

SECTION XIV.

EVENTS OF THE EXHIBITION SEASON.—COMPETITIONS AND SHOWS.— THE ATTENDANCE.

THE Fiji fire-walkers from the island of Benga arrived in Christchurch on the 17th December, and gave four performances of their ancient and mysterious rite of the *vila-vila-i-revo*—walking on red-hot stones.

The famous Besses o' th' Barn Brass Band, from England, commenced a fortnight's season at the Exhibition on the 10th January, and played another season in March.



A SPORTS-GROUND CROWD.

An Axemen's Carnival—the first held in Christchurch—took place on the Exhibition Sports Ground on the 17th and 19th January. Champion bushmen from Tasmania and Australia, as well as New Zealand, competed.

An international brass-band contest was held in February, and occupied several days, commencing on the 11th February. A New South Wales musician, Lieut. Bentley, was the principal judge of competitions.

Four very fine flower-shows were held during the season, and were considered to have been the most beautiful and comprehensive yet organized in New Zealand. They

were conducted by the Christchurch United Horticultural Society, and were held in January, February, and March. Christchurch is a city of flowers, and the exhibitions, both in point of number of entries and perfection of bloom, were delightful floral displays. The first display was devoted chiefly to roses, which made an exceedingly beautiful show, occupying the long Main Corridor of the Exhibition. The following shows were mainly carnations, begonias, and dahlias. For the begonia-show on the 6th February there were 265 entries, which was a record for Christchurch. The exhibits covered about 1,000 ft. of tables, and an additional 700 ft. of floor-space. The whole extent of the large Main Corridor was required for the display. There was in addition a large display of fruit and vegetables. The quality in all branches of the exhibits was admirable, and the show was thronged with visitors all day and in the evenings.

In the first flower-show, held during the first week in December, there were two particularly interesting collections of New Zealand native plants. One exhibit was

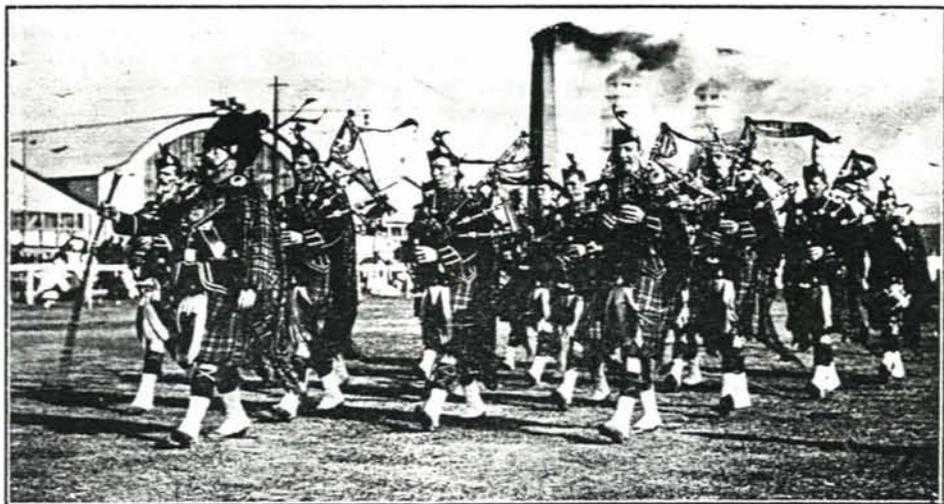


A FLOWER SHOW IN THE MAIN AVENUE.

shown by a Christchurch resident and the other came from Dunedin. Included in the Dunedin plants were some specimens of Alpine flora, some of the celmisia or mountain-daisies of Central and Western Otago, the flowering *Olearia colensoi* or mutton-bird scrub of Stewart Island, and the beautiful "daisy-tree" of the Chatham Islands, the curious mountain-plant known as the coral broom, a cassinia from Flagstaff Hill near Dunedin, several veronicas, and specimens showing different forms of the New Zealand flax plant. In the collection of Nairn and Sons was another interesting New Zealand plant, the crimson-flowered manuka.

On the 13th and 14th December the Main Corridor was devoted to an exhibition of cookery and laundry-work and dairy-produce in connection with the competitions of the Home Industry Section. During these two days demonstrations in cooking and laundry-work were given. Tables covered with the results of the cooking and other

competitions extended in three lines the whole length of the corridor. Several city and suburban schools grouped their cookery exhibits on a series of tables. The entries in



THE SOUTHLAND PIPE BAND, OF INVERCARGILL.

