

A BRIEF LIFE HISTORY.

A COLONIST OF SIXTY YEARS.

The Hon. George Throssell, C.M.G., M.L.C., was born in Ireland on the 23rd May, 1840. He arrived in Western Australia with his parents in the ship *Scindian* in 1850. After enjoying the very limited educational advantages obtainable at that time, Mr. Throssell in his early teens entered the service of Mr. Joseph Farmaner, then one of the leading merchants in the embryo city of Perth. It was in Mr. Farmaner's employment that Mr. Throssell got his first insight into business principles, and laid the foundations of a commercial education that was afterwards to be exercised not only for his own material advancement but in the development of the district in which he subsequently made his home. Whilst devoting long days to the business of his employer, his nights were keenly studious. He was a constant attendant at the Swan River Mechanics' Institute (now known as the Perth Literary Institute) and a great reader. History, political economy, sociology and biography were his favorite subjects, and the result of his self-appointed studies was that when he came of age he was a well-read man. The habit clung to him throughout his life, and in his later days he collected a large and tastefully assorted library at his home at Fermoy.

NORTHAM IN 1862.

His coming to Northam was doubtless largely due to his marriage in March 1861 to Miss Morrell, the daughter of Richard and Susan Morrell, two pioneers of the district of Northam. The ceremony was performed in Perth by Dean Pownall, and for a time the young couple lived in Guildford. In 1862, however, they came to Northam, where Mr. Throssell has resided ever since. That he should have been variously known as "the father of Northam," and "the lion of Northam," is but natural, in view of the enormous influence Mr. Throssell has exercised in the building up of the town and district since he came here nearly half a century ago. Northam was then a very small place, but commercially he soon became a power in the district. Many

small place, but commercially he soon became a power in the district. Many prosperous farmers of to-day owed their first start in life to the hacking he was always able and willing to give to any enterprising settler. He built up a huge business very largely on the barter system, and it was not long before his firm became widely known not only throughout the State but in Eastern Australia and in other parts of the world. In 1885 he was joined in business by Mr. W. J. Stewart, and subsequently by Mr. G. L. Throssell—his eldest son. The firm carried on business in Nor-

tham and Newcastle, and dealt extensively with the goldfields in the early days when Northam was the railway terminus. Ten years ago Mr. Throssell retired from business, the great commercial enterprise he had built up being still conducted under the style of Throssell, Son & Stewart.

A PUBLIC-SPIRITED MAN.

Even in the earliest days of his business struggles—and at the outset his difficulties and disappointments were many and great—he was always a public-spirited man. He was never so busy with his own affairs that he had not time to lend a hand to any project that had for its aim the social or material advancement of the community. His strong personality made him a natural leader, and his masterful grasp of business affairs gave everyone confidence in his projects. One of his first undertakings was the establishment of the Northam Mechanics' Institute, which, with the assistance of half a dozen other public-spirited gentlemen he carried to a successful issue in 1864. He was also one of the founders of the Northam Building Society, and a constant worker in all social movements. As his young family began to grow up he realised the necessity of securing educational advantages for them. The Government of the day was appealed to, and on it being ascertained that a school could not be opened for less than seventeen children, Mr. Throssell made up the number by enrolling his then youngest daughter, and kept faith with the department by carrying her to school for a sufficient number of mornings each week to secure the necessary attendance.

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SECOND MAYOR—FIRST MEMBER.

As the town increased in importance some measure of local government was demanded, and on this being granted Mr. Throssell was elected Chairman, a position he retained for nine years, until municipal government was extended to Northam. He was then asked to take office as the first Mayor of Northam, but modestly took the view that this honor belonged to the pioneer citizen—Mr. Frederick Morrell. At the end of 12 months Mr. Throssell became Mayor—an office he occupied on many subsequent occasions—and on the introduction of Responsible Government in 1890 he was elected as the first member for Northam in the House of Assembly. In the Parliament of the country he soon made his influence felt. Handicapped though he was by deafness, his force and ability were quickly recognized. He was a clear, incisive speaker and brought to the discharge of his duties a ripe knowledge of the conditions prevailing in the part of the country he had been called upon to represent. He was the first public man to express confidence in the agricultural resources of Western Australia, but his initial triumph in Parliament was in connection with the route of the Eastern Goldfields railway. He was unquestionably the chief factor in inducing the Government of the day to bring the railway through Northam instead of through York,

and by so doing he hastened immensely the development of this district. It is a significant fact that when Mr. Throssell was returned to Parliament twenty years ago there were not more than about 300 people in Northam. The securing of the railway to the goldfields gave the town a start, and no doubt Mr. Throssell's success in the matter greatly increased his prestige in Parliament.

MINISTER FOR LANDS.

