

GENERAL NEWS.

THE Emperor, Don Pedro II., has signed a decree commuting the sentence of four years of hard labor to which Mgr. Vital, bishop of Olicca, has been iniquitously condemned, into four years of simple imprisonment without hard labor. The Fortress of Santa Cruz has been assigned as his prison. Very shortly the bishop, and a priest who voluntarily shares his imprisonment, will be carried off to that fortress by the police agents.

The late deputation of Irish members to the Premier, requesting the release of the remaining Fenian prisoners, is characterised by the 'New York Herald' as the most remarkable demonstration of Irish Parliamentary opinion that has taken place since the union of Great Britain and Ireland. It offered Mr. Disraeli (says the 'Herald') an opportunity to make a change in the policy of the Government towards Ireland, which no wise statesman would have allowed to pass. Whatever opinion may be entertained of the wisdom of the Fenian movement, there can be no question of the earnestness and single-mindedness of the men who engaged in it in Ireland. It is now nine years since the arrest and conviction of the leaders of the movement, and during that period the prisoners have been treated like ordinary convicts, or rather with greater severity. The moral effect of their punishment has been felt by those likely to imitate them, and its prolongation can serve no useful purpose.

Whilst the Lord allows the Church to be afflicted and opposed in many countries of Europe, he gives it a rapid development elsewhere. At the beginning of the present century America had only two or three Bishops, whilst now there are more than seventy, and they are divided into seven large ecclesiastical Provinces. And Australia, where then there were only two missionaries, has now thirteen dioceses. Besides the province of Sydney, His Holiness has just erected another in Melbourne, embracing Victoria and other flourishing parts of the Australian continent. Victoria has 731,528 inhabitants, of whom 170,620 are Catholics; in 1871 there were only 18,014. New South Wales, out of a population of 503,932, has 147,627 Catholics. In South Australia (Adelaide) there are 28,668 Catholics in a population of 188,995. In Queensland the Catholics are 31,882 out of 120,104. In Western Australia (Perth) by far the most desert and least cultivated part of the continent, there are 7118 Catholics out of 24,785 people. In New Zealand, out of 350,393 inhabitants, 35,608 are Catholics. In Tasmania (Van Diemen's Land) out of 99,328 inhabitants, 22,091 are Catholics. Summing up, out of a population close upon two millions (exactly, 1,925,115) nearly a fourth (in 1871, 443,554) are Catholics. Supposing the increase during the last three years to have been in like proportion, we find at this minute a Catholic population of 500,000, where half a century ago there were scarcely 30,000 Catholics. And this population is in the full vigor of Catholic life, with magnificent churches, colleges, schools, convents, and charitable institutions of all sorts.

The Russian Government is sedulously engaged in exterminating the Catholic Church throughout its dominions. In the days of that infamous tyrant, Nicholas I., the United Eastern Church in the old Polish provinces of Lithuania and Volhynia was forcibly suppressed, and soldiers and hangmen called in to compel the Catholic people of those districts to join the so-called orthodox Church. The present emperor, Alexander II., whose generosity and magnanimity the toadies and tuffhunters of the London press are never weary of extolling, has of late begun to follow in those "footprints on the sands of time," and enter upon the *damnosa hereditas* left to him by his father. One of his most detestable tools, the late Governor of Poland, Count Berg, signed a stringent order on the very eve of his death, i.e., on the 17th of January of the present year, for the compulsory conversion of the Catholics in the eastern districts of the kingdom. This order has been carried out to the letter. Russian Popes were sent into the villages of the circles of Seidlca and Biala, and began their sacrilegious antics in Catholic churches. In some places, such as Polabice, Zablocie and Drelow, the people resisted, broke the "czar's door" to pieces, and sent the sham priests to the whereabouts. These risings have been put down with fearful slaughter. Apart from a large number of men and women killed in the defence of their faith, hundreds of peasants have been put in irons and taken to the prisons of Biala and Miedzyciecz. By the time the eastern districts shall be "converted," the western portion of the kingdom, which has been Catholic for upwards of 1000 years, will be brought under the harrow, and there will be none but the schismatic Church left throughout the dominions of the Czar. Whether it will boscom Catholics to join in the ovations with which England is about to welcome the persecutor of their Church, may be very well left to their own discrimination.

Peter Ellingthorpe, a gentleman of great wealth, died at his own residence, Shorrokey. He was often desired to dispose of his property by will, but he always resolutely refused to do so, alleging that he had not any immediate relations, and the next of kin must assert their claims and establish them in the best way they could. Mr. Ellingthorpe was as good as his word, and died intestate. The family tree reveals the fact that the heirs-at-law are two brothers, who, if living, are somewhere abroad. The coveted treasure is estimated to be worth £40,000; much of it is freehold property, and therefore some claimant is sure to assert a title thereto.

A singular application was made at Wandsworth Police Court. A woman came before the magistrate and wished to know whether she had a right to show a calf, as so many persons wished to see it. She said the calf had two heads, four eyes, two mouths, and two tongues. It was something more than ever was known. She wished to know whether she was justified in showing it. Mr. Ingham said he did not know of any law against it. The applicant said some of her neighbors told her that she required a license. Mr. Ingham supposed it was not a place of public entertainment. The applicant said it was her own place. Mr. Ingham told her to go to the station and speak to the inspector.