(This bagpipe band won the quickstep competition held in connection with the New Zealand Athletic Union Sports, 14th February, 1907.)

all classes totalled 850. In the evenings a number of juvenile cooks gave practical demonstration of their skill.

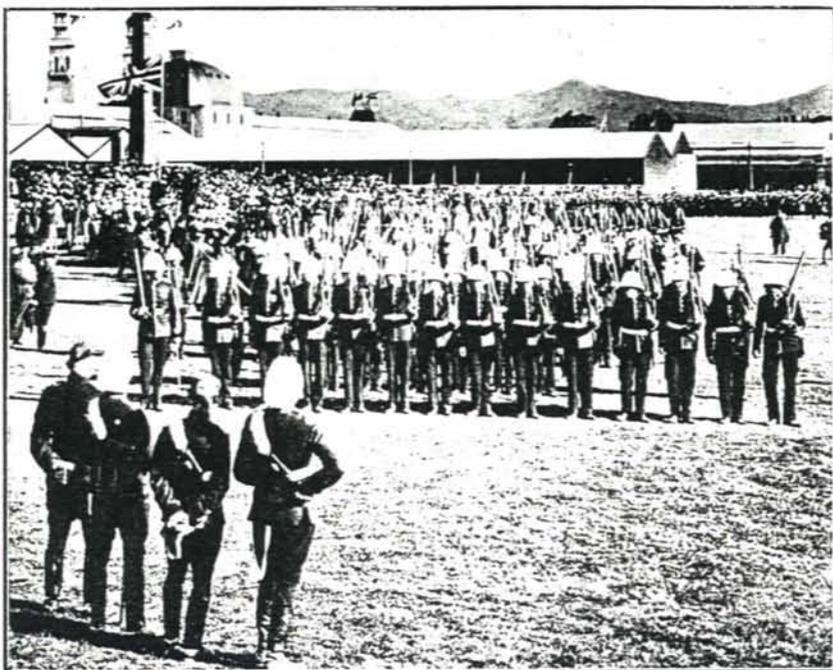
A baby-show, in which over three hundred children were shown, was held in the Main Corridor of the Exhibition.

Under the mana of the Exhibition various other shows and competitions were held. Of particular interest were the splendid live-stock shows of the Canterbury Agricultural and Pastoral Society, held at Addington.

New Year's Eve was a particularly gay and animated night at the Exhibition. There was an exceedingly large attendance, and every part of the buildings as well as "Wonderland" and the promenade in the grounds were crowded with light-hearted sightseers. "Wonderland" was a fairyland of illumination, and an even more dazzling sight was the Sports Ground, where a firework-display of uncommon magnificence was given. The large enclosure at the rear of the ground was packed with spectators. Pain and Son's great pyrotechnical exhibition was favoured with perfect conditions of darkness and unvexed air. Some novel and beautiful set pieces were shown, and there were lights of every colour, huge rockets that broke into the most brilliant of stars, soaring fire-balloons, and a multitude of other fine effects in fireworks.



It was a great night for the sons of Caledonia. There was an especially large gathering of Scottish Highlanders, including several pipe bands—the Dunedin, Waimate, and Ashburton pipers. The skirl of the bag-pipes made sweetest music for the patriotic Scottish ear, and even the poor Sassenach could not but admire the proud and lordly gait of the "Macs" who blew away hour after hour at their beloved march-tunes and strathspeys and Highland reels. About midnight there was a procession of pipers and numbers of the Canterbury Scottish Society and other Celts, from the Scottish Society's rooms to the Exhibition Buildings. The Scotsmen duly "first-footed" Mr. G. S. Munro, the General Manager, at the entrance, Chief Mackintosh producing the orthodox bottle of "Scotch drink," and one of his kilted henchmen a dish of oat-cakes.



A MILITARY PARADE, SPORTS GROUND.

The late Sir John Hall, Mayor of Christchurch, was only able to visit the Exhibition once. His visit was made in his invalid's chair, the day before the closing of the Exhibition, when he spent about three hours in the buildings. He was particularly interested in the British and Canadian Courts.

MILITARY EVENTS.