It was on the retirement of Mr. Richardson in 1896 that Sir John Forrest asked Mr. Throssell to accept the portfolio of Minister for Lands. He did so, and the appointment proved an extremely fortunate one. He was the first live Minister for Lands

was the first live Minister for Lands the State had ever had. Our present land laws—admittedly the most liberal in the world—were largely moulded by him. At his instance Sir John Forrest introduced the Agricultural Bank Act—one of the most beneficent measures on the Statute books of the country. The Repurchase of Estates Act was another of his creations. A feature of land legislation on which Mr. Throssell always prided himself was the provision of ten-acre blocks for working men, his idea being that the farm hand might have his own block near to his employment on which he could build his own home and cultivate the ground during his spare time. He was at all times a man of strong liberal tendencies never likely to overlook the point of view of the worker, and in giving the settler a homestead farm of 160 acres he insisted that the farm laborer also should be entitled to his free block of ten acres. That the provision has not been largely availed of is due rather to practical difficulties than to any weakness of intention on the part of its initiator.

AN INSTANCE OF FORESIGHT.

One Bill Mr. Throssell framed during this stage of his political career which failed to pass. It was the Encouragement to Industries Bill, and its object was to anticipate Federation, to seize the opportunity we then had of building up secondary industries by means of subsidies and bonuses so that when, under Federation, all these props had to be taken away the industries might have become strong enough to stand alone. Had we had in the Parliament of that time a few more men with Mr. Throssell's vision, some measure of the kind would undoubtedly have passed into law, with the result that Federation would not have devastated our secondary industries in the manner it has done.

PREMIER OF THE STATE.

With the entrance of the State into Federation, and the retirement of Sir John Forrest, Mr. Throssell was generally regarded as his natural successor. He was immeasurably the strongest man in the cabinet, and even the affliction of his increasing deafness did not alter the opinion that he was the only man who could hope successfully to lead the old party. On February 6, 1901, Sir John Forrest

February 6, 1901, Sir John Forrest called his supporters together and announced his resignation. Mr. Throssell was appointed to succeed him. A day or two later he was accorded a most flattering welcome on his return home to Northam, and he then briefly sketched the line of policy he intended to lay down. Whilst declaring his intention of safeguarding the interests of the goldfields and indeed of every portion of the State, Mr. Throssell made agricultural development the keynote of his policy. "It would be wise," he said, "to send land missionaries all over Australia to extol the undoubted value of our lands in order to induce settlers to come here." The election which followed showed that the country was not prepared for a land settlement policy. Two of his ministers (Mr. Moran, and the late Mr. B. C. Wood) were defeated, and Mr. Throssell resigned without meeting Parliament.

RETIREMENT FROM POLITICS.

For the next three years he remained a private but active member of the Assembly, and towards the end of the session he announced his intention of retiring from parliamentary life. In February 1904, a monster deputation armed with a petition signed by over 400 voters, waited upon him and urged him to again contest the general election. He refused on the ground that although he felt his judgment to be riper than ever, and was strong in bodily health, his infirmity (deafness) made it obligatory for him to retire. He said that he would still work for Northam, "It is a duty I owe to Northam to work for it. I married a Northam lady, all my family have been born in Northam, and whatever wealth God has blessed me with I have made in Northam."

DEATH OF MRS. THROSSSELL.

During the period of his political retirement Mr. Throssell underwent a very severe illness, and on May 19, 1906, Mrs. Throssell died in her 64th year. The loss of her who had been his helpmeet and companion for forty-five years was a blow from which he probably never recovered, and it was not until the end of the following year that he again took any active interest in public affairs.

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ELECTION TO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

The death of the Hon. C. E. Dempster in July 1908 left a vacancy in the Legislative Council. The taxation proposals of the Moore Government were then before the country, and although Mr. Throssell had at first regarded them with disfavor, a tour of New Zealand—undertaken in Mr. Dempster's company—had done much to modify his views. He came forward as a supporter of the Government and won a strenuous fight. The splitting of the democratic vote made the odds against him almost overwhelming, and his victory was chiefly due to his grand platform speeches. In that brief campaign he displayed much of the vigor of his youth, an abounding confidence in his country, and a broad-minded appreciation of the requirements of the people. A series of illnesses to some extent interfered with the performance of his legislative duties, but as of old his voice has always been raised on the side of liberty and progress, as instance his vote for the extension of the Legislative Council franchise during last session.

CREATED A C.M.G.

Early in last year Mr. Throssell met with an unfortunate accident. He had just arrived by the express from Perth and was starting to drive home from the station when a puff of smoke frightened the horse. He was thrown out, and it was a long time before he recovered from his injuries. In June 1909 his great services to the State were to some extent recognised by the conferring upon him of the title of C.M.G.—an honor which he had more than deserved. Early in this year he journeyed to the Eastern States for a brief holiday and returned at the beginning of June. He was then in rather indifferent health, but more recently his condition improved wonderfully and during the last couple of months he had been remarkably well. He repeatedly said that it was a long time since he had felt better or in higher spirits. His was one of those natures that could not but "rejoice with those that rejoice," and the growing prosperity of the district with which he had been so closely associated was a never ending theme of satisfaction.

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The Late HON. GEO. TUROSSELL