s per acre. One district farmer has been offered £7 per acre for his crop.

There is now a prospect that the work of erection at the new Parliament Buildings will be resumed at an early date. For some time work has been hung up owing to a difficulty in securing suitable large blocks of marble from quarries in the Motueka district. It is now announced that a supply of marble to meet requirements has been located three miles from the old quarries, but about four miles and a-half of tramline will have to be built over difficult country. It is stated also that the Government is affording assistance to push on with the tramline, so that the new source of supply may be available to draw upon in a few months' time.

The Prime Minister stated the other day that in order to see if anything could be done to relieve the position of the Canterbury producers through the shortage of shipping space he had cabled to the Board of Trade, London, asking that body if it could secure any ships with insulated space to send them out immediately in ballast. This, of course, would mean a lapse of at least six weeks before the vessels would be available here, but the Prime Minister thought it possible in the circumstances that Southland producers might forego some of their space allotment in order to help the Canterbury men out of their plight. He telegraphed to the Southland meat producers accordingly, but it is understood that the reply was not favorable, as they could not see their way at present to accede to the request.

Stoats appear to be on the increase in Otago (says the *Otago Daily Times*). Writing to the Otago Council of the Acclimatisation Society, Mr. Steven, curator at Clinton, reported that he was often surprised that any of the ducks or pheasants managed to survive the invasion of stoats, which were more numerous about the place now than he had ever known them before. While writing his report he happened to glance through the window and saw a stoat taking an egg across the drive. If measures were not taken to check the pest it would only mean a few years before game birds in New Zealand would be a thing of the past. The council briefly discussed the matter, but took no action.

Preparations for the erection of the public monument to the memory of the Right Hon. R. J. Seddon are well in hand (says the *Wellington Post*). The monument will occupy a prominent position on the lawn in front of the new Parliament Buildings, fronting Molesworth street, where a solid stone base is being constructed by the Public Works Department. The cost of the memorial is being paid out of the sum of £808 collected by the committee of the Seddon memorial fund and £466 contributed by the railway employees and paid into the public account in 1908 and 1909 respectively. The interest accruing on these sums will be very considerable, and the Government has placed on the Estimates a vote of £1000 as the contribution of the Dominion towards the cost of the monument, which will take the form of a bronze statue of the deceased statesman, the work of the celebrated sculptor, Sir Thomas Brock, R.A. The statue is on board the *Turakina*, which arrived at Wellington from London on Saturday. The contract price for the statue with Sir Thomas Brock was £2000.

About nine o'clock on Thursday night of last week a very large stable at the foot of St. George's Bay road, owned by Messrs. J. J. Craig, Ltd., one of the principal carrying firms in Auckland, suddenly burst into flames. The lots were full of straw and hay, and this is believed to account for the fact that the flames spread so rapidly that it was found impossible to save the horses. There were no fewer than 300 magnificent animals, the average value of which was about £40, in the stable, and of these only three were saved. In addition many lorries and drays and a large quantity of equipment were destroyed.

The phenomenal rise in the price of butter has led to a great reduction in the sale of that important article of food (says the *New Zealand Herald*). 'It is an acknowledged fact in commercial life,' declared a leading retailer, 'that when the price of a commodity exceeds a certain figure, its sale diminishes. That is precisely what has happened to butter. As you know, the sales of large quantities to Australia put up the price to 1s 5d, and now it is 1s 6d per lb. The people begrudged paying 1s 5d, and sales fell off, but since the extra penny was put on large sections have ceased to purchase it, while many people have reduced their orders. The working classes simply cannot buy it, and many of the poorer people are buying roast beef dripping from the restaurants at 6d per lb. It is only at a time like this, when prices are so high, that people in such a prosperous country as New Zealand turn to dripping; but I can tell you that the position is very different in the Old Country. The demand for the first class roast beef dripping is so keen that people have to await their turn to be supplied. One effect of the present position is that our sales of cheap jams and golden syrup have greatly increased.'

Mr. Massey informed a newspaper representative a few days ago that, notwithstanding the extra expenditure in connection with the war, the finances of the Dominion are in a particularly satisfactory condition. 'Money for legitimate purposes (said the Prime Minister) is obtainable at (for war times) very reasonable rates, and we hope before long further to relax the restrictions which were placed on the lending departments when war broke out. The exports are being well maintained, and with a sufficient number of insulated ships they could be greatly increased. The deposits in the Post Office Savings Bank from month to month greatly exceed the withdrawals, and depression in the ordinary sense of the term is unknown. There is very little unemployment—probably not so much as at this time last year—and wages are as good as ever they were. It is true that there has been an increase in the price of various commodities, but this is almost unavoidable in war time, especially in a war like this when 25 per cent. of the whole of the world's mercantile shipping is either being used for transport purposes or temporarily laid up. The result is that freights and insurance have gone up enormously, greatly increasing the prices of nearly all imported articles. The war and the shortage both in Australia and New Zealand, taken together, are responsible for the increase in the prices of wheat and flour.'

When the Suez Canal was opened in 1869, Britain at once realised its great importance to her sea routes and trade, and paid Khedive Ismail, father of Prince Hussein, £1,000,000 for his shares. Last year 5000 vessels passed through the canal, 3000 of which were British.

The *Book of Armagh* is a celebrated Irish-Latin manuscript known as *Liber Ar Machanus*. This is kept in the library of Trinity College, Dublin. The name of the writer of perhaps the entire work was Ferdonack of Armagh, who wrote the first part of it in the year 807 or 808. This book is highly prized, especially by the Irish. It is, for the most part, a transcript of documents written in former times, and is of inestimable value as a record of the early history and civilisation of Ireland, and especially as containing the earliest writings which we have of St. Patrick. It is most important for the history of the Irish language, for it is the oldest manuscript extant of Old Irish and of continuous narration in Irish prose.