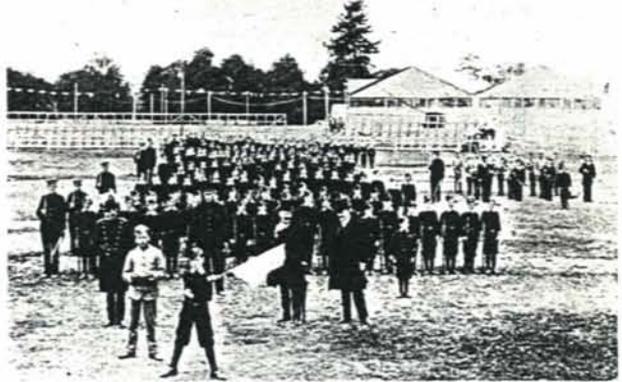
On the 26th and 27th December a military tournament in connection with the Exhibition was held in the Sports Grounds. For these military sports entries were received from over a thousand men. All parts of the Dominion sent competitors, chiefly Volunteers, and also including members of the Royal New Zealand Artillery and Submarine Mining Engineers (Permanent Force). Australia was represented by a team of artillerymen from the Garrison Artillery, Melbourne, and a Field Hospital Corps from

Ade'aide. All branches of the service were embraced, and every imaginable kind of sport and competition was included that helped to smarten up a soldier, harden his muscles, and make him limber and "springy" in his military duties. On the first morning of the tournament competitions were held in flag-signalling, harnessing military horses, lemon-slicing, tilting at the ring, making fascines and gabions, gun-laying and fuse-setting, and in trumpet-call and bugle-call playing contests. The gunnery and engineering contests were carried out at the southern end of the grounds, where a quick-firing Nordenfeldt gun had been set up on a temporary pedestal mounting. Here also a supply of cut willows for making fascines and gabions was provided. In the harnessing competition twenty-eight artillery drivers entered, and did some smart work. Each man had to harness single-handed two gun-horses with a heavy collar and harness, and then mount. The competition known as "subsection alarm" gave a good opportunity for gun squads to display their alacrity in the field. A 15-pounder field-gun was used; the teams were harnessed, the gun limbered up, taken at a gallop the length of the ground, then unlimbered, prepared for action, and loaded; after inspection the gun was fired and returned to the starting-place. The physical-drill competition brought out a number of squads, all of whom did good work. Another competition worth watching was the handling of the

6-pounder q. f. Nordenfeldt. In the evening there were tugs-of-war on foot and on horseback (bareback), and other competitions. On the second day the contests included competitions in pitching and striking of tents, semaphore signalling, electric land-mining, section driving competitions for artillery, road-marching contests, displays of sword exercise, ambulance-stretcher drill, big-gun drill, tent-pegging by fours, Maxim-gun drill by

squads of infantry, and an excellent exhibition of work with a galloping Maxim, in the course of which two horses galloping tandem took the gun at a jump over a 3-ft. obstruction of brushwood. A test of the activity and promptness of the Engineering Volunteers was the placing of a field observatory by teams of ten men.

Arrangements were made early in the course of the Exhibition to give the public-school boys who are members of the Defence cadet corps an opportunity of visiting the Exhibition, and of at the same time undergoing a short period of training in camp under military conditions. The result was exceedingly beneficial to the boys of the Dominion, New Zealand's future defenders, for some five thousand of these were enabled to see the big fair and to spend a useful week under canvas. Under the arrangements made by the Government the cadets attended the camp at the Exhibition in battalions; these included corps from Invercargill in the south to as far north as New Plymouth and Gisborne. The camp and the arrangements generally were under the control of Colonel Loveday, Inspecting Officer of Cadets for the Dominion. While in camp, the discipline of the cadets was excellent, and they carried out their military duties with obedience and enthusiasm, and greatly pleased their officers by their good behaviour. The work included pitching and striking camp, guard-mounting, and all the usual duties of a soldier in a camp of instruction.



On the 7th February, at an inspection by the Hon. G. Fowlds (Minister of Education) of the Third Wellington Battalion of School Cadets, which was encamped at the Exhibition, the following cable message received by Colonel Loveday from Lord Roberts was read: "As president of the National Service League, I send you greeting and the compliments of the season, and hope that you will personally do your utmost throughout the coming year to promote the movement towards the much-needed national reform for which we are all working.—ROBERTS, F.M."

AXEMEN'S COMPETITION.

