

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

THE ROYAL VISIT.—Would it not be possible to arrange that the Duke and Duchess of York might see the glorious view from the Springs? The Prince of Wales was not allowed to go. It seems such a pity that they should see nothing of our scenery, and that the time should be filled up with official functions.

—F.A.C.

TASMANIA, A FREE PORT.—When shall we Tasmanians develop a truly Tasmanian patriotism, consistent with our obligations and natural facilities to better serve our fellow Australians on the mainland, while putting Tasmania more definitely "on the map" in the eyes of overseas countries? To my mind the making of Tasmania "a free port," with the true development of its natural geographical endowment in the interests of more efficient trading between the Commonwealth and overseas ports would work wonders, and spell greater prosperity for everybody concerned. Whatever our relations with the mainland from the political or sociological points of view we must realise that it is wisdom to turn a disadvantage such as Bass Strait has proved to be under existing Federal restrictions, into an advantage, which our insularity would thus afford to commerce. Tasmania's geographical situation predestines her to be a natural repository of the exchangeable wealth of Australia and overseas. Under "The Free Port" plan, Tasmania would come into its own. The Australian protectionist need not object to the idea—which merely speeds up the transfer of commodities, giving importers and exporters greater freedom of exchange with saving of time to traders and a better regulation of Australian distribution, which would reduce the cost of living, rendering labour products immediately available for consumption, while checking profiteering, stimulating Australian production and adding enormously to Australia's wealth. I sincerely suggest the formation of an Enthusiastic Research Committee, consisting of any persons resident in Tasmania who are prepared to study seriously, every phase of the problem and discuss its economic tendencies. If my office, at 35 and 36 Commercial Bank Chambers, would be regarded as suitable, I gladly make them available for regular evening meetings, with a view to something more than "a flash in the pan" being the result of these thoughtful, voluntary efforts, to promote "deserved prosperity by rendering better service" to the human family.—**WILLIAM E. LLOYD.**

TOTALISATOR AND TICKETS.—No doubt some investors do make mistakes when asking for the number of a horse they wish to back in a race, but then, again, all riders have the number of their mount in such a position that the public can see what they require before they go to the totalisator to back a horse. At Richmond races I asked for a ticket, No. 20, in the Electric Trot, one mile. Putting the ticket in my pocket, I went away. No. 20 won, but when I looked at my ticket I had a No. 5, so as this number was neither above nor below the horse, the mistake was not in that direction. Then, again, in the 1½ miles trot I went to get two tickets on a horse, No. 22, and was given No. 23, so I drew the official's attention to this. He simply said he was sorry, and gave me the right numbers.—**H. RO-**

—**BINSON.**

OUR TIMBER AND OUR FORESTRY.—The Tariff Board is inquiring into our timber industry. Will it give a protection? There is just a possibility. On

the previous inquiry the board declined to give protection, and as a consolation to our timber industry, expressed the opinion that our hardwood timbers are too good for building purposes, and hoped that an ample foreign market would be found to absorb it for furniture and cabinet making. Since that time a new imported timber was introduced on our Australian market; it is Manchurian oak. As a furniture and cabinet material it beats flat our hardwood on our own market; it beat even blackwood, our incomparable blackwood! And the Tariff Board's pious hope that an ample market would be found somewhere outside Australia for our hardwood seems to burst like a proverbial bubble; far from gaining a foreign market, we have very nearly lost our own. It is superfluous to discourse on the merits of our timbers and their superiority to the imported article. It is not disputed by anyone outside a few foreign timber merchants, whose nature of business might make them not unbiassed. It is just as well clear to everyone why we buy imported timber and not our own. The magic word "cheapness" makes us do it. We have not outgrown in this respect a child's mentality, and we are apt to indulge in buying the most expensive things by buying the cheapest. And yet with all the black outlook of our timber industry, there are still optimists who cherish a hope that we shall be able to gain a foreign market for our timber. Shall we? No. At least, not as long as we don't use our timber ourselves. The first natural question a would-be buyer will ask is this: How extensively do you use your timber yourself? And we shall be humiliated to confess that we don't use it ourselves, but we are anxious to sell it. It is evident that the interest in our timber of a would-be buyer will never go beyond this stage. We are facing the dilemma; either to use our timber ourselves and have a good prospect of selling it abroad, or not to use it, have no prospects, and let the young industry terminate its existence so full of care, remembering gratefully that it deserves at least a war memorial for its outstanding usefulness to our nation during the last war; for where should we have been then if not for our home timber? It is not only patriots who are anxious that the first proposition of the dilemma triumph; all the people of common sense recognise the necessity of lessening the unfair competition of inferior imported timber. Our timber industry cannot stand this competition unaided. It is not the question of the original price of timber, it is the question of different standards of labour. As long as our timber worker, with 14s. a day wage (I think it is under average), cannot compete with a Chinese, Japanese, or Korean labourer with something like 6d. a day, so long our hardwood cannot compete with Manchurian oak. For the time being the fate of our timber industry depends on the Tariff Board's point of view and that point of view is very uncertain. There are private people fussing about the Tariff Board, trying to influence it one way or the other, and the only institution whose attitude should play a decisive part in the matter remains in all appearance silent. This institution is the State Government, the State Government as a patron of the national forestry of the State. It is very interesting to observe that simultaneously with the ousting of our timber from the market there appeared on the stage a national forestry, a presumptuous child requiring a measure of assistance both from the Federal and State treasury. It is going to grow timber, the same timber that is not wanted on the market. It is a mistake that forestry in its inception was not made concomitant with marketlike provision; there is no sense to grow timber if we cannot sell it, and those who are respon-

