

PROGRESS

With which is Incorporated
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BRIEF FOREWORD.

THE contents bill of the current number announces many carefully selected articles, and we believe our readers will vote February PROGRESS the best yet produced. Next month this journal will expand to the extent of an additional eight pages, in order to deal completely with Motors and Motoring in New Zealand. Further particulars will be found on another page in this issue.

VALE! LABOUR PARLIAMENT.

THE proposed gathering of the various forces representing Capital and Labour in New Zealand, which was to have eventuated under the above somewhat misleading title on the 20th inst., has been abandoned.

While applauding the conciliatory motif of the Labour Parliament we cannot altogether arrive at a satisfactory deduction regarding the possible conclusiveness of its work. The idea of bringing such parties together to discuss leading questions, whose contentious nature must exist until the end of all things, was certainly a very high and meritorious one. At first sight, it appeared to mark a trend in the direction of the substitution of the self-interest of a group of individuals for the self-interest of the whole community, and which, taking concrete form, was to give promise of the regulation of our commercial policy by those immediately concerned in its success. In short, the unparalleled situation presented in law-makers discussing a *via legis* with the representatives of the business public provoked a feeling that the industrial peace of the future was to be assured. But ideals were shattered: the quibblings of parties turned predestined harmony into discord; equal representation became a difficulty; nomination, to the satisfaction of both parties, an impossibility. The industrial employers wished to know the degree of weight that would attach to the resolutions of the conference, and in many directions they held that, though good might come from the meeting, the issue was problematical. The New Zealand Farmers' Union stubbornly refused to join the Parliament, for the simple and happy reason that they had nothing to discuss; while representatives of the Labour division capped all by demanding expenses and fifteen shillings a day for attending that which, as the Premier stated, was for their own good.

Perhaps the chief cause for regret in the failure of the Labour Parliament lies in the shelving of matters which have no connection with party. Much was expected of the discussion that would have kept the doings of the International Harvester Company before the people. This concern, be it remembered, continues to trade in the midst of reputedly advanced legislation, promenading in business guise, plus cajolery and dissimulation, as it unerringly fights its way into absolute monopoly of the implement trade of New Zealand. Tariff reform, too, needs considerable attention on economic grounds. Anomalies abound; and there is none greater than that pictures, paintings, drawings, engravings, and photographs, which so materially assist the technical and artistic bent of the community, should have to bear the imposition of twenty per cent. duty. Of the other questions, we have to mention the need for a discussion on our Labour laws, and in giving preference to trade unionists, to stipulate for the minimising of the unprofitableness of unskilled labour by instituting classes, or degrees, whereby a man will only receive a wage commensurate with his ability. And so on, *ad infinitum*, could the Labour Parliament have deliberated. Perhaps, when the diametrical opposition of parties ceases, such a gathering will be possible. Until then, the best medium of redress is the press of the colony, for it at least reflects the opinion of the people, who seldom err on questions of national importance.

AGRICULTURAL MACHINERY AND COMPETITION.

WHAT is fair competition and what is unfair? If this question could be settled, the trade and commerce of many countries would be benefited. But much must depend on circumstances. There is such a thing as "healthy" competition, which conduces to industrial progress, and brings the best to the front, both as to man and as to methods. Given a fair field and no favour, reasonable trade rivalry is not altogether a bad thing, but when some of the competitors are hopelessly handicapped from the start, then the contest cannot assuredly be called equitable. That the contest between British and American agricultural machinery in the colonies is hardly being carried on upon reasonable lines, evidences continue to accumulate. We have received from Mr. P. H. Evans, the secretary of the South Australian Chamber of Manufactures, Incorporated, cuttings from one of the Australian dailies—the *Advertiser*—dealing with the importations of harvesting machinery and other mechanism into that State. As far back as nearly a year ago that paper made special enquiries upon this matter, and the information then received in special interviews is worth recalling at the present time. Mr. C. D. Lennon, a prominent member of the Melbourne Chamber of Manufactures, stated some time back that "at every port of the Commonwealth foreign-made goods were arriving in shiploads. In Adelaide he had seen 250 copies of Australian-invented harvesters landed from New York, the freight on which was less than the freight from Melbourne to Adelaide." Australian agricultural machinery manufacturers have pointed out that there has never been a really high tariff on machinery in South Australia. Probably 15 per cent. has been the highest, but in Victoria it went up to 60 per cent. on some lines. The protective tariff in South Australia has given way to a revenue tariff, and the outside duty is now about 15 per cent. They consider that the duty should be at least 25 per cent on certain lines to assist them to fight against the inrush of American goods.

What (it is asked) can Australian manufacturers—who work under the eight hours' system, and don't believe in making slaves of their men—do against such competition? With reference to the season before this the number of harvesters imported into South Australia from various outside sources was decidedly heavy. Reports make the total from 250 to 500 by one firm. The duty is 12½ per cent. on the invoice, but at what price are these invoiced? From official information received it appears that harvesters have been invoiced at £38 2s 6d., plus 10 per cent., a total of £41 18s 9d. The retail price to farmers in South Australia is about £80. Seed and manure drills are invoiced at from £12 10s to £16 16s 8d, and £18 15s plus 10 per cent. These drills are sold in South Australia at from £36 to £40. Another line which will affect the trade in South Australia is the importation of stump-jump ploughs. We understand that some were imported from Canada, and were exhibited at the last Adelaide show. Up to the present the effects are not greatly felt, but if these ploughs are invoiced on the same basis as harvesters and drills they would come into South Australia at £10. These ploughs weigh about 8½ to 10 cwt., and are sold at £20 to £22 in South Australia. The outcome of the agitation in the Australian Commonwealth will be awaited with much interest by New Zealand and British machinery manufacturers alike, for the latter are no strangers to keen competition from Transatlantic sources, and, therefore, have sympathy with the former.