

New Zealand's Ideals

BY HON. DR. FINLAY

NOTE:—A few days ago Sir Joseph Ward, premier of New Zealand, and Dr. Finlay, minister of justice in his cabinet, passed through Canada on their way to the Imperial conference and Coronation. They were accompanied across Canada by Dr. J. A. Macdonald, editor of The Globe, who discussed matters in the southern Dominion with Dr. Finlay and wrote the following interview with him. New Zealand is often quoted as an example for Canada, and Dr. Finlay's statements will be found intensely interesting.—Editor.

"All our efforts in New Zealand, both in legislation and in administration, are directed, conscientiously directed, along definite lines to a clearly recognized ideal. The ideal we keep in view is a democratic state in which the average citizen is offered the freest possible access to all the opportunities of life, and is encouraged to take advantage of those opportunities in the interest of the state. If you disregard that organizing idea you will miss the real significance of what is happening in New Zealand."

It was the Hon. Dr. Finlay who spoke those concise and pregnant words. He is the minister of justice in the government of New Zealand, and, with the prime minister, Sir Joseph Ward, is now in Canada en route for the conference of the colonial premiers in London.

A Progressive Statesman

Dr. Finlay is a distinguished graduate of the University of New Zealand, a doctor of laws of Cambridge University, a professor of political science, a lawyer of the highest standing, the attorney-general of his country and a progressive statesman whose presence would give strength to any government under the flag.

The Government Leads

"The policy of our government," he went on, "is not to delay legislation until unrest here and clamor there or the pressure of half-instructed public opinion yonder crowds us into action. Our plan is to lead. There came a time when it was plain that New Zealand was face to face with a crisis. Things could not go on as they had been going without revolt and reaction. The ideal was conceived of what kind of state New Zealand ought to be, and it has been the aim of our politics to work steadily and determinedly towards that ideal."

"No, it is not numbers or material wealth. In geographical area our country, you would think, might be lost in your Lake Superior. In population the United States would laugh at us, as China might laugh at the rest of the world. But in the real things of life and in the highest achievements of government New Zealand today is not afraid of comparison with any other country. We have 66,000,000 acres and one million people, and our purpose is to make each of those acres yield the utmost of good for the people and to secure to each of those people the freest possible access to all the opportunities which life in New Zealand affords."

What "Opportunity" Means

He said all this and much more with such exactness of statement and such sincerity of conviction that it was plain he was neither a theorizer in political economics nor a novice in the work of government. "Access to opportunity" was to him far more than a text-book phrase. It meant access to the land as the source of wealth; access to education, both free and efficient, as essential to the right use of opportunity; access to wholesome conditions of labor and just rewards; access to justice, such as gives the poorest seamstress as fair a chance before the court as the wealthiest corporation; access to capital at moderate rates of interest and easy terms of payment; access to all the conveniences provided by railways, telegraphs, telephones and other public services, at the minimum of cost to the state, and access to insurance against accidents and invalidism and a pension for old age. To secure access to all such opportunities, not for the privileged few, but for all the people of New Zealand, is what Dr. Finlay regards as the chief duty of the government of his country.

Towards the Mark

"No, we have not already attained,"

he went on, "neither are we already perfect, but we press on towards the mark. There are mistakes and failures, but the plain facts abundantly justify the policy. Both the material progress of our people and their moral character give the lie to all that ignorant or interested outcry about Socialism which you may have heard even in Canada. We repudiate and combat those forms of Socialism, defined and maintained elsewhere, under which class privileges grow up and by which the few are enriched at the expense of the many. But we have no fear of government ownership or operation of those public services which can be managed more satisfactorily by the community than by private individuals."

Solving the Land Problem

Dr. Finlay then told of the solving of the vexed land question in New Zealand. With only a limited area, and with private estates of 200,000 acres devoted to sheep-raising and supporting only a few shepherds, a situation

turn to the old plan is never suggested. "So, too, with education. With universal suffrage, women as well as men voting in all elections, we require trained intelligence in our citizenship. Therefore all our schools, from the primary grade to the university, are practically free. A college education is the privilege of the common man. Many of our policemen hold college diplomas, and not a few of them solicitors' certificates. At first the effect was to incline young men away from the land, but that day is past. Make college education general and you create no special class."

"Yes, our teachers are fairly well paid, better on the average than teachers in Canada, but our great advantage is in a very generous pension—two-thirds of the regular salary—granted on retiring either from disability or old age. Education costs New Zealand a very large sum, but without it democracy is doomed."

"Our working classes are better dealt

with. The Eugenist Society of Southern New Zealand is an organization which is preparing the way for effective legislation that will make it a crime for syphilitic or similarly diseased persons knowingly to communicate or transmit their taint."

