

News of the Week.

FRIDAY.

In mining (says the *Cromwell Argus*), as in other things, distance lends enchantment to the view, and the fact of two or three parties who did well at Criffel last season going to Dunedin, and very likely making the most of their good luck, created a *furor*, as if the whole range was an Eldorado, and many made their way there who had never worked at mining in their lives, and became utterly disgusted that they could not at once drop on a good claim. As far as we can ascertain from all sources, the fact is the most of the claims taken up last season are known to be good. A number of claims have been taken up in the vicinity and been prospected with more or less success, but undoubtedly the best ground was taken up at first. The top of the Pisa range—miles in extent—is, so far as this season is concerned, a perfect *terra incognita*. As it is still covered with snow, very little prospecting can be done for at least a month yet. On the lower slope of the range, on the Midran, several claims are working, but we do not hear of anything better than good wages. The great want undoubtedly is water, which is difficult to bring on to the ground. One party has obtained a right for the head of water of the Roaring Meg, and will commence cutting the race as soon as the snow gets off; but as it is about 17 miles in length, and the working season very short, it will be some time before it can be got in. There are other applications from the same source, but it is very doubtful if any but the very head water will be high enough to command the ground.

There does not appear to be much foundation for the rumours which have been recently circulated, to the effect that Mr. H. A. Scott has made arrangements in London for the construction of the West Coast and Nelson railways. It appears, however, that certain negotiations on the subject are pending, though no definite information has yet been received as to the probability of success. It is said that some of those who held back until the matter was on the point of being withdrawn have now made overtures to the delegates, and that consequently negotiations are pending for an arrangement under the terms of the contract between the guarantors and the Government. Messrs. Fell and Selanders, two gentlemen of long experience in London, the brothers of the Nelson delegates, are now associated with Mr. Scott in the matter.

King Milan of Servia has addressed a diplomatic note to the European Powers, in which he states that he is anxious to uphold the integrity of the Treaty of Berlin, and he has no intention of breaking the peace.

The news of the reported revolution in Mandalay, and the death of King Theebaw is not confirmed, and the rumour is believed to be devoid of truth.

News is to hand of a severe storm on the coast of Labrador, which has wrecked 80 fishing boats. The loss of life was very great, no less than 80 men being known to have been drowned.

SATURDAY.

The *Lizuna* arrived at Melbourne yesterday evening from London. His Eminence Cardinal Moran is a passenger for Sydney.

The South Canterbury Refrigerating Works at Timaru were formally opened yesterday. A large number of shareholders and others were present. Freezing operations commence at once. Mr. Coxon, Haslam's representative, at the opening, referred to the correspondence going on in the Christchurch papers, and said it was quite a mistake, for people, instead of writing to the papers, should put themselves in communication with Mr. Haslam, who would tell them the truth about the matter, and give them a satisfactory explanation. It was only fair that the writers should do this, so as to give Mr. Haslam a chance of answering the accusations made against him.

An extraordinary case came before the Supreme Court yesterday. Mrs. Walcot brought a suit for judicial separation, and praying for the custody of her two children, against Colonel Walcot. The respondent had failed to appear in the suit, but was in court attired in the uniform of a Salvation soldier, and had put on placards with printed texts, fixing them on his breast and back, and said: "My wife, judge, and citizens, I ask forgiveness for a great sin." He was reproved by his Honor, and asked to remove the placards, which he did. The *evil-ance*, which was very lengthy, was then proceeded with. The respondent, who retired from the Indian service with the rank of colonel was shown to be most eccentric, and virtually the only question for the Court was as to the custody of the youngest child, a lad of 12, who could scarcely read, though very intelligent. Mrs. Walcot since her marriage has joined the Roman Catholic Church, and though she was willing to have her boy brought up as a Protestant desired to take him to England. His Honor was ready to make the decree for separation, but took time to consider the order as to the custody of the boy.

The Raratonga embassy left Auckland last night by the *Janet Nicoll*, which takes the largest cargo yet taken to the Islands. Mr. Ballance had an interview with the Queen. He proposed to arrange reciprocity duties in order to foster closer commercial relations between the Colony and Raratonga, and the establishment of a quasi protectorate by New Zealand to prevent foreign powers intervening, the Natives to have full control of internal affairs. The Queen will refer the proposals to the Native chiefs for consideration and send a deputy to the Government. Sir George Grey also interviewed the Embassy, and told them whenever they needed help or a friend to write him, and he would stand by them.

An inquiry is to be held as to the sanity of the insurgent Riel, who now lies under sentence of death.

An attempt, fortunately unsuccessful, was made to shoot M. Freycinet, the French Minister, on Thursday. A man fired a shot at him, but was arrested by the bystanders and placed in the custody of the police before he could fire another shot. The prisoner is a Corsican. He admits having premeditated the attempt, but has not stated his reasons for the crime.

MONDAY.

