

## THE REVENUE RETURNS.

FROM THE WEST AUSTRALIAN

SOMEWHAT, or to speak more truly, most unreasonably late in the day, the Quarterly Returns of Revenue and Expenditure have been published in the *Gazette*. It is the more regrettable as the tale it has to tell is one which may be read with almost unalloyed satisfaction. The figures show even more decidedly in our favour, than was predicted, or probably even imagined by the most sanguine of our financial prophets. Mr. FRASER in his Budget speech last September, estimated the revenue for the year 1885 at £295,666, though he admitted his belief that this erred on the side of caution. A week later Mr. MARMION calculated that we might fairly expect to receive £306,625. The actual amount paid into the Treasury turns out to be £323,213, that is £27,547 better than the Colonial Secretary's estimate, and £16,548 better than Mr. Marmion's. £27,547, or nearly ten per cent., is certainly a large difference between an official estimate and the true result. But Mr. FRASER, besides his claim that he purposely set the year's revenue at a modest figure, may urge, also, that the receipts in some departments, notably, in the Lands, have exceeded considerably the expectations formed in the middle of the year. It is needless to say that the revenue for 1885 is much, very much, the largest ever paid into the Government chest, comparing, as it does, with £290,319 in 1884, £284,363 in 1883, and £250,372 in 1882, or an increase of about thirty per cent. in four years. As the unexpended balance carried over from 1884 stood at £75,165, it follows that the sum at the disposal of the Government for the services of 1885 from current revenue reached the handsome proportions of £398,378.

Of this there has been expended in the twelve months £308,848, as against £291,306 for 1884. It speaks well for the economy and watchfulness of the Government that the expenditure for the first three quarters of 1885, £203,220, scarcely exceeds that for the same period in 1884, when it was £200,125. For the fourth quarter of last year it rose to £105,628, the largest quarterly expenditure to be noted in our history. For the corresponding quarter of 1884 it was thought to be abnormally high when it touched £91,110. The increase for the last quarter, of £14,518, compared with the year previous, has been largely incurred we are informed in connection with the late railway accident at York Greenmount. Most of this no doubt is to be found under the head of Miscellaneous, which stands at £12,787, as against £7591 last year, although the Railway Department shows a growth of close upon £2000, upon the previous quarter. The arrangements for settling a Resident Magistrate at Cambridge Gulf, and the despatch of a police force under his charge, have also contributed to swell the cost of the quarter. It will be noticed that while the increase in the expenditure of the three months compared with the same quarter of 1884 is £14,518, the increase of revenue is £8787. Contrasting the September and December quarters of 1885 it will be found that expenditure shows an excess of £46,443, and revenue of £14,317 in the latter quarter. The expenditure for the year being £19,280 within the estimate, £328,128, and the revenue being better than the official estimate by £27,547, it follows that instead of a balance in hand of about £42,000 as Mr. FRASER calculated there is really a balance of £89,529 available for the current year, greatly the largest balance Western Australia has ever had to boast of on closing a year's accounts. These figures, allowing for proportions, are far the most satisfactory that any colony of Australia can disclose at the present time. There is not a balance sheet in the continent, we may be pardoned for repeating it, which, comparing we admit the small with the great, can show so favourable a result. We carry forward to 1886 a sum equal to nearly a fourth of the total

receipts of the previous year. This sum will put many things within the reach of the Government, which otherwise they would not have been able to look at. Judiciously expended it may do wonders. The expenditure for which the Colonial Secretary calculated provision would have to be made during 1886 came, we may say, roundly to something over £350,000. He counted upon receiving £321,225 revenue. It is quite certain he will receive more. He calculated on bringing forward a balance from 1885 of £42,702, but he will have more than that by £47,000. As the estimates of the Colonial Secretary gave him a balance to carry over to 1887 amounting to £30,838, we may safely assume that the Government and Legislature will find themselves with, at the very least, £50,000 more than they expected, to dispose of as they please, and still leave an unexpended surplus of thirty or forty thousand pounds, which is, in our present circumstances, the lowest sum that should be kept in hand to meet unforeseen emergencies. We must defer any examinations in detail of the various heads of receipt and outlay. It is enough for the moment to take a general view of our financial position, and to record our opinion that it presents the brightest outlook, ever yet shown to the colonists of Western Australia.

