

of Paula, or St. Anthony, whether his facile interpretations would be able to convince them that such a symbol was worthy of Christianity, and fit to replace the sign which led to the conversion of the founder of Constantinople. The crescent, at least, is emblematic of what was once a mighty empire, but the pineapple (?) of nothing.

WE can have no better proof of the desperation into which the loss of personal charms drives certain members of the fair sex than that afforded by the continued patronage accorded to Madame Rachel. The craving to be "beautiful for ever" has been strong enough to induce ladies of good position to have recourse to this woman's doubtful services, notwithstanding the *exposés* that have occurred throughout her career, and which, it might have been thought, must have been sufficient to have blasted her reputation even in respect to the unworthy trade carried on by her, and shown her to be, even where her professed art was concerned, an impostor; while social extinction was well known to be the penalty that awaited her published victims. This effort to retain beauty of appearance for a longer period than nature has decreed that it shall be retained is certainly one of the gravest weaknesses that marks the female character, and it is a blemish that is as incomprehensible as it is disfiguring. It is, indeed, most difficult to understand what satisfaction can be derived from the belief that admiration is accorded to the paint and enamel that adorn skin which has lost its smoothness and delicate tints, or to a head adorned with luxuriant tresses that by no means belong to it. It is as irrational to take pleasure in such an admiration as it would be, almost to feel a personal conceit in that bestowed upon the waxen lineaments of a lily figure in the nearest hairdresser's window. But it is too true that a tendency to seek for spurious admiration of the kind is not only in existence, but strongly on the increase. The extravagance of fashion is said to be growing daily, and the promenades of Paris, its chief fountain, are now said to exhibit a devotion to dress that has never been equalled. Yet it remains true that dress is impotent to confer the charms that are demanded from it. In many instances it disfigures rather than adorns, and it frequently takes weeks for the eye to grow accustomed to some freak of taste introduced by those who lead the fashionable world in this regard. What Addison has said of the head is worthy of all attention:—"I would desire the fair sex to consider how impossible it is for them to add anything that can be ornamental to what is already the masterpiece of nature. The head has the most beautiful appearance, as well as the highest station, in a human figure. Nature has laid out all her art in beautifying the face; she has touched it with vermilion, planted in it a double row of ivory, made it the seat of smiles and blushes, lighted it up and enlivened it with the brightness of the eyes, hung it on each side with curious organs of sense, given it airs and graces that cannot be described, and surrounded it with such a flowing shade of hair as sets all its beauties in the most agreeable light. In short, she seems to have designed the head as a cupola to the most glorious of her works; and when we load it with such a pile of supernumerary ornaments, we destroy the symmetry of the human figure, and foolishly contrive to call off the eye from great and real beauties, to childish gewgaws, ribbons, and bone-lace."

PEACE or war, which is it to be? It is not as yet determined but matters do not look very cheerful. What the effect of the attitude of Roumania may be on the question we are hardly as yet in a position to judge, for we have not had the advantage of learning the opinions of those at home, more intimately acquainted with the ins and outs of European politics. The two most remarkable articles on the situation brought here by the mail are that of Mr. Gladstone in the *Nineteenth Century*, and that of M. de Laveleye in the *Fortnightly*, but neither includes a view of the present complication. Mr. Gladstone, desirous that Roumania should not be deprived of Bessarabia, but considered the matter as a question to be decided upon by the States bordering on the Danube, and he did not seem to foresee that Roumania would offer an armed resistance to the demands of Russia. M. de Laveleye, whose paper contains a sketch of the most satisfactory settlement of the difficulty that appears possible, made no provision for the establishment of Russia within the Balkan Peninsula, or in fact at all upon the Danube. His plan was for autonomous provinces, with an Austrian protectorate of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and that Turkey should be allowed to suffer her inevitable fate of decay. He did not consider that the interests of England in the East were threatened by the Russian advance in Asia, which he looked upon as certain to prove a source of weakness to the latter power. He believed that England, should she be guilty of undue interference, would be isolated; but although he affirms the impotency of Austria to take action without the cordial support of Germany, and considers France to be the natural ally of Russia, and further relies upon the good sense and stinging qualities of the present French Ministry for the preservation of peace, he admits the possibility of England's persuading France and Austria to form an alliance with her, and consequently the possibility of her committing the great