A great sensation was caused when the *Wairarapa* steamed into Poverty Bay about 6 yesterday morning, and dense volumes of smoke were seen issuing from about a third of the length of the vessel amidships. The steamer came unusually close to shore, and sounding signals of distress with her whistle. Immediately the anchor was dropped, the ship's boats were lowered and a crowd of passengers were seen getting into them. The steam tender *Moko* went off immediately, and assisted in getting out the passengers, and all were soon landed on the beach in safety, many, however, with only very scanty clothing, some with only bedclothes wrapt around them. There were about 100 passengers for here, Auckland, and Sydney, and on arrival on shore they were taken in 'busses and cabs to various hotels. Boats went off from shore to the vessel, which was about half a mile distant. Smoke continued to belch out in dense volumes. On arrival on board, it was found all hands were straining every nerve to subdue the fire. The fire-engine was working at its hardest, and buckets were being used over the side. The *Wairarapa* left Napier at 9.30 on Saturday night, and came along under easy steam as usual, to arrive at Gisborne by daylight. The night was beautifully calm and fine. About 4 yesterday morning, just at daylight, when a few miles South of Necks Head, the alarm of fire was raised. All the passengers were awakened with the utmost expedition. Some of the cabins were already filled with smoke, and several passengers were nearly suffocated before they could escape. All hurried on deck through the smoke and flames, taking what clothes and effects they could catch; all remaining on deck till arrival in the bay. Meanwhile all the crew had turned to their allotted stations, under Captain Chatfield and Chief-officer Anderson, to combat the fire, which it was found had originated in the linen closet. From there it spread along to the ladies' cabin. The fire had a pretty good hold when discovered, and despite the utmost efforts to subdue it, it travelled aft, and spread the whole width of the ship. It worked through into the hold and to the upper deck; into the kitchen and rooms adjacent, and up through the ventilators. The plates on both sides of the vessel got red hot, and part dropped off. The iron ventilators also got red hot. A number of fire extinguishers and hand grenades were taken off from the shore to assist. The fighting with the fire was kept up with unabated energy until a quarter to 9, when the chief officer reported it had been got under, and that there was no fear of the loss of the ship. On inspection after the fire was got under, it was found that the whole centre of the ship, for about one-fourth of her length, was completely gutted, all the woodwork and fittings being destroyed. The extent of the damage to her cargo is not yet ascertained, but it is known to be very considerable, both by fire and water. A large quantity of water was poured in and it lowered the vessel two feet and gave her a great list to one side. A large cargo is on board, including a great quantity taken from the *Loic* at Wellington. It is not known what caused the fire, but the most plausible suggestion seems to be that some one must have gone into the linen-room in the evening with a match and dropped it, and that the linen smouldered some hours before the fire broke out. Captain Chatfield states that the men all worked splendidly, and passengers say great order and good discipline was shown. There was not much excitement or fear shown by the passengers, the shore being so near and it being daylight. Some ladies, however, were greatly alarmed for a time. Some passengers lost nearly all their effects. It is reported several were injured by the heat. It is computed it will cost at least £5000 to refit the vessel.

The recent gold discovery at the northern end of the Longwood range, near Merrivale, still continues (says the *Hiverston Star*) to attract considerable attention. There are some 30 men on the ground prospecting, and from tests already made it would appear that the run of gold extends over a considerable extent of country. Writing on the subject the Otago correspondent of that journal says:—The manager at Merrivale has set men on to cut a track into the supposed goldfield. A great many have gone out to prospect. I think there is no doubt as to the genuineness of the field, as everyone who has been there has brought good prospects down. I have seen another quantity of gold that was got from a couple of shovelful of dirt, and if there is much of the same kind of wash the field must be a success. I hear that a reef has been struck, but as we all know that quartz abounds in the Longwood, that discovery does not go for much. Reliable reports just to hand say that those on the ground are sure of good wages, if not more. The sinking at present is shallow, but they intend driving.

The Dunedin Cavalry sports held at Tahuna Park on Saturday proved highly successful. The weather was fine and a large concourse of spectators were present. The *Daily Times* describes the contest in the "Tug of war" as follows:—This proved one of the most interesting competitions of the day. The first two teams to meet were the Irish Rifles and the B Battery of Artillery, and a most obstinate contest ensued in which the Irishmen had for some minutes the worst of it. They stuck to the work, however, and to general surprise lasted better than their opponents, and finished by pulling them clean across the line. The Dunedin Cavalry then met the Peninsula Navals, and another prolonged tussle took place in which the Hussars, a fine body of men in good trim, had to work hard to assert their superiority. The Irish Rifles then pulled the Engineers over without very much difficulty, and then came the final tussle between the Irishmen and the Hussars, the former labouring under the disadvantage of having contested twice to the other team's once. The decision was in doubt for some moments, but the cavalrymen finally prevailed.

The Bulgarians have established a blockade on their western frontier and threatened to shoot any Servians found crossing into Bulgarian territory. King Milan of Servia has issued instructions to the troops to retaliate should violence be offered them. In consequence of the threatening aspect of affairs, a number of Servians are leaving the town of Widdin and taking refuge in Servian territory.

Sir Henry Wolff has been received by his Highness the Khedive, who assured him that he would warmly support such measures as might be concerted between England and the Sultan for the better regulation of Egyptian affairs.