A competition that was of special appropriateness in a country that is still largely in its pioneer stage, and where the settlers are still struggling with the great forests of the interior, was the Axemen's Carnival, held on the Exhibition Sports Ground on the 17th and 19th January. It consisted of wood chopping and sawing contests, and brought entries from all over Australasia—the pick of the bushmen of the Southern World. The principal event was the New Zealand International Exhibition Handicap of 150



SCHOOL-GIRLS' EXERCISES AT A GATHERING ON THE SPORTS GROUND.

sovereigns (first prize, £75; second, £25; third, £10; and fourth, £5), in which 18-in. logs, firmly planted upright in the ground, had to be chopped through. This was won by J. Hartnett, of Hawke's Bay, who chopped second for the Axemen's Cup at the last Eltham Carnival. Hartnett's time was 3 minutes 4 $\frac{3}{4}$ seconds.

Some of the competing axemen were young giants, fit pioneers of a new bush country: C. O'Rourke, of Westland, the winner of the Underhand Chopping Championship, aged twenty-four, stood 6 ft. 3 in. high, and weighed 16 st. 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. His brother, P. O'Rourke, who was second in the same event, was nineteen years of age, 6 ft. 0 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. in height, and weighed 13 st. 9 $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. W. Chellis, another prominent axemen, aged thirty-five years, was 6 ft. 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. in height, and weighed 15 st. 12 lb.

Amongst the spectators at the Axemen's Meeting was the Hon. H. A. Nicholls, M.J.C., of Tasmania, the founder of the Australasian Axemen's Carnival. It was in 1891 that he originated the Axemen's Association in Tasmania, with the object of increasing the interest of bushmen in their work, and of creating a spirit of emulation which would bring out expert axemen. One result of the founding of this Association, Mr. Nicholls stated, was that it helped to materially reduce the cost of forest-clearing.

THE EXHIBITION HOME.

The Exhibition Home, which was situated near the northern end of the Exhibition Building, was established by the Exhibition Executive for the accommodation of school-children as well as adults, and during the season many thousands made use of the board and lodging provided. Quite fifty thousand had meals at the Home, and it proved a very necessary adjunct of the fair. School cadets and pupils from various parts of the colony were practically in continuous occupation of the Home—in fact, without it their visits could hardly have been made. The Home fed on an average 950 people each day. On "Show Day" over a thousand people were attended to in the dining-hall. Mr. J. H. Towsey carried out the duties of manager of the Home with extreme satisfaction to his fleeting guests, adults as well as children.



AN AXEMEN'S COMPETITION IN THE SPORTS GROUND.

THE CHILDREN'S REST.

An institution that was a great convenience to mothers visiting the Exhibition was the Children's Rest, in a building a short distance inside the Armagh Street entrance. This institution was conducted throughout the season by the Women's Christian Temperance Union, the Exhibition authorities paying the expenses and taking the proceeds. Over 1,600 babies were temporarily left in the Rest while their mothers visited the Exhibition. The maximum number for one day was seventy—on Boxing Day, 1906. Many women informed Miss Field, who was in charge of the Rest, that they would never have been able to see the Exhibition at all if it had not been for the Rest. A large number of lost children were also received in the Rest, but all were returned to their parents safely.

H.M. CUSTOMS.

The Customs office in the Exhibition had an immense volume of work to deal with during the season. Mr. H. R. Spence was the officer in charge, and he and his obliging staff did their utmost at all times to facilitate the business of exhibitors.

EXHIBITION POST-OFFICE.

A special post-office and telegraph-office were established in the Exhibition Buildings, just inside the Main Corridor, and did a very brisk business all through the season. The number of articles posted and delivered at the Exhibition Post-office were—

	Posted.	Delivered.
Letters	187,200	296,480
Registered letters	1,236	200
Letter-cards	5,320	6,450
Post-cards	340,000	8,700
Parcels	750	610
Packages	1,200	7,690
Newspapers	11,409	15,000

Nine thousand eight hundred telegrams, valued at £240 10s. 6d., were received at the Exhibition office counter for delivery in the Exhibition, and 14,514, valued at £568 8s. 2½d., were despatched from the office. Mr. Peter Young was the Postmaster in charge.

POLICE ARRANGEMENTS.

