

Commercial.

MR. HENRY DRIVER (on behalf of the N.Z.L. and M.A. Company, Limited) reports for the week ending 12th February, 1879, as follows:—

Fat Cattle.—The small supply of 87 head was yarded for to-day's sale, consisting of medium to good quality. Competition was fairly animated, and prices obtained were rather over last week's rates. Bullock's brought from £9 to £14 per head; cows, from £7 to £9—equal for prime beef, to from 30s to 32s 6d per 100lbs.

Fat Calves—7 yarded, and were sold at satisfactory prices.

Fat Sheep.—1663 penned. The trade having bought largely last week, bidding was languid, and sales difficult to effect, and prices showed no improvement on last quotations. We disposed of a few small lots at from 13d to 2d per lb, at which we quote mutton.

Country Sales.—Land: On Saturday, the 8th inst., sold 30 sections in the township of Clinton, at an average of £17 16s, on account of Fitzclarence Roberts, Esq.

Wool.—We sold a small catalogue of farmers' lots this afternoon. The attendance of buyers was not full, and bidding lacked spirit. It was with difficulty that former prices were obtained. Merino fleeces, both in grease and washed, were in good demand, and brought very full rates. The former sold at from 7½ to 10d, the latter from 13d to 15½d per lb., the last named price being from the stud flock of John Johnston, Esq., Kaihiku. Crossbreds barely maintained former rates, particularly Leicesters and three-quarter-breeds, which, if in at all heavy and cotted condition, brought very low prices.

Sheepskins.—At our usual weekly sale on Monday we catalogued 1500 skins, which were fairly competed for, though without improvement in prices, the stormy weather preventing some fellmongers from buying their usual requirements. Cross-breeds in wool sold at 3s 9d to 4s; lambs, 11d to 1s 4d each; station skins, 4½d to 5½d; pelts, 6d to 9d each.

Tallow.—Small parcels of inferior tallow sold at 22s; rough fat, 21s to 21s 6d.

Grain.—Wheat market quite stagnant; no business doing; prices are nominal. Oats: Market quiet; old corn moves off in small parcels, at 3s 6d to 3s 7d. The unsettled state of the weather has prevented new grain from coming to market; dealers are without stock, waiting for arrivals of new grain. Barley: Malting samples are inquired for. Brewers getting low in stock, fair prices will be given for early samples.

Messrs. A. & H. Mercer report for the week ending Feb. 12:—Retail prices only.—Fresh butter, ½ and 1lb. prints, best and favourite brands, 1s 2d per lb; ordinary butter, 1s per lb; fresh butter in lumps 11d per lb: powdered and salt butter, 1s. The market is still well supplied with fresh butter, and although several of the shopkeepers are salting down large quantities, prices are looking up. Salt butter in keg, 10d to 11d per lb, no demand; cheese, best quality, 10d to 1s per lb; side and rolled bacon 10d to 11d per lb; colonial hams, 1s per lb; English hams, 1s 3d per lb; eggs still scarce and retailing at 1s 10d to 2s per doz.

Mr. Skene reports for the week ending February 12:—Harvest operations are now in full swing, and every man is at work. Ordinary works on roads, Railways, harbour works, &c., are all crying for men. Wages were never so high as at present in every department. Town and Country.—Shopmen and clerks are poorly paid, in comparison to ordinary labourers; hotel servants are in good demand and trained people are scarce. The Building Trade keeps very active. Couples are more asked for. Men trained to bush work are much wanted. Female servants are a shade more plentiful. Wages—Couples, £75 to £90; harvesters, 30s to 50s; cooks, waiters, boots, &c., 20s to 40s; ploughmen and shepherds, £60, £65, and £70; day labourers, 8s, 9s, 10s, and 11s per day; girls, 10s, 12s, 15s, 20s, and 30s; milkers, 15s, 20s, and 25s; boys, 6s to 10s.

Mr. J. Fleming reports (wholesale prices) for the week ending Feb. 12, 1879, as follows:—Oats (feed), 3s 6d to 3s 9d per bushel. Wheat—4s; chicks, 3s to 3s 4d. Barley, malting, 5s to 6s 6d; feed 3s to 3s 6d. Pollard, £6 per ton. Bran, £4 10s. Flour, large bags, £10; small, £10 10s. Oatmeal, £19 10s. Potatoes, £5 0s to £6 per ton. Hay, new, £4 per ton; old do, £6 per ton. Chaff, £4 10s to £5 10s per ton. Straw, £2 per ton. Onions, 10s. Cheese, 6½d. Rolled bacon 9d.

Mr. J. VEZEY reports for the week ending Feb. 12, as follows: Retail prices. Roasting beef, 6d to 8d per lb; boiling do, 3d to 6d per lb; stewing do, 4d to 6d per lb; steak, 6d to 8d per lb; mutton, 2½d to 4d per lb. veal 4d to 8d per lb; pork, 6d to 9d per lb; lamb 2s 6d to 3s 6d per quarter.

A good story of a priest and a parson is related by the *Birsener Courier*, a Berlin paper, as having lately happened in one of the largest towns of Prussia. The wife of a journeyman carpenter out of work having given birth to a very delicate child, wished it to be baptized at once, and so the husband called on the Protestant minister, asking him to perform the ceremony. The parson refused to do it unless a fee of six shillings were paid him in advance, and all entreaties of the poor man to wait for the money were of no avail. A friend then told the child's father that the Catholic priest of the place would baptize the child for nothing, and so he went to see him about it. "But, my good fellow," said the priest, "you're not a Catholic; why don't you have the child baptized in your own Church?" The man explains to him that it is owing to want of cash, whereupon the priest replies, "If that is all, here is six shillings. Go and take it to the minister. It shall not be said of me that I want to proselytize." The man went back to the parson, who, on being told that the six shillings came from a priest, would not for very shame accept it, but christened the child gratis; adding, however, "Go and tell the priest that out of pity for your poverty I have done it for nothing." Upon the money being offered to the priest, this excellent man refused to accept it, but said it had better go towards some comforts for the poor woman in confinement.

