

ON BOARD H.M.S. "MILDURA".

H M.S. MILDURA, which is now on the New Zealand division of the Australasian Station, is a twin screw cruiser of the 3rd class. Her tonnage is 2,575, and her indicated horse-power 4,000. Her commander is Captain Wm. Lea, who took the place lately of Captain Wm. McC. F. Castle. The vessel was transferred to the New Zealand shores a few months ago, and both her officers and crew have made themselves popular wherever they have gone.

BUSH FIRES.

Heartrending are the reports which come to hand of the terrible bush fires which have raged during the past week or so in every part of the colony. In Hawke's Bay, in Pahiatua, in Nelson, in Taranaki, in Canterbury, in Manawatu, the damage done cannot yet be even roughly estimated, for not only is the immediate loss enormous, but the loss of feed and fodder means that quantities of stock—sheep, cattle, and horses—will have to be sacrificed, since there is, and will be, nothing to feed them on. As for the story of individual loss and suffering, it will not bear thinking of.

The tale from every part of the colony is the same, but the press reports cannot give even the smallest idea of

the suffering and privation which must be endured for many months and even years by the unhappy settlers whose homesteads and property have been utterly destroyed.

But for the rain which fell at the end of the week, it is hard to say where the devastation would have ceased. Our artist, Mr Watkins, has endeavoured to give those who live in safety, and to whom such experiences are happily unknown, some idea of what a bush fire looks like in its earlier stages. To attempt to pourtray the scene when the devouring element has assumed full sway would be to court failure, but our illustration gives a very fair impression of the scene when the fire fiend has begun to reach the edge of the bush and to lick up the outstanding trees with its ever-hungry tongues of flame. As will be noticed, many of our correspondents make reference to the fires in their letters.

ROBERT L. STEVENSON'S MOTHER.

A gentle, kindly lady has passed away somewhat suddenly, and one to whom she was ever most friendly would lay a stone on the cairn which will be erected by many in affectionate sorrowing remembrance of Mrs Stevenson.

Some time after the death of her husband, Mrs Stevenson, knowing

that her son, although now happily married, needed her as much as she longed for his companionship, left her home here and bravely went to the distant, sunny land where the novelist found he could best enjoy a measure of health. There the presence of the surviving beloved one soothed his mother's sorrow; and her intense interest in all that concerned him, and also in the entirely new phases of life around her made time pass very pleasantly. When, on (we think) two occasions she returned to Edinburgh for a short visit, she delighted all her friends by her graphic descriptions, aided by innumerable photographs, of life in Samoa. A third time she joined her son and his household there; but now they were not long to be together. As every one knows, after a few hours illness the distinguished novelist breathed his last, and sleeps in a lonely grave far from his native land, far from the spot where both his parents now rest till the great awakening. When his mother returned here she looked so changed and saddened, it seemed as if she could never be her own bright self again. True Christian resignation, however, time and appreciation in which her lamented son was held, had their healing effect; her wonted cheerfulness gradually reappeared, and she evidently began again to enjoy life.

At first we dreaded the most distant illusion to her loss, but before

long found that nothing pleased her more than speak of Robert Louis and his works. The last winter she seemed specially animated and cheerful. The meeting in the Music hall (presided over by Lord Rosebery) in connection with the proposed memorial to the great author was a heartfelt pleasure to her. So crowded was it that with the utmost difficulty his mother effected an entrance, and only by going on the platform much against her inclination, could she obtain a seat. "You may believe," she afterward wrote: "I listened with very mingled feelings; but I think the prevailing one was gratitude."

A daughter of the manse, Mrs Stevenson was always, as was her husband, an attached member of the Church of Scotland, and a warm friend to its missions. Kind, thoughtful, generous to a degree, she was ever ready to respond to appeals for aid in any form; and many a charity, public and private, will miss her sympathetic heart and her liberal hand.

Interested in all around her, brightly intelligent, full of anecdote, and with a keen sense of humour, she was a delightful companion, and her pleasant smile, her genial laugh, are good to remember.

The afternoon of Easter eve was the last time we saw her; and little did we think that the parting cheerful 'good-by' was 'farewell' for all time.—Chambers' Journal.



THE COMMENCEMENT OF A BUSH FIRE IN NEW ZEALAND.