

WINCHESTER.

MR. THOMAS CORCORAN.

(From a Correspondent.)

THE people of this highly-favoured agricultural District are lamenting the removal of their esteemed station-master, Mr. Thomas Corcoran, who by the fact of that bogey, Retrenchment, has suddenly been transferred to Doyleston, an unimportant rural station on the Southbridge line. For seven years Mr. Corcoran has discharged his onerous duties with consummate ability and tact, to the satisfaction alike of his department and the public. As the station is the centre of the grain-growing districts of Winchester, Geraldine Flat, Geraldine, Pleasant Valley, Kakaha, Waitohi and Hilton, and in the midst of the Springfield and the Barker estates, the grain trade alone has naturally attached to it a position of responsibility. In addition to this, the private aiding of Inwood and Co., the local millers, whose grain shed has storage capacity for an enormous quantity of wheat, gives it a prominence sufficient to class it as a first-class rural station. The entire business has been carried on hitherto by Mr. Corcoran, with the assistance only of a telegraphist who also acted as clerk. Considering the multifarious duties devolving upon them, the wonder is that they had been found equal to the pressure of business during the grain season, besides attending to the receipt of letters, telegrams, money order office, savings bank, Government insurance, transit of goods, parcels, etc. Now it appears that under the retrenchment scheme the station is to be worked by one officer, whose *sine qua non* qualification is a knowledge of telegraphy.

As soon as the unwelcome news had spread that Mr. Corcoran was to prepare for orders to be transferred, a meeting of some 20 leading residents was got together within 24 hours of the first intimation being given, and a committee was formed to take steps to present Mr. Corcoran with a substantial testimonial in recognition of his unvarying kindness and civility while located at Winchester. That good work is now in train, and gives promise of meeting with a hearty response from all classes, irrespective of creed, country, or colour. But while all agreed that Mr. Corcoran may be vouchsafed permission to come back soon to receive the testimonial, it was decided not to allow him to leave even at so short a notice without inviting to a social re-union, in the shape of a smoke concert, on the evening prior to his departure. The whole district was fully represented, there being some 30 gentlemen present. In speaking to the various toasts, the burden of every speaker seemed involuntarily to gravitate towards according a meed of praise to Mr. Corcoran. To say that some were eloquent, or were specimens of modern oratory, would be only giving faint praise to several of the speeches made. All seemed unanimous in emphatically declaring that Mr. Corcoran's great popularity was the result of his invariably civil and obliging disposition to all whom he had occasion to do business with, both in his official and private capacity. He thought nothing of getting up even in the middle of the night to oblige a customer or to confer any favour. His purse was always open to the poor and distressed in the district. His benevolence was a by-word. By his own countrymen his advice was listened to with attention and respect, but if anything should have merited his stern condemnation, his artful weapon had a double edge, and he would lash out with withering denunciation against the actions of an evil-doer with such trenchant force of utterance as to show how inviolable was his sense of purity, how hereditary his strength of mind, and how magnanimous his sentiments in matters of purely human concern in private life as distinguished from his public position. To succeed in such a comparatively humble capacity is no wonder in Mr. Corcoran's case, especially so to those having any acquaintance with his career as a colonist. Arriving in Victoria in 1852, when not quite 15 years of age, he soon made his mark. He appeared on the Ballarat gold fields prior to the Eureka riots, and soon made a handsome fortune. His graphic description of the riots, of the causes which led to them and of their disastrous results should be heard from his own tongue to properly digest the wild enthusiasm which the inordinate thirst for gold implants in the human mind. His love of romantic change in those days found him the possessor of a caravanary of bullock-teams, conveying goods from Melbourne to the gold fields. How he penetrated the wild forests, bridged rivers, and on many large rivers built temporary pontoons to enable him to land heavy machinery in the Ovens District, need only be mentioned to give an idea of the genius and intrepidity of the young pioneer. While engaged in this work he knew how to select his drivers, not by the dexterity with which they plied the stock whips, but with the fidelity and courage with which they would brave the hardships of bush life, or if needs be face the terrors of camp life, viz., the bush-ranging desperadoes who may turn up anywhere. Being a man of keen observation, he utilised his powers by establishing a large saw mill in Bullarook Forest, where with his brothers he carried on operations for many years. Engaging then in political life he became a member of the Victorian Legislature, within whose halls he soon became a forcible speaker. One of the greatest contests on record is perhaps the contest between Jones, Dyte, and Corcoran when the last named was returned at the head of the poll. During many years Mr. Corcoran was president of the Shire of Bungaru, the wealthiest and most extensive Shire in the colony. His popularity was unquestionable; his influence was indeed royal. In 1856, when Charles Gavan Duffy landed, Mr. Corcoran was not only one of the chosen delegates but one to whom was assigned one of the principal speeches made on that memorable occasion.