## MR. DAVIES' CONCESSION.

FROM THE WEST AUSTRALIAN

ON Friday last we published one amongst several communications which Thursday's Southern Mail brought us, in addition to those we had previously received, on the subject of the grievances of the Augusta settlers caused by the very rash agreement entered into by Sir WILLIAM ROBINSON with Mr. M. C. DAVIES, of the Hamelin and Augusta timber works. So much feeling seems to have been aroused about the matter—and very naturally too—that it may be desirable we should add a few words to the comments upon it which we have already made. Some of our correspondents go so far as to say that the settlers within the timber reserve are to be ruined for the sake of an exploitation which is simply denuding us of a source of wealth, while giving us nothing whatever in return. This is a strong way of stating the case, and one which can scarcely be maintained, for we suspect that were the timber business at Augusta and the Hamelin closed, the district would feel the consequences severely; a certain amount of money must be put in circulation by Mr. DAVIES's operations, which must also furnish a market for a certain amount of produce and live stock, while the general revenue, also, benefits by the customs receipts which his importations of stores bring to the Treasury. But beyond these, perhaps not very important, benefactions it may, we take it, be said with truth, that we receive but little equivalent for the exportation of our timber.

And yet the late Government seem to have been impressed with the conviction that no stone should be left unturned in the endeavour to induce speculators to rid us of our timber wealth as quickly as they possibly could. What caused this anxiety to possess the late Government it is not very easy to understand. But at any rate it induced them in Mr. DAVIES's case to grant terms which have been with truth described as in part outrageous, and wholly extravagant. Upon the extraordinary agreement made as to railway lines, jetties, etc., we need not now dwell, for the compact is made and cannot be altered. But this may not perhaps apply to the worst feature in the case—that of which our own settlers so bitterly complain—the right given Mr. DAVIES to the leases and licenses within his reserve, as they fall in. What could have induced Sir WILLIAM ROBINSON's Government to sacrifice the Augusta settlers to Mr. DAVIES in this way we are at a loss to comprehend. They would almost appear to have been suffering from temporary mental aberration. Had the removal of these settlers been essential to the successful conduct of Mr. DAVIES's business, and had that business been

of a character such that any check upon it would have seriously affected the interests of the colony, then we could have understood that Sir WILLIAM ROBINSON might have considered himself bound to sacrifice the few to the many. But neither the one nor the other was the case. The settlers in the Augusta District could not seriously, or even, that we can see, in any way, interfere with Mr. DAVIES's operations. And even if they did, to some small extent, the colony could in no way suffer in consequence. The arrangement made, therefore, for depriving them of their runs—of their means of livelihood, and for destroying the value of the homesteads they had, by patient toil, established, was cruel in the extreme. We do not for a moment believe that the late GOVERNOR realised what the effect of his action would be; we do not believe that had he done so that action would ever have been taken. But, to a certain extent, it is impossible not to view it, as originating in almost culpable negligence. If the GOVERNOR were acting in ignorance, at any rate the late SURVEYOR GENERAL could scarcely have been doing so.

We wish again to guard ourselves against casting any personal reflection upon Mr. M. C. DAVIES in the matter. He cannot be blamed for endeavoring to secure the very best and most advantageous terms he possibly could. He saw that everything he asked for he could obtain, and he very naturally asked accordingly. But whether this most objectionable of all the concessions granted him was legitimate—whether the Government had any legal right to grant it—seems, as we have already intimated, open to doubt. We should be sorry, however, to pronounce an opinion one way or the other. It is a question which only lawyers can decide. And the Augusta settlers having asked us to help them in their trouble, we can only repeat the advice we have already given them, that they should seek professional aid. They probably would argue that the present Government should take the initiative, obtain the ATTORNEY GENERAL's opinion, and if it be adverse to the legality of the agreement respecting these leases and licenses, should refuse to carry out so much of the compact entered into by their predecessors. We should be somewhat inclined to take the same view. Nevertheless we are by no means prepared to contend that the Government may not be better advised in making no attempt to depart from Sir WILLIAM ROBINSON's engagement, unless those affected by it take action in defence of their rights—or, rather, of what may possibly prove to be their rights. There is, at any rate, very little likelihood that the Government will depart from their passive attitude. If, therefore, the settlers are really in earnest in the matter, as we do not doubt they are, it is for them to show their earnestness by exerting themselves actively in their own behalf.

