

COMMERCIAL.

Mr. HENRY DRIVER (on behalf of the New Zealand Loan and Mercantile Agency Co.) reports for the week ending February 28, as follows:—

Fat Cattle.—A moderate supply of 150 head was yarded at the market to-day, chiefly of good to prime quality. The whole met ready sale at fully up to last week's rates. Best pens of bullocks brought £9 10s to £12 17s 6d; do cows, £6 15s to £10—or equal to 27s 6d per 100lb. for prime quality.

Fat Calves.—Only a few penned, which sold at from 20s to 65s each.

Fat Sheep.—2000 were penned, and all changed hands at late quotations—say, for best crossbreds, 9s to 11s. One lot of medium quality merinos brought 6s. We quote prime mutton at 2d to 2½d per lb.

Fat Lambs.—The market was much over-supplied with 500, and in consequence prices receded about 1s each. We quote best lambs at 6s 6d to 7s 6d; medium, 4s to 5s 6d.

Store Cattle.—Very few transactions have taken place, although there is still a demand for quiet, well-conditioned cows and bullocks.

Store Sheep.—There is a good demand for young merino ewes and wethers, and likewise for cross-breds, but buyers are unwilling to give the prices required for the latter description. During the week we have sold 6000 at the following rates:—Merino wethers, two, four, and six-tooth, 5s to 5s 6d; ditto full-mouthed, 3s to 4s; merino ewes, two, four, and six-tooth, 6s to 7s; ditto full-mouthed, 2s 6d to 3s 6d; cross-breds, four-tooth and over, 7s to 8s; ditto two-tooth, 6s to 7s.

Wool.—Since our last week's report the cable has brought advices of the opening of the London February sales at a decline of 1d per lb on greasy and 2d on washed, bringing values on a par with April sales of last year. Since the opening day the market has assumed a firmer tone, and possibly the opening decline may be recovered before the sales close. The news of receding values will be only slightly felt in this market, a very small quantity of wool being left over unsold. At a sale of remnant parcels on Monday last prices were firmly held, considering the unsaleable descriptions which mostly comprised that catalogue. Any good lots brought up to within a fraction of late rates. We hold our next sale on Thursday, for which we are in receipt, and advised, of some superior lots to offer.

Sheepskins.—The sales on Monday were dull, and late rates barely maintained. The supply consisted chiefly of bare pelts and shearlings or woolled pelts; the former brought 3d to 1s each, the latter 1s 5d to 1s 9d.

Hides.—Only a small inferior supply came to hand, one lot only being fair-conditioned medium quality, which sold at 15s, or barely 3½d; inferior heavy weights, 12s 6d to 13s 6d each. In the absence of sailing freights market is dull.

Tallow.—Market is not so brisk for inferior parcels, prices are slightly easier fair medium quality sold at £27 to £28 10s.

Grain.—Wheat, good sound milling qualities are in active demand, 5s 3d to 5s 6d, but scarce. Some fine samples of Southern growth are on offer. The Southern corps of this Province being later in harvesting have not suffered to the same extent the earlier districts have, where it is found but little really sound grain has been gathered. Secondary samples are saleable for present delivery at 4s to 5s, according to quality. Oats, old feed, are much wanted; farmers too busy to deliver; prices are advancing. We sold by auction, to-day, about 4000 bushels inferior feed, 2s 5d to 2s 6d; good feed at 2s 7d per bushel; milling are held for 2s 9d to 3s. Barley: Malting samples are inquired for, we sold 500 bags, Riverton grown, at equal to 4s 6d per bushel here, and have further offers pending.

Mr. SKENE reports for the week ending February 28, 1877:—The month of February, just closed, has been very irregular and broken, both for employees and employers. Harvest operations have been much hindered by floods in the principal grain districts. Work has been plentiful enough all along; but men could not get at it, so as to make the usual sum to put past for a dull season. Now at the close of the month everything is much improved, and every man, at all suited for out-door labor, can go to work full swing. Town trade moves along quietly; rather good carpenters are well employed. The iron trade seems to drag very much. Couples are more asked for; only odd shepherds are needed at this season. Female servants, in all departments, are in brisk demand. Too many city bred people, clerks, shopmen, &c., about. Wages—Couples, £65 to £80; ploughmen, £52, £55, and £60; day labor, 7s, 8s, and 9s; cooks, barmen, stewards, grooms, gardeners, &c., 25s to 50s per week; house girls, private families, 10s to 15s; hotel girls, 12s, 15s, and up to 30; boys and girls, 6s, 8s, and 10s; dairy hands, 15s and 20s.

Mr. A. MERCER reports as follows for the week ending February 28, 1877, retail prices only:—Fresh butter, in ½ and 1lb prints, 1s 2d to 1s 4d; fresh butter, in lumps, 1s; powdered and salt butter, 1s 2d; fresh butter is again plentiful, and the shops have again resumed salting down; but it will be good stock; salt butter, in kegs, has been selling well at 10½d to 11d per lb. Cheese, is very plentiful, and Provincial cheese, good quality, 1s; English cheese, 1s 4d; side and rolled bacon, 10d to 11d; Colonial hams, 1s 2d; English hams, 1s 6d; eggs are very scarce, and a great difficulty in supplying orders at 2s 6d per dozen.

Mr. M. C. FLEMING reports (wholesale prices) for the week ending February 28, 1877, as follows:—Oats (feed), per bushel 2s 4d; milling, 2s 6d. Wheat (chicks) 4s to 4s 6d. Barley, malt 10s, 4s to 4s 6d; feed, 2s 6d to 3s. Pollard, scarce. Bran, 2s, bags included. Flour, large bags, £15; small, £15 10. Oatmeal, £11. Potatoes, new, 5s per cwt. Hay (new), £3 10s; old hay, 2s per ton. Chaff, £4 10s per ton. Straw, £2 per ton.