crime of provoking a general war. Of a probable coercion by Russia of Roumania he says nothing, and this now appears likely to exercise an important influence in determining to which side the balance is to incline. The *Journal des Débats*, the French constitutionalist organ, we perceive expresses doubts of the sincerity of Prince Bismarck's mediation; we confess we participate in such doubts. The great chancellor has throughout his career been known for so far-sighted a plotter, so systematic and patient in designing and working out the measures that seemed desirable to him that it is impossible to place any reliance upon him, or to say what it may be, that he, in truth, is bent on until his ends have been gained, and published to the world. It may be true that a great war would not now suit Germany, but it may also be true that a war in which she would not be obliged to take part, but which would facilitate her annexation of Holland, may seem to her statesmen far from undesirable. However it may be, we may be persuaded that Bismarck's mediation, sincere or insincere, is intended for the ultimate benefit of his own country, rather than for that of either of the two other powers concerned.

THE POPULATION OF VICTORIA.

(From the *Argus*, February 23.)

THE population returns of Victoria for 1877 are published in yesterday's *Gazette* and we learn that Victoria now numbers 860,504 souls. This is an increase of 20,504 from the 31st December, 1876 to 31st December, 1877—a gain somewhat in excess of the stunted growth of previous years, though considerably less than the healthy increase which the year prior to 1872 witnessed. The strange feature of the returns is the continuation of the steady diminution of the birth-rate to which we have from time to time called attention before. Mr. Hayter tells us that the births were fewer in 1877 than in any year since 1869 and we give figures which show the falling-off:—

	Total Births.
1873.....	28,100
1877.....	26,043

Yet in 1873 the population was only 700,000 and now it is 860,000, and the total of births ought to be large in proportion. The immediate cause of the effect is not far to seek, Dr. Balls-Headly having recently written at length on the decrease of marriages in Victoria. But this only pushes the difficulty a stage further back, and brings us to the question, why should marriages be fewer in Victoria than before? No question deserves a closer study. A decrease in the birth rate—the ratio per 1000 of the population can be understood. It may be accounted for by an increase in the number of children who are not marriageable, but an absolute decrease in the number of births, six children only coming into the world where seven came before, in the same country, and substantially with the same population, is a phenomenon of which no explanation has been offered except the very unsatisfactory one that men and women are more pinched for the means of living than ever they were before in Victoria, and than they are in the adjacent colonies, where the population has not ceased to abundantly multiply in the land. Some corresponding figures come from New South Wales. Putting aside immigration, the excess of births over deaths in the sister colony last year, was 16,414, and in Victoria the excess was only 13,521, although we had much the larger population. Our gain, measured by the Sydney standard, ought to have been 20,000 from this source alone. New South Wales gained 16,072 by immigration, and we 7,253. Our total increase is 20,504: hers 32,486. We are 860,504 in number; New South Wales is 662,212—the two colonies containing now a population of over one million and a half; Victoria still considerably in advance, but New South Wales gaining rapidly.

NEW ZEALAND CENSUS, 1878.

THE following are the approximate numbers returned by the sub-enumerators for the places named:—

Borough of Auckland.—(City East).—Males, 2157; females, 2105; total, 4262. City West.—Males, 4812; females, 4658; total, 9470. Making a total males, 6969; females, 6763; gross total, 13,732, in the two main divisions of the city of Auckland. To these numbers, however, must be added the number on board ship in the harbour of Auckland, viz., males, 763; females, 65; making a gross total of 14,565 souls within the city and port Auckland.

Parnell.—This district comprises a division into "borough" and "electorate," from which the returns are the following:—Borough—Males, 1321; females, 1382; total, 2703. Electorate—Males, 486; females, 376; total, 862.

Eden (County).—Parnell is also classed as a Riding—Males, 514; females, 554; total, 1068.

Newton (Riding) is classed as an Electorate, and the numbers are—Males, 1730; females, 1782; total, 3512.

Epsom (Riding) is taken in as a suburb, but the reason why is not very apparent, the population being shown as follows:—Males, 359; females, 339; total, 1698.

Grafton (Riding) is also represented as a suburb, the numbers being—males, 2289; females, 2465; total, 4754. This represents a gross total for city and suburbs of 29,162.

Tamaki (Riding).—Males, 479; females, 423; total, 902.

Whau (Riding).—Males, 701; females, 526; total, 1227.

Onehunga (Borough).—Males, 1031; females, 1111; total, 2142.

Total returns for County Manukau received up to the present 6135.

Total returns for Rodney County, 2114.

Total for Waitemata County, 3123.

The Registrar-General desires it to be notified that the above returns must be regarded as approximate only, until they shall have been properly checked.