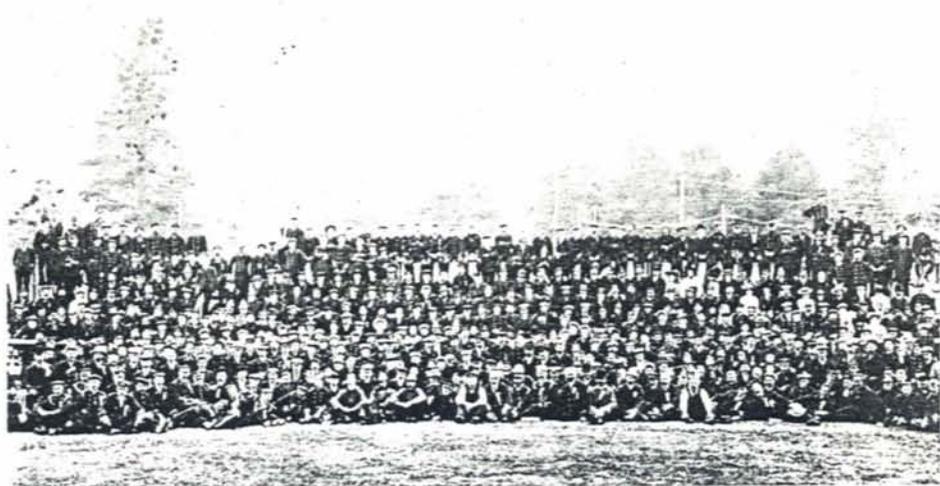
Careful arrangements had been made by the police for safeguarding the Exhibition property from robbery and visitors from thieves and pickpockets. A special force of police did duty in the Exhibition grounds and buildings during the season. The Exhibition police office was in charge of Sub-Inspector Dwyer, of Christchurch, an excellent and experienced officer. The force on duty from November to January, the busiest months of the season, totalled fifty-eight officers and men, twenty-nine of whom were artillerymen of the Permanent Force. In January the strength was fifty-two, and in February forty-nine, but towards the last days of the Exhibition an increase was again made to deal with any emergency in view of the great attendance of visitors. The whole of the Exhibition area was mapped out into a number of beats, and each beat had its regular patrolman. The services of detectives from Melbourne and Sydney were also secured in order that a check might be kept on criminals whom the fame of the fair might attract from the Commonwealth. These prompt measures prevented any serious crime at the Exhibition. Inspector Gillies, head of the Christchurch Police Force, remarking on the good order that prevailed in the city and Exhibition during the season, and the freedom from crime, said he considered that the refusal of the Licensing Committee to grant a liquor license for the Exhibition had undoubtedly largely contributed to this desirable condition.

THE ATTENDANCE.

The total attendance at the Exhibition for the season, as registered by the turnstiles at the entrances, reached 1,967,632. This showed a daily average attendance of nearly 14,000. Compared with previous Exhibitions held in the colony, these figures showed an enormous increase. At the Exhibition held in Dunedin in 1889-90, the largest previous to that of 1906-7, the number of visitors was 618,622—less than one-third of that recorded at the International Exhibition; the daily average was 4,849.

The largest attendance at the New Zealand Exhibition on any one day was on the closing-day, when the turnstiles registered 46,852. The next largest day's attendance was on the King's Birthday, the 9th November, when the admissions totalled 45,348. In reading these figures, however, it must be remembered that they included the visits of season-ticket holders, attendants, and others who frequently or daily visited the Exhibition, so that the actual number of persons who attended the Exhibition was considerably smaller. The number who entered the Exhibition as paying visitors (not including season-ticket holders) was 983,621. The number of season tickets issued was 8,123.

The millionth visitor to the Exhibition, Miss Alice Jennings, of Christchurch, passed through the gates on the 26th January, and was afterwards presented with a gold watch as a souvenir of the occasion.



A MASS GATHERING OF MEMBERS OF NEW ZEALAND FIRE BRIGADES.

THE TRAMWAY SERVICE.

The Christchurch City Tramways cars naturally had a busy season during the Exhibition. For the period from the 1st November, 1906, to the 31st March, 1907, the number of passengers on all lines in city and suburbs nearly doubled that of the same period in previous years. The figures are—1905-6, 2,858,412; 1906-7, 5,517,357. The traffic between Cathedral Square and the Exhibition and between the railway-station and the Exhibition totalled 537,896 fares. The heavy work of the five-months' season was exceedingly well carried out by the tramway service.