Mr. J. VEZEY reports for the week ending February 28, 1877:—Retail: Roast beef, 6d to 8d per lb.; boiling do., 4d to 5d per lb.; stewing do., 4d to 6d per lb.; steak, 6d to 9d per lb.; mutton, 3d to 6d

per lb.; veal, 4d to 8d per lb.; pork, 9d to 10d per lb.; lamb, 2s 6d to 3s 6d per quarter.

HIBERNIAN-AUSTRALASIAN CATHOLIC BENEFIT SOCIETY.

The first anniversary of the establishment of the H.A.C.B. Society in Blenheim was commemorated on the 13th of February by a most enjoyable dinner at the South Star Hotel, the arrangements for which did the greatest credit to the host—Mr. J. Barry.

The Rev. Father Sauzeau honored the Branch by his presence, and members with their friends, to the number of about forty, made up the company.

Mr. T. O'Sullivan occupied the chair, and in the absence of the President the vice chair was taken by Bro. J. Morrison, P.P. Due justice having been done to the various delicacies which were spread in profusion upon the table, the Rev. Father Sauzeau rose to propose the first toast, addressing the company to the following effect:

"Mr. Chairman, Gentlemen, and Brothers,—The toast which I am going to propose requires all the warmth of our feelings and all the energy of our faith; it is the health of our Holy Father, Pope Pius IX. The name of the present Pontiff will be famous in history for the length of his life, for he reaches 85 years on the 13th of May next, but especially by the length of his Pontificate, which surpasses even that of St. Peter himself. On the 21st of June he will have been 31 years on the throne of St. Peter. Glorious and remarkable events have succeeded one another during his reign, which make it one of the most remarkable of Pontificates. The principal of these are the Immaculate Conception, the Canonization of the Japanese Martyrs, the Vatican Council, and the famous Syllabus, by which all the modern errors were condemned. St. Malachy, Archbishop of Armagh, in his prophetic vision, calls him "cross of the cross"; and great, indeed, have been the trials and the persecutions of his enemies who have robbed him little by little of all the patrimony of St. Peter, and who have assailed the Church in almost every part of the world. He has not an inch of ground he may call his own, and yet, as the Governor of Malta remarked on a similar occasion about two years ago, "no one can see him without admiring his calmness and serenity." His words are flashed across the world by the telegraph wires, and excite the wrath of his enemies and the unbounded admiration of his children. No wonder that we, as Catholics, are proud of so great a Pontiff, and so let us wish our Holy Father the Pope long life, health, and prosperity, with the cessation of persecution." Loud and continued applause. And the toast was received with great enthusiasm.

The Chairman then proposed "Her Majesty Queen Victoria," during whose long and prosperous reign the position of Catholics throughout the British Empire had been so much ameliorated, that they had comparatively few grievances left, and even Ireland was now, at least, in a fair way to prosperity, and he had little doubt that should the reign of Queen Victoria last a few years longer, and he sincerely hoped it would, many other improvements would take place, giving them still more occasion for wishing "long life and every happiness to Her Most Gracious Majesty." Loud applause. This toast having been most loyally received, the Chairman proceeded to propose the "Governor of New Zealand," one doubtless well-fitted for his exalted station, and against whom, at least, they knew nothing, and they should drink his health most heartily as Her Majesty's faithful and worthy representative. This toast having been duly honored, the "Army, Navy, and Volunteers" were proposed in a few appropriate words by Mr. Casey.

Mr. T. O'Sullivan, as captain of volunteers, returned his hearty thanks to the company for the tribute they had paid to the three services. They knew that a very large proportion, both of army and navy, were Irishmen, and for that reason most of the company had an additional interest in their welfare, and he had no doubt they would all hope and pray for the success of those whose duty it was to defend the British Empire; and who had done so with the greatest honor and success on many a hard fought field, where streams of Irish blood had flowed, commingled with that of the natives of the sister isle. He wished, too, there were more Irish among the volunteers, for as they made good soldiers, he knew they would also gather laurels in the capacity of volunteers, should that force have unfortunately to be brought into active service. Applause.

Bro. J. Ward, jun., said he had the honor to propose "Health and long life to the Clergy," coupled with the name of the Rev. Father Sauzeau—a toast which each one he knew well would receive most enthusiastically, both on account of the great worth of the clergy themselves, and also for the personal interest each one must take in their present welfare for his own sake. When one of us, or our families, are attacked by disease, we are anxious to be where some physician of repute can be called in, and yet under the most favorable circumstances he may fail to effect a cure. But the priest, who is the physician of the soul, unlike those who undertake to cure our bodily ailments, has an infallible specific which cannot fail in efficacy if the patient really desires it. The wish to have one with such powers at our call should be alone sufficient to make us most enthusiastic; but we have also to consider the intrinsic worth of the clergy themselves—their lives of self-sacrifice—especially of those who have torn themselves away from their friends and country to administer to the wants of the people in these distant lands. Unlike other immigrants, they came with no prospect of improving their worldly circumstances. But, on the contrary, with every probability of having much more hardship to undergo than had they remained in their mother country, and, perhaps, scarcely knowing where they would find a house when overtaken by age and infirmities. They would then, he was convinced, drink with enthusiasm to the health and long life of the clergy, and especially our own beloved pastor, the Rev. Father Sauzeau, and long may he live amongst us. Applause. The toast was drunk amidst great acclamation.