THE HORRORS OF RUSSIAN CHRISTIANITY.

At length the official report of the correspondence respecting the proceedings of the International Commission sent to the Mount Rhodope districts is before us, and we have an opportunity of studying the "plain, unvarnished tale" which is offered for the consideration of Europe by its special representatives. The commission journeyed from place to place, gathering evidence and investigating statements. Nothing like enthusiasm or even humanitarian sympathy marks its proceedings; witnesses are heard, their testimony is sifted, and then the calm report is made. The Consuls-General and Secretaries of Legation went to the Rhodope district to ascertain the truth, and what they heard they compile in the form of an ordinary official document, leaving their respective governments to supply the requisite comment. They tell us, for instance, that at Saremberg a number of Turkish refugees were chased by the Russians, who, on overtaking them, "carried off the young women," but of the fate of these hapless Muzzulmans no more is said. At Carlova it was found that the Russians had arrested sixty-eight men and three women in the village of Medressi, close at hand, and shot them all; but why this slaughter was perpetrated we are not informed. In the district of Tirnova ample evidence is given to show that the Russians cut off the hands of twenty-four Moslems, and then hurled them from a precipice, the only comment on the appalling tale being that it is "confirmed by all the delegates." Forty Turks are found to have been bung at Selvi and ten shot, the sole explanation given being that they were "the rich people of the district. Once only the members of the commission are represented as greatly impressed, and it was when they saw, inside the Russian lines near Gabrova, about a dozen burnt villages, which had been so evidently destroyed by design as to prove beyond a doubt the determined nature of the devastation which Muscovite soldiers had committed. Referring to Phillippopolis, the stories of large numbers of women, who testify to the brutality of the Czar's troops to their children and themselves, are summarized in the fewest possible lines; and even the evidence of those who witnessed the decapitation of thirty unoffending peasants in a glen is not dwelt upon with the slightest emphasis. A man named Issi sees ten Turkish women taken towards a wood by the Russians, some of them sabred on the way for offering resistance; another man who witnessed the murder of his wife and the abduction of his daughter-in-law, is merely mentioned in a long list of those who at Hannanli who were either killed or outraged; while a crowd of widows near Camarkow, who furnish evidence of the most fearful nature it is possible to conceive, are simply catalogued, and so left. The narrative which deals with the agony of thousands, continues in the same quiet fashion to the end. The recital at Kerdjalli was indeed so terrible that as it proceeds, the sobs of the victims are mingled with the tears of "more than a thousand auditors;" but the commission makes no comment, even when noting the infamous conduct of the Muscovites at Fourlton, when fifty women were put in a shed full of leaves, and there burnt to death. Nor is the terrible record more highly coloured when it relates the destruction of two thousand children in the Maritza river, or when the fact that skeletons lay lining the road, as was the case near Hasskeni, is grimly added to the proceedings.

The report bears the signatures of the representatives of England, France, Turkey and Italy. Illness prevented the Austrian envoy from adding his name to the paper, and the Russian signatures are missing for obvious reasons.—Exchange.

THE FAMINE IN CHINA.

The Chinese Minister has addressed the following letter to the Foreign Secretary on the subject of the recent famine in China:—
"My Lord,—I have been instructed by the Tsung-li Yamen and the Grand Secretary Li to request that your lordship will have the goodness to present to the subscribers of the China Famine Fund the grateful acknowledgment of the Chinese Government for the generous alacrity with which, on hearing of the fearful calamity which had befallen the northern provinces of China, they hastened to the assistance of the suffering population. The noble philanthropy which heard in a far-distant country the cry of suffering, and hastened to its assistance, is too signal a recognition of the common brotherhood of humanity ever to be forgotten, and is all the more worthy of being remembered, because it was not a mere passing response to a generous emotion, but a continued effort persevered in, until, in sending the welcome rain, Heaven gave the assuring promise of returning plenty, and the sign that the brotherly succour was no longer required. Coming from Englishmen residing in all parts of the world, this spontaneous act of generosity made a deep impression on the Government and people of China, which cannot but have the effect of more closely cementing the friendly relations which now so happily exist between China and the Government and the people of this country. But the hand that gave also assumed the arduous duty of administering the relief; and here I would not forget to offer my grateful thanks and condolence to the families of those, and they are not a few, who nobly fell in distributing the fund. To Englishmen in all parts of the world I beg to offer, through your Lordship, the thanks of the Government and people of China for the generous assistance afforded by them in a time of great calamity; but I more especially desire to thank his Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury, Sir Thomas Wade, Sir Rutherford Alcock, the Governor of Hong Kong, and the various missionary societies who inaugurated the China Famine Fund, supported it with their influence, and advanced it by their strenuous exertions. Trusting that your Lordship will convey to them this acknowledgment of the Chinese Government, I beg, &c. (Signed) KUO SUNG TAO." Lord Salisbury has thus replied:—"Foreign Office, October 25, 1878.—Sir,—I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 14th inst., conveying to me an expression of the grateful acknowledgments of the Chinese Government for the assistance rendered by Englishmen in all parts of the world towards relieving distress in the districts of China recently stricken by famine, and I beg leave to acquaint you, in reply, that I shall have great pleasure in communicating such acknowledgments to the persons who were instrumