

THE LATE MR. JOHN OXLEY NORTON.

(From the Dubbo Dispatch.)

Mr Norton was a son of the late Hon. James Norton, M.L.C. His father was an attorney, and known as the "father of the profession." He was a member of the firm which was long known as "Norton, Son, and Barker." In early life, Mr. J. O. Norton, called Oxley after his relative, the well known Surveyor-General, who first crossed the Macquarie—was intended for the law, and was placed in his father's office. The managing clerk at the time was Mr. J. N. McIntosh (now of Bathurst) and the friendship which then sprung up between Mr. Norton and Mr. McIntosh lasted till death removed one of them. The law was not congenial to Mr. Norton's tastes; and he went to live on his estate, Coonumbia, near Hartley. In 1862, when the new Police Act passed, and the force was thoroughly reorganised by Sir Charles Cowper, Mr. Norton was appointed a sub-inspector. In 1862, when the Gardiner gang of bush rangers held the western districts in *terrorem* sticking up mails, robbing escorts, and shooting policemen, Mr. Norton was sent to Forbes, and he there saw some hard service. On one occasion, when out on duty near Wheogo, accompanied by a black tracker, O'Meally Daley, and two others of the bushrangers, surrounded him. The tracker, after the first shot had been fired disappeared; and Mr. Norton was compelled to surrender. Whilst in the hands of the rascals, they tried his courage, but he blanched not. They placed him against a large box tree, and fired three shots at him. Two of the bullets struck the tree, about a foot above his head, and another hit it within a few inches of his left arm. His capture created terrible excitement in Forbes, then peopled by from 30,000 to 40,000 diggers. A public meeting was held on the camp reserve, and 500 stalwart men volunteered to go to the rescue. Captain Vern, an adventurous Hungarian, who had seen service in 1840, headed the party, but just as they were about to start Mr. Norton arrived in Forbes, having been released by the bush rangers. He afterwards saw rough services on the gold-field; and was out with Sir Frederick Pottinger, on the night when Gardiner, and his celebrated white horse, escaped from Mrs. Brown's house. Sir Frederick and his men were at the back and Mr. Norton and his party at the front of the house. Gardiner passed within ten

and Mr. Norton and his party at the front of the house. Gardiner passed within ten yards of Sir Frederick, who had him covered, but as he pulled the trigger the piece missed fire. After leaving Forbes Mr. Norton was for a time in the Maitland district, under Superintendent Morriset, and subsequently he was stationed at Hartley, where he did good work among the lawless gangs who infested the Fish River and Abercrombie. In 1867, he was transferred to Dubbo, and had charge of the force here till 1872, when he was appointed police magistrate, an office he held up to the time of his death. Eminently fitted by education for the position, his interpretation of the law was intelligent and impartial; and all agree in saying that a more upright magistrate never sat on a bench. If he occasionally fell into error, it was the error of honest conviction. Mr. Norton was a good citizen, he took an active part in most public movements. He was for some time president of the mechanics' institute, and at his demise was vice-president. He had for a number of years held the position of judge at the Jockey Club meetings. When a Masonic Lodge was established in Dubbo, he was appointed junior warden; and, in fact, he had a generous sympathy for every movement calculated to do good to his fellow men. As an example, we may state that when an agency in the Mutual Provident was established here, he assisted in every way Mr. Barrett, and feeling that life assurance was a great benefit, he urged all to take advantage of it, and as he has said an encouragement to others, he assured his own life for £500. That policy was in existence at the time of his death, and his family will receive about £550. He leaves a wife and six children, but it is satisfactory to know that they are fairly provided for, having an income of about £350 a year, derivable from property left Mr. Norton by his father. The deceased gentleman's mother died in England about 12 months ago, and he has two brothers living—the Hon. James Norton, M.L.C. and Mr. Henry Norton, an officer in the Imperial army, residing in England.