

## The Late Mr. C. F. Lewis.

### DEATH.

LEWIS.—At St. Arnaud, on the 3rd May, Charles Ferris Lewis, proprietor of "St. Arnaud Mercury," native of Davis s. Wiltshire, England, beloved husband of Jane Lewis, aged 72. A colonist of 51 years.

When the history of Victoria and its settlement comes to be written, pride of place will undoubtedly be given to the men of the golden age—the fifties—who, lured by the prospects of wealth, flocked into the Southern land from all parts of the world. No one would wish to undervalue for one moment the magnificent work done by the early pioneers, who, to find pasturage for their flocks, bravely faced all the dangers of an unknown wilderness. Drought, relentless savage foes, lack of transit, and scores of other difficulties were cheerfully overcome by the men of the pastoral age, and credit must be given to them for the dauntless heroism they displayed. With the Lullial year of the second half of the century, however, a new era began, and the bright-eyed, strong-handed, high-spirited, young adventurers who then flocked into the infant country in search of the noble metal, laid the foundations of the lasting prosperity of the premier colony of the Southern seas. The story of their work, although told in fragments from time to time, has still to be portrayed as a whole, and when this is done many a private citizen, who, to the present generation simply seems a quiet ordinary individual, will have been found to have played no mean part in the great work of nation building. When in 1854 and 1855 the glories of Simson's and other fields in what was known as the middle diggings, were attracting general attention, there arrived, among others, a young man who was fated to take a very prominent position in the fuller civilisation that followed the turmoil and hurly-burly of the diggings days. This young digger, Mr Charles Ferris Lewis, had seen many phases of life, young as he was, having already tempted fortune in California and New South Wales, commercial pursuits having occupied his attention in the mother country. Gold seeking became his business on his arrival at the infant diggings of New Bendigo, now St. Arnaud, in the year it was opened—1855—and for several years he wielded the pick and shovel with varying fortune. When the

glories of New Zealand emptied the Continental colonies in 1861, Mr Lewis, like others, tried his luck in the land of the Moa, but, although fairly successful, he still kept a warm corner in his heart for the then picturesque little diggings near the Avoca. Returning to Victoria, he made his way back to New Bendigo, or as it was then named St. Arnaud, after the great French Crimean hero. Quartz mining by this time had got a fair start in Victoria, and until the day of his death Mr Lewis was largely identified with the industry in his own locality. He, however, saw the means whereby he could be of greater use to his adopted home than by personally following the occupation of a miner, and to that end purchased the "St. Arnaud Mercury" from its then proprietors, who resided in Maryborough. Under his editorship and management the "Mercury" quickly took a prominent position among up-country journals, and it was largely owing to the plucky up-hill manner in which the "Mercury" set forth the claims of St. Arnaud and its resources to recognition, when the collapse of the St. Arnaud silver mines and the working out of the upper formations of its gold reefs left the little town on the edge of the plains without a friend, that capital was found to further explore and prospect with the magnificent results obtained by the Lord Nelson, a claim which, by the way, Mr Lewis held himself many years ago. When the tide of agricultural settlement rolled northward, Mr Lewis was quick to realise the magnificent field offered in his district, and the "Mercury" has ever since been among the most notable of the recognised farming journals. In his own town and district he was recognised as the leading man, and no movement was considered fairly launched until it received his approbation and co-operation. The long list of local honours he enjoyed need not be recapitulated here, but throughout the district he was regarded with affection and respect as "the father of St. Arnaud." When, some ten years ago, a movement was set on foot by the proprietors of the principal country newspapers to establish a central office of their own in Melbourne, Mr Lewis was one of the first to recognise the great advantages to be derived from such a course. His active co-operation was given, and his great experience and his clear business knowledge were found of the greatest value in successfully establishing the Country Press Association, which has since proved of such great benefit to provincial journals. His fellow shareholders indeed his

great benefit to provincial journals. His fellow shareholders induced him to become a director of the company, a position he occupied until his lamented death on Thursday, 3rd May. His term of office of chairman of directors only came to an end a few months ago.

Mr Lewis was born in Devizes, Wiltshire, in April, 1828, and in 1868 married the widow of the late Mr Archibald Borthwick, of St. Arnaud. His widow survives him; as also two grown-up sons and a daughter. His eldest son, Mr T. G. Lewis, has for some years been associated with his father in the management of the "Mercury," while the other son occupied a leading position in a Melbourne printing office.

In his own town and district Mr Lewis's death leaves a gap not to be filled by any one man, but his family and many friends have the consolation of knowing that among the men who assisted to build up the nascent nation of the south Mr C. F. Lewis was one of the chief workers.