Dr. Kenealy, of Tichborne fame, has taken to journalism. Whether from a want of some work to do at his own profession, or a fear

that his services in the cause of Arthur Orton will meet its due reward, we do not know. All we are at liberty to say just now is that convict Orton's distinguished advocate has started a newspaper and has become its editor, and that he seems to be sadly in want of money. The first number of the new journal appeared a short time ago. Its first striking characteristic is quite in keeping with the well-known personal characteristics of its editor—barefaced self-puff and vulgar rhodomontade. The whole number is occupied with articles in eulogy of Dr. Kenealy and of his conduct during the Tichborne trial. To cap the modesty of the proceeding, an announcement occupies a prominent place wishing the public to assist in raising £30,000 to be presented to Dr. Kenealy as a reward for his exertions on behalf Arthur Orton! Is this to be taken as a deliberate insult to the intelligence of the British public, or is it that the doctor has become demented?

The Dublin 'Freeman,' alluding to the disgraceful state of affairs at Kilmainham Hospital, says:—As Mr Owen Lewis has taken up the matter of the Catholic inmates of Kilmainham Hospital, there are a few other matters on which we think it might be well to question the Minister of War, or whoever the proper authority is. The Catholic inmates of the house are, as previously stated, in the proportion of five to one. There is, we understand, a sum of sixteen pounds set aside for buying newspapers for the inmates. This sum is, we are told, disbursed entirely in the interest of the few Protestants in the asylum. Not a single Catholic or Liberal paper is purchased. Again, although the asylum is full of aged Catholics tottering on the verge of the grave, the library does not contain a single Catholic work of devotion with which the Catholic veteran could solace his evening hours and prepare for the long journey close at hand. In the bedroom of every Catholic inmate, we have reason to believe, is placed a Protestant version of the Bible, but there is not a single Catholic version in the establishment! The matter is no light and trifling one, and we trust Mr Lewis will not allow it to die out till full justice is obtained. It is intolerable that Catholic soldiers who have perilled life and limb for their Royal mistress should, in the refuge provided for them in their old age, feel that a system—for it is a system, not individuals, we arraign—prevails which places their religion under a ban.

The Geelong 'Evening Times' thus pathetically relates an incident which occurred at the local Police Court:—"More shocking and painful than the erratic mental aberrations of lunacy, or even than the frenzy of madness, is the vacant, blank, unmeaning look, and the positively hideous smile and laugh of the idiot. Poor Mrs Freeman has been afflicted by Providence with an idiot child, which has grown from its birth minus all mental perception, and is now a physically strong girl of twelve to fourteen years old. But on her face, the features of which are individually almost handsome, set the inexpressible deformity of fixed, unalterable, drivelling imbecility. As the mother and daughter sat together, it was easy to see the story of a heart that had suffered a never dying anguish, far exceeding the poignant sorrow that springs from death. One could readily picture the years of tender solicitude during which the mother looked in vain to catch some acknowledgment from her child of the love she had lavished upon her; but who can tell the intensity of the pangs she must often have felt in receiving from the offspring of her heart, nothing but an idiotic chuckle, or a laugh without meaning, in response to her best affections. What her many years' experiences have been were, perhaps, portrayed in the final outburst of her maternal feelings in Court to-day. Throwing her head upon the idiot girl's shoulder, she sobbed aloud. 'Oh, your Worship, it is hard for me to lose her, for she was always more to me than all others.' More painful to the spectator, during this scene, than even the mother's grief, was the unappreciative expression of the girl as she laughed vacantly in response to her parent's sounds of grief. It seems that the cause of the laws intervention is that the girl as she grows older is getting dangerous, occasionally threatening herself and others with the carving knife."

An English journal publishes a description of a terrible predicament of the lighthouse-keepers on Bishops Rock during the recent hurricane, the violence of which is described as being fearful. The Bishops Rock lighthouse is erected on a rock beyond the Scilly Islands, far out in the Atlantic. It was struck by enormous waves in quick succession, each causing a noise like the discharge of cannon, and making the massive stone building rock to and fro, so that every article fell away from its place. One fearful sea broke the great lens in several pieces, and another smashed the cylinders of the spare light, while sand from the bottom, thirty fathoms deep, was found heaped upon the lighthouse gallery. The keepers had a narrow escape.

THE 'Waka Maori'—the journal published in the native language—has taken a rather novel and unpleasant way of reminding forgetful subscribers of their liabilities, as the following notice quoted from a recent issue will show:—"We beg to inform the undermentioned parties, of the Wanganui district, that their names have been struck off our list of subscribers, they having refused to pay their subscriptions as promised. Of all our numerous subscribers in the Wanganui district they are the only defaulters; everyone of the others have honorably paid the subscriptions as regularly as the Pakehas do for their newspapers. There are also others in other districts, whose names we purpose to expunge from our list if they do not fulfil their engagements."

THERE are two brothers, twins, whose resemblance to each other is so strong that strangers can hardly tell them apart. They keep a grocery and provision store, and were one day bringing in bags of meal from a waggon which was out of sight from inside the shop. Nathan had his coat, but Eli was in his shirt-sleeves. A stranger in the shop watched them coming in and going out, but only one was visible at a time, and at last he exclaimed to Eli, "Well, you're the smallest man I ever saw; but why do you keep putting on and taking off your coat?" These brothers and several other men were in the habit of getting up very early, and going to swim, and once Eli going, as was his wont, to Nathan's house to call him by tapping on the pane, saw his own face reflected on the glass, and taking it for his brother's called out, "Come on, they're all waiting for you."