PROGRESS

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EDITORIAL COMMENT.

New Zealand and the New Zealanders.

THE letting of the Otira tunnel contract is an event which does not stand alone in its category. On the contrary it is the last, as well as the greatest, of a remarkable series. First of the series stands the Lyttelton tunnel, made by a provincial government with a population of less than 8,000 people behind it. Extraordinary as it may seem, it is, nevertheless, a fact that the Lyttelton tunnel was in its day the greatest engineering work of its kind in Australasia. Now the same thing can be said with truth of the Otira tunnel. It certainly is greater than anything hitherto thought of in Australasia. It is more: It stands fifth on the list of the great tunnels of the world, as may be seen by reference to our article on the tunnel and its history, in another part of the present issue. Even in the United States there is no similar work of such magnitude. This is already something: but it does not exhaust the subject offered by the mention of the work in question. The public works policy followed the Lyttelton tunnel, and the men who planned and built it subsequently made their mark with the great undertakings of the Public Works Policy. We have in this colony, at Makohine, the greatest viaduct in the world, and the sister structure at Makatote is not far behind. These were designed and carried out by New Zealanders. The fact reminds us that all the engineers now in the Public Works Department have been trained in New Zealand, and are repeatedly showing themselves equal to anything that may be required of them. This excellence, pre-eminence we might almost say, is due to the tradition of the great works of the early days of colonisation, such as the Lyttelton tunnel, the Arthur's Pass road (in itself also the greatest work of its kind in all Australasia), and the great system of roads which the provincial authorities of Otago built up for the proper supply of the gold-fields of the early "sixties." It is due also to the rugged nature of the country, which is such as to demand the utmost courage and resource in the engineers. It is due partly also to the great tradition of splendid effort which has come down from the pioneers who have made New Zealand pre-eminent in so many departments of life, and successful in all.

The fact is welcome in the midst of a controversy raging in the press about the need, or otherwise, for getting a foreign stamp for the degrees of the New Zealand University. There are timid persons who think that unless our degrees are vouched for by examiners of European celebrity, they will be regarded with contempt by the rest of the world. Now, the other things of approved stamp in this country, which have not had the foreign *imprimatur*, are they regarded with contempt? Take the lawyers: It is long since we ceased importing our lawyers, and most of the judges of the Supreme Court are of the New Zealand Bar, without any degree or any training in law outside their country. The Chief Justice himself is a New Zealand barrister, the first on the list; and on a certain now famous occasion he crossed swords with the Lords of the Privy Council of the Empire, and certainly did not come off second best. Take then the case of the engineers, to whom we have referred. It proves incontestably that in New Zealand it is possible to train first-class talent to first-class rank, for first-class work in a highly technical profession; the men thus trained easily grappling with local difficulties of topography and formation sufficient to perplex the most experienced.

Continuing the survey along all departments of life, what do we see? We see locomotives running on our railways, of local manufacture, equal to anything imported from either Europe or America; a mighty and most successful system of gold-dredging entirely thought out and executed by local talent; a scholastic system which has sent men of mark to leading scholastic positions elsewhere, and even to head the world's work in some instances of original scientific research. We see, in addition, a coastal fleet, established mainly at the direction of local enterprise, excelling anything in the coastal waters of any country under the sun; woollen manufactures second to nothing in the world; water systems, drainage schemes, tramways, timber-cutting and working industries, all up-to-date and flourishing; all the world of industry controlled and regulated by a system of factory and labour legislation which absolutely leads the world, both in inception and in results, and has swept the sweating evil from its path. Coming to the world of sport we find this department of national life organised magnificently, doing strenuous work in all its branches, in many of them heading the records. In a word, New Zealand gives a remarkably good account of itself all along the line of industry, professional pursuits and sport, and shows to the front in political, municipal, and commercial life. Why should we hesitate to trust this self reliance in the training of our youth? We are going, thank Providence, to rely on it in the technical training of the people, as may be gathered from the articles we are publishing on the subject, and we have a population which will not long tolerate the fads of professors and the timidity of doctrinaires who fail to understand the virility of our people, and have absolutely no knowledge of our history, in every page of which the word "Self-reliance" is so broadly written. The descendants of the picked men of old, men who, coming to the wilderness, conquered it handsomely, and left behind them a country in every way up-to-date, are not to be prevented by academic timidities from relying on their own energies of body and mind. More especially are they determined to be self-reliant in the face of the great works on which they are now giving such very good account of themselves.

The Rhodes Scholarships.

The other day it was announced that one of our Rhodes scholars—Mr. J. Allan Thomson, of the School of Mines, Otago University—has been appointed lecturer in geology at St. John's College, Oxford. Mr. Thomson has been four years away from the colony, and he is in all probability lost for ever to his country. This sort of thing we have no right to complain of in a case like that of Professor Rutherford who, beginning his career in New Zealand, has long been established in Canada as the first authority of the world on the subject of that extraordinary metal, radium. Mr. Rutherford found his own way to fame, and presumably, at least so we hope, to fortune. On the other hand the Rhodes scholarships were given to help persons, whether residents of Britain or of any part of the Empire, or of any foreign country, to improve their own countries by improving themselves, with the ulterior object of giving them, by showing them the world, cosmopolitan ideas, which make for the brotherhood of mankind and the peace of nations. It was a large-hearted magnificent bequest that Rhodes left behind him. But the practice of students going away and taking service in other countries, and so depriving their own of the advantages obtained through the bequest, is not the proper method of carrying out Rhodes's true intent. The trustees ought to be appealed to, and can be with effect, as their powers are very large.