"There is nothing else for it," said Dr. Finlay. "The people must be protected against disease and social poison or they will decay. The citizenship of a democracy must be intelligent, self-controlled and unpoliticized or self-government will degenerate into despotism or anarchy."

Immigration Laws

"The same holds true as regards immigration," he went on. "Our original population was good, the best Britain had to give. It is still more than ninety-eight per cent. of Anglo-Saxon or Celtic stock. If our institutions of government and life are to be maintained, all diseased and ignorant and incompatible elements must be forbidden entrance. They are all rigidly excluded. So are aliens of all sorts who cannot pass the tests of inspection not only as to physical and mental fitness and financial competence, but also as to education. By those tests all Orientals, Hindus as well as Chinese and Japanese, who cannot pass the educational test are excluded. If they come to us they have the right under our suffrage to share in the responsibilities of government. If educated intelligence and all the other requirements are necessary in our own people it cannot be urged that in aliens and foreigners they are of less importance. We are not unjust to fellow subjects from India if we require from them what we require from our own children."

"Of course this policy makes our immigration returns look small. What New Zealand needs is not the largest number of people, but the best brand."

Woman's Suffrage

Talking about woman's suffrage, Dr. Finlay was unreserved in his commendation of its effect on the politics and life of New Zealand. "The women take quite as much interest in public affairs as the men, and they go to the polls quite as freely. More than eighty per cent. of the electors vote in any ordinary election, even when temperance or other social or moral questions in which women are specially interested are not an issue. The votes of the women certainly have made advanced temperance legislation possible and effective. Great areas of New Zealand are now dry, and in a very few years national prohibition, forbidding the manufacture, importation or sale of alcoholic stimulants anywhere in our Dominion, will be enacted. Thousands of men stand for absolute prohibition who have not been total abstainers, but who have come to see that the use of alcohol is a hurt to the individual and a menace to the state."

"The general effect of woman's suffrage has been the tuning up of our politics. What would most surprise and interest you in New Zealand is the strength and activity of the social conscience. That phrase is often a vague thing, but with us the social conscience is a real power making for righteousness in politics and in all departments of our organized activities. It is indeed the compelling force in our effort to make New Zealand a true democracy in which the ordinary man has a man's chance."

And the man who talked on in this way is no shallow thinker or irresponsible theorist. Rarely have I met one who sees the essential things so steadily or who knows so accurately the history and the issues of self-government. With leaders like Sir Joseph Ward and Dr. Finlay it is no wonder that New Zealand points to a truer type of democracy and leads the way. J.A.M.



Barn owned by W. E. Simpson, Oak River, Man.

grew up akin to that in Britain. The government "reclaimed" much of that land, leased it to small farmers, loaned capital on it, provided needed facilities and conveniences, and in the end disproved every argument of the obstructionists by showing widespread prosperity and trebled land values. One-sixth of all New Zealand is now held by the crown, and will not be sold, but only leased in small holdings at reasonable rentals, and revalued every sixty-six years.

"Absolutely and in every particular our land policy has been justified," said Dr. Finlay, and he did not refuse the refrain of the campaign song of British Radicals, "God made the land for the people."

Transportation

So, too, with their railway problem. All the transportation services are owned and operated by the state. "In every respect it has proved a success," he said. "The roads are not run to make money. In any section where profits begin to pile up the rates are reduced. We would rather make a loss than a profit, for the service is the people's. There are many things the state can do for the people by owning and operating the railways. Our system is managed by a commissioner, who is not interfered with by politicians or in the special interest of any class. Re-

with, alike in wages, in hours, and in conditions of service, than elsewhere known to me. A weekly half-holiday in every shop and factory and store was resisted at first, but it has proved itself a boon to both employers and employees. It is universal, and so firmly fixed is it in our business ideas that even were the law repealed the practice would continue."

After much more illustration and illumination of the New Zealand idea of "access to opportunity" for the average citizen, our talk turned to the problem of crime and unfitness.

"Vengeance is wholly eliminated from our administration of the law," said the minister of justice. "Men are punished, but the constant objective is their reclamation and restoration to social usefulness." Hence discretionary powers granted to the courts, and the shops and farms and schools attached to prisons and reformatories. Dr. Finlay's instances of the benefits of reform methods from personal knowledge, both as a practising lawyer and as minister of justice, were rarely instructive and encouraging. So, too, was his exposition of New Zealand's experience in making it a criminal offence for mental defectives or persons tainted with hereditary disease to marry. No feeble-minded woman is allowed to be exposed to the risk of reproducing her