## DARING ATTEMPT TO ROB A BANK.

## A WOMAN SHOT DEAD.

One of the most daring attempts to rob a bank that we have had occasion to chronicle, occurred on Tuesday forenoon in the city of Collingwood. The Commercial Bank, as is well known, has a branch establishment in South-street, but the extension of that suburb has been so rapid, and the population in its most outlying parts has increased to such an extent, that Smith-street is regarded as inconvenient by those who reside in the outskirts, and are obliged to have recourse to that busy thoroughfare for the transaction of banking business. Regarding the matter in that light, some of the customers of the Commercial Bank complained of the inconvenience they were put to, and the bank authorities, recognising the force of these complaints, decided to establish a sub-agency in some other portion of the city. With this object in view, the bank entered into an agreement with Mrs. Ravenscroft for the lease of a portion of her house in Hoddle-street. Here it was that about three weeks ago the Commercial Bank opened a sub-agency, placing Mr. James N. Hill in charge of it. In a building affording little security for a banking institution it was not to be supposed that any money would be left in the place overnight. It, therefore, formed a part of Mr. Hill's duties to bring all the money every afternoon to the branch bank in Smith-street, and to call again for

it every morning. The money was handed over to him between nine and ten o'clock every morning, and it was his invariable custom to walk to the sub-agency in Hoddle-street, carrying the money in a black leather bag. The excitement created by the sticking up of the bank in Simpson's-road had died away, and no one ever imagined that the unpretentious sub-agency in Hoddle-street would so soon after its establishment be the scene of such a tragedy as was enacted there on Tuesday morning.

The facts, simply told, are as follows:—Mr. Hill called at the bank in Smith-street at the usual hour in the morning, and took away with him in a black leather bag, money amounting in round numbers to about £300 in coin and notes of the bank. He reached the sub-agency in Hoddle-street and found everything as usual. The door was opened at 10 a.m., and Mr. Hill, after putting things in order, took his seat at the desk, which was placed against and at right angles with the portion of the counter nearest the front window. No customers coming in, Mr. Hill began to read. Shortly afterwards, and between half-past ten and a quarter to eleven o'clock, as nearly as can be ascertained, Mr. Hill, whose face was sideways to the door, thought he perceived the shadow of some one entering the room. He turned instantly round, and was confronted by a man covering him with a revolver, who exclaimed in a loud tone, "Here young man, hold up." With a coolness and courage which cannot be too highly eulogised, Mr. Hill jumped off his desk and made a grasp at his own revolver, which was lying some distance from the desk. The revolver was loaded in its six chambers, but unfortunately, when Mr. Hill pulled the trigger his revolver missed fire. By this time the man whom Mr. Hill first perceived, crouched down underneath the counter. Mr. Hill pulled the trigger a second time, and the revolver went off, but the shot took no effect. Seeing that he had four men to deal with instead of one, Mr. Hill at once realised the desperate nature of his position, and resolved to act accordingly. He closed with the desperadoes, and dealt one of them a very severe blow in the face, marking him in such a way that the fellow will have great difficulty in concealing his identity. The quarters were so close that at one period of the scuffle which ensued the muzzle of Mr. Hill's revolver was pressing against the body of one of his assailants. He pulled the trigger, but again the pistol missed fire. One of the men, catching Mr. Hill from behind, nearly choked him, and it was by an almost superhuman effort that he released himself from his grasp. While the struggle was going on Mr. Hill continued calling out for help, trusting that the people in the street would come to his assistance. Seeing the determined nature of the resistance offered by Mr. Hill, two of the men opened the door and made off, and by this time Mrs. Ravenscroft, attracted by the noise and pistol shot in the bank room, ran out into the street and got as far as the bank door when she dropped down shot through the head. It appears that when one of Mr. Hill's assailants was in the act of passing through the door, Mr. Hill fired after him, and the bullet, instead of hitting its intended victim, entered the side of Mrs. Ravenscroft's head, passing through the left temple. She had evidently got to the bank door at the same moment the shot was fired. Death ensued about two minutes afterwards, and the poor woman's body was removed to her bedroom.

Hearing the shots and seeing Mrs. Ravenscroft fall, a crowd soon collected in front of the bank. Mr. Hill was unconscious of Mrs. Ravenscroft's death until he saw her body lying on the footpath. As soon as he saw the people at the door, he handed one of the men who had stuck up the bank over to them, thinking that he would be well looked after, but strange to say he was allowed to escape. This was the man with whom Mr. Hill had such a severe struggle on the floor, and who had nearly throttled him. When the encounter was over its severity was apparent, and Mr. Hill's pluck in struggling so successfully against such great odds cannot be too highly commended. He saved the property of his employers most manfully, and it is only to be regretted that the life of an innocent woman was sacrificed by an accident.

