

packed with trout, and visitors come from far and near to try their luck in the Waitaki.

The Irish delegates had a most successful tour through the colony. Oamaru's share towards the Evicted Tenants' Fund has not yet been remitted. \$180 will be about what they will receive from here, which, considering all the things we have had here lately, is very good.

## Correspondence.

[We are not responsible for the opinions expressed by our Correspondents.]

### EVICTED TENANTS' FUND.

TO THE EDITOR N.Z. TABLET.

SIR,—At the request of Sir T. Esmonde, please find enclosed, for transmission to the proper quarter, bank draft for £42 13s 5d, the result of his meeting held in Winton on the 13th inst. in aid of the Irish Evicted Tenants' Fund.—I am, etc.,

GEORGE M. STARKEY.

Winton, 27th December, 1889.

### PARNELL DEFENCE FUND.

TO THE EDITOR N.Z. TABLET.

Sir,—Please find enclosed cheque for the amount of £19 9s, being the amount collected by me for the Parnell Defence Fund, together with the list of subscribers' names, which you will please to publish in the first issue of the TABLET.—I am, etc.

Gore, December 28th, 1889.

JAMES HOLLAND.

### AN IRISHWOMAN'S STRANGE STORY.

EUGENE Davis, in his "Irish Footprints over Europe," written for the *Dublin Freeman*, gives the following romantic story:—

Some considerable time after this date (1629), Madrid was the home of a Cork lady, who, curiously enough, was the widow of Mulli Mahommed, Emperor of Morocco, and whose salon in the Spanish capital was the rendezvous of rank and fashion, art and literature, for over a decade. The career of this creature is so interesting as to merit at least a paragraph at our hands. What her maiden name was has not been satisfactorily determined; but it was shrewdly suspected that the future Empress was a Miss Skiddy, of Castle Skiddy, on the banks of the Lee. It is certain, however, that she assumed the name of Thompson, owing possible to the fact that that of Skiddy was a far from euphonious one. Miss Thompson was in any case the leading belle of the southern city. She had a pale, classic face, deep blue eyes, and a wealth of raven locks, which, added to the artistic mould of her willowy figure and the elegance and suavity of her manners, placed her above the level of would-be rivals and threw all the local bards into ecstasies that found vent in the jingling rhymes of many a madrigal. A certain Mr. O'Shea, a merchant from Cadiz, having visited Cork in the interests of his firm, saw the young lady and fell passionately in love with her. Whether she at first listened with favour to his suit owing to the fact that a wealthy husband was a fine "catch" for a penniless girl like her, or owing to a nobler or more generous motive, the gossips of the day failed to ascertain; but it is admitted on all hands that the Spanish-Irishman, a tall, well-built elegant cavalier, eventually made a deep impression on her heart. The result was that the lovers plighted their troth, and as Mr. O'Shea's business engagements compelled him to return immediately to Cadiz, it was decided that Miss Thompson was in a month afterwards to rejoin him at Cadiz, where the marriage was to take place. The young lady embarked at the proper time in a vessel bound from Cork to Cadiz; but as ill luck should have it the bark was captured by a Moorish corsair off the Spanish coast and the Corkagian damsel was made a slave and brought a captive of Fez, where the news of the wonderful beauty soon got bruited about, and eventually reached the ears of his Majesty, Mulli Mahommed, who at once had her removed to his Imperial Palace. Her personal charms wrought such havoc with the heart of the dusky monarch that he laid his sceptre at her feet and asked her to be his favourite sultana. Her womanly vanity was highly tickled of course by this offer on the part of his Majesty, and she consented. With that fatal fickleness of some members of her sex, she had forgotten the old love for the sake of the new.—Flattered, perhaps, by the reflection that nature intended her after all to sit on a throne, and not to pass her life mixing sand with sugar and chicory with coffee behind the counter of a grocery store, she gave her hand willingly to the Sultan, and bore him in due time two pledges of her affection in the persons of Mulli Ismael and Mulli Mahomed—a brace of Irish Moors who were for years the pride and the joy of the palace. The fair Sultana was indeed the Queen of the harem. None of his Majesty's spouses had a tenth of the influence over him which she so cleverly wielded. To effect this, however, she abjured the Christian faith, embraced the religion of her adopted country, and gave over the European for the Moorish costume. All was smooth sailing enough for the Irish Sultana for some 15 or 16 years. Morocco, however, was just then a country where political convulsions and court intrigues were the fashion of the day, and one bleak morning the Sultana awoke to hear the dread news that her lord and master was assassinated by a pretender who had seized the reins of power and had himself proclaimed Emperor of the Moors. Before a similar doom could overtake herself she escaped in disguise from the harem and reached in safety the coast of Spain. The fair widow afterwards settled down in Madrid,

where she lived with great pomp for many years. Eventually the authorities in Morocco offered her a home in that country, whither she returned, and where she died at a very advanced age. There is no record left of the fate that befell poor O'Shea, the jilted suitor.