is no sense to grow timber if we cannot sell it, and those who are responsible for forestry's creation and its upkeep are responsible as well for the absorption of its output, i.e., our timber. Our State Government is one of them. Of course, the Tariff Board is outside our Government's control. But, anyhow, the way for our Government to act is not through the Tariff Board. It should represent to the other trustees of the national forestry, the Federal Government, that experience has shown that there is no justification to indulge in forestry expenses, as our timbers

employees of the Electrolytic Zinc Co. jumping from the train before it stops. Some of these days I am afraid we shall learn of a serious accident taking place there.
—A.R.

THE FLAPPER ELEMENT.—If the facts concerning a foreign ship and young girls are as stated by your correspondent, "Moral Reform," in "The Mercury," and we have no reason to doubt them, then I think that the A.I.P. is to be highly commended for calling attention to them. As one anxious that our city should be beautiful morally as well as physically, I gladly join with your correspondent in saying "well done."

—F. V. PRATT (The
Manse, 71 Hampden-road, Battery Point).

are not required on the market; even when we have grown exotic softwoods we shall not be able to sell them for the same reason, on account of competition of foreign timbers produced by cheap labour. Let, then, the Federal Government have its say; either we want a national forestry, and, consequently, market for the timber grown in our forests, or we want neither; there can be no third way out. The present uncertain position in our timber industry is detrimental to the healthful development of the national forestry, which is very important from several points of view, but it cannot be based on sentiment alone; recognising forestry and afforestation as our national duty, we must not forget that the marketing of our timber is our right.

—S. SUTCHKOFF.

STATE SCHOLARSHIPS.—In last Monday's issue Mr. G. W. Knight, of the Lindisfarne State school, attempts to throw a smoke screen over the exposure contained in my recent letter to "The Mercury." In writing my letter, I abstained from personalities, acting purely in the public welfare by exposing a practice which lends itself to abuse. To summarise, the facts are purely these:—(1) My son Marcus wanted to sit for the scholarship exam.; (2) his teacher, Mr. Knight, tried to prevent him; (3) I appealed to the Secretary for Education just in the nick of time and got my boy included among the candidates; (4) at the examination my boy won a scholarship. And now, under defeat, Mr. Knight writes to say: (a) That during 1925-26 my boy missed a fabulous number of days from school; (b) that another son of mine lost 150 days; (c) that Mr. Knight told me repeatedly to send my boys to school regularly. These statements of Mr. Knight, apart from being chiefly imaginary, have no connection with the subject under review as the man in the moon. Still, recognising the poorness of his case, I think Mr. Knight deserves sympathy. The closing paragraph in Mr. Knight's letter springs from his inventive genius, as the statement he terms "despicable" was never contained in my letter.

—H. MONTI

(Lindisfarne).

JUMPING FROM TRAINS.—I was a witness to what might have been a very serious accident at the railway station, when a lad jumped from a moving train and his leg caught between the carriage step and the platform, with the result that he was dragged some distance. The railway officials soon had the boy released and attended to. Evidently a word of warning is not sufficient for the boys. I have repeatedly heard the station-masters warning them about jumping from moving trains. Parents and school teachers should warn the children of the danger in getting off moving trains or trams. At Derwent-park station I have noticed time after time the employees of the Electrolytic Zinc Co. jumping from the train before it stops. Some