One of the ruffians was secured. He was seen running away, and was followed by a man on horseback and brought back to the bank, where he was given in charge to Constable Gleeson. He gave his name as James Williams, but his real name is Hopkins, the son of a cabman, who died suddenly a short time since. He is a diminutive looking fellow of the larrikin type. He is 21 years of age, but looks much younger. He was conveyed to the Collingwood lockup, where he remained very reticent as regards his associates in the sticking up of the bank. Four or five men were subsequently arrested on suspicion. Hopkins's mother recognised him as some of her son's companions; but Mr. Hill failed to identify them as being any of his assailants.

Mr. Hill at first thought he had only one man to deal with, and the fact of his being a young man of great physical strength, enabled him to maintain the struggle so successfully, until fear of the arrival of assistance caused the ruffians to clear off the premises as best they could. The robbery must have been maturely planned, but in carrying it out the would-be robbers displayed the greatest indecision and cowardice. The revolver which one of their number presented at Mr. Hill was a six-barrelled, old fashioned one, commonly known as a "pepper box." They do not appear to have fired a shot. In the scuffle which took place between the bank manager and themselves two of their number lost their hats, and they also left behind them the revolver, a bar of iron, and a tomahawk. The men are all young, and belong to the larrikin class. There is no criminal record against the one in custody, but he has been known to the police as a rowdily inclined larrikin.

The police authorities were on Wednesday last engaged trying to discover traces of the scoundrels who assisted the prisoner Hopkins in the bank robbery at Collingwood, but up to a late hour that evening had obtained no reliable clue. One remarkable feature in the case, which shows the cool impudence with which the would-be robbers were endowed, was reported to the police by the resident surgeon of the Melbourne Hospital. Between eleven and twelve o'clock on Tuesday morning a man giving his name as Pepper presented himself at the hospital with a gunshot wound in the arm, and wished to have the bullet extracted. In conversation with a surgeon he informed him that a companion of his had accidentally shot him. The doctor, not having heard of the occurrence in Collingwood, extracted the bullet and allowed Pepper to depart. When the news of the attempted robbery reached his ears, the doctor at once thought that the man he had treated might be one of those who were implicated, and forwarded the bullet to the police, at the same time informing them of the fact. The bullet given to the police was afterwards discovered to correspond exactly with those fired by Mr. Hill. The description of Pepper given to the police by the surgeon is similar to that reported by the bank manager, and it is surmised that he is identical with one of the desperadoes.—*Leader*.

## THE VICTORIAN REVENUE.

THE Victorian revenue returns for the last quarter of 1885 show that the total income for the period was £1,569,857, a decrease as compared with the last three months of 1884 of £19,218. For the year just ended £6,247,466 was received, or £60,103 more than for the previous 12 months. In revenue matters, however, the year begins on July 1, and consequently in six months which have gone the treasurer has received towards his ways and means £2,994,614 out of £7,000,141 estimated for the year in the budget. In 1884 5, which terminated on June 30, the estimated revenue was £6,495,858, which was more than realised. For the six months up to December 31, 1884, £3,037,801 was received, or nearly half. This year, therefore, the prospect is not quite so hopeful. The treasurer must get in £500,000 more than the moiety for the next six months to bring the result up to the estimate. The decrease on the quarter just ended is more than represented by the falling off from sales by auction of Crown lands because of the new system introduced in the Land Act. The deficit is £25,382. Another important item in the decreases is £39,208 "interest on public account," against which, however, may be set a handsome increase of £39,916 in the railway revenue, the income from that department being £617,790, as against £577,873 for the last quarter of 1884. The Customs show a good increase, principally for spirits, the duties on which for three months just ended were £131,159, as against £118,693. For the first time a proper comparison may be made of the receipts from the sale of stamps, which now include all payments where stamps are required—such as a letter, telegram, and documents subject to the Stamp Act. For the last quarter of 1885 £156,070 was received, or £13,776 more than in October, November, and December of 1884.

## THE NEW SOUTH WELSH REVENUE.

THE revenue of New South Wales for the last quarter of 1885 amounted to £2,203,170, being a slight decrease compared with the corresponding quarter of the previous year. The total revenue for the past year amounted to £7,588,667, an increase of £471,076 on that of the previous year. Land revenue yielded £1,876,563, an increase of £123,374. The expenditure during the year was £8,816,683.