Adverse fortunes brought the subject of this sketch to New Zealand, prior to which, however, he had made a tour of the colony where he had sunk and speculated so much wealth, to report to the Government on Forest Conservation, and as to the adaptability or otherwise of the various kinds of timber indigenous to the colony for being employed in public works, such as bridges, railways, etc. To this he was appointed as an expert, with a roving commission, at a large allowance per diem. But his character for integrity and unsullied honour could not then be even tarnished by political op-

ponents, as his exhaustive report was in the hands of Government when it was thought he had only started on his mission.

The writer being a Victorian himself, who had opportunities through his connection with the Press of knowing that Mr. Corcoran was not, and is not, a man of ordinary calibre, ventures to place on record the above short sketch of a man who has played a prominent part in the drama of public life in the greatest of our colonies, where he is yet remembered with an intensity of inflexible attachment as the "hero of a hundred fights."

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A citizen of Douglas county, Kan., has hit upon a new idea of destroying wolves. He puts a chunk of beef where the wolves will find it, and in the fight resulting for its possession one or more are sure to be left dead on the field.

An address is about to be presented from the University of Dublin to the University of Bologna on the occasion of the latter completing the 800th year of its existence. The address is written in Latin, and the illuminations have been done in Dublin. The illuminations are intended to convey an idea of the treasures of the island of Ireland, the plants which grow in her woods, and the relics of the past, stored in Trinity College and the Royal Irish Academy.

Mrs. Jackson has consented to the removal of the body of her late husband, General "Stonewall" Jackson, from its present resting place in our cemetery to the "Jackson Circle," which is about 100 feet from the present grave. This will be done that the proposed bronze figure may mark the grave on that beautiful circle set apart for Jackson's monument. The body of General Jackson is in a cast iron casket, and the removal can be accomplished without much trouble.—*Lexington (Va.) Gazette.*

Lord Londonderry offers an instructive example to the world that interests itself in the Government of Ireland, of a Viceroy, who at a critical period in Irish affairs, finds time to attend to them in the intervals of racing engagements. It is true that, in the Lord Lieutenant's absence from Ireland, Prince Edward of Saxe-Weimar is invariably appointed one of his deputies; nevertheless, such is the unreasonable nature of the Irish that they are still dissatisfied with Dublin Castle rule!

The slums of London and Paris are bad enough, but it appears that the slums of Berlin are, if possible worse. *Das Echo* has just published some interesting details on the subject. There are about 40,000 houses in the Prussian capital. A small number are inhabited by one or two families, but the great majority are divided into several distinct lodgings. Two thousand five hundred contain from 16 to 20 lodgings, 20,000 from 20 to 30 lodgings, and 10,000 over 30 lodgings each. Seventy-five thousand of these lodgings are composed of one room only, and inhabited by no fewer than 270,000 persons, which is an average of nearly four persons per room; 75,000 other lodgings are composed of two rooms, and occupied by 350,000 inhabitants; while the remaining 30,000 lodgings are formed of three rooms, inhabited by 140,000 people.