### CHRISTMAS CREEK.

BY HENRY KENDAL.

PHANTOM streams were in the distance—mocking lights of lake and pool—  
Ghosts of trees of soft green lustre—groves of shadows deep and cool;  
Yea, some devil ran before them changing skies of brass to blue,  
Setting bloom where curse is planted, where a grass-blade never grew.  
Six there were, and high above them glared a wild and wizened sun,  
Ninety leagues from where the waters of the singing valleys run.  
There before them, there behind them, was the great, stark, stubborn plain,  
Where the dry winds hiss for ever, and the blind earth moans for rain!  
Ridged about by tracks of furnace, ninety leagues from stream and tree,  
Six there were, with wasted faces, working northwards to the sea!  
\* \* \* \* \*  
Ah, the bitter, hopeless desert! Here these broken human wrecks  
Trode the wilds where sand of fire is with the spiteful spinifex,  
Toiled through spheres that no bird knows of, where with fiery emphasis  
Hell hath stamped its awful mint-mark deep on everything that is!  
Toiled and thirsted, strove and suffered! *This* was where December's breath  
As a wind of smiting flame is on wierd, haggard wastes of death!  
*This* was where a withered moau is, and the gleam of weak, wan star,  
And a thunder full of menace sends its mighty voices far!  
*This* was where black execrations, from some dark tribunal hurled,  
Set the brand of curse on all things in the morning of the world!  
\* \* \* \* \*

One man yielded—then another—then a lad of nineteen years  
Beeled and fell, with English rivers singing softly in his ears.  
English grasses started round him—then the grace of Sussex lea  
Came and touched him with the beauty of a green land by the sea!  
Old-world faces thronged about him—old-world voices spoke to him;  
But his speech was like a whisper, and his eyes were very dim.  
In a dream of golden evening, beaming on a quiet straad,  
Lay the stranger till a bright One came and took him by the hand.  
England vanished, died the voices! but he heard a holier tone,  
And an angel that we know not led him to the lands unknown.  
\* \* \* \* \*

Six there were, but three were taken! Three were left to struggle still;  
But against the red horizon flamed the horn of bridled hill!  
But beyond the northern skyline, past a wall of steep austere,  
Lay the land of light and coolness in an April-coloured year!  
"Courage, brothers," cried the leader; "on the slope of yonder peak  
There are tracks of herb and shadow, and the channels of the creek!"  
So they made one last great effort—haled their beasts through brake and briar—  
Set their feet on spurs of furnace—grappled spikes and crags of fire—  
Fought the stubborn mountain forces, smote down naked, natural powers,  
Till they gazed from thrones of morning on a sphere of streams and flowers.  
Out behind them was the desert, glaring like a sea of brass!  
Here before them were the valleys, fair with moonlight-coloured grass!  
At their backs were haggard waste-lands, bickering in a wicked blaze!  
In their faces beamed the waters, marching down melodious ways!  
Touching was the cool, soft lustre over laps of lawn and lea,  
And majestic was the great road Morning made across the sea.  
On the sacred day of Christmas, after seven months of grief,  
Rested three of six who started, on a bank of moss and leaf,  
Rested by a running river, in a hushed, a holy week;  
And they named the stream that saved them—named it fitly—  
"Christmas Creek."

An English company has offered 100,000 dols. to the Mexican Government for the right to excavate in search for Montezuma's treasure.

Late experiments would seem to refute the theory that France is warmed by the Gulf Stream, as in Summer no surface currents reach that country from the southwest, but there are currents from west and northwest.

St. Peter's, Rome, has a seating capacity of 54,000; Milan Cathedral, 37,000; St. Paul's, Rome, 25,000; St. Sophia's, Constantinople, 23,000; Notre Dame, Paris, 21,000; Pisa Cathedral, 13,000; St. Mark's, Venice, 7,000.

The electric light on the Eiffel Tower can be seen at Orleans, 70 miles distant.

The area of the United States is 20 per cent. greater than that of China, which nation supports a population of 400,000,000.

An elephant recently died in Ceylon which had served the public works department for over 65 years, and had previously worked in various parts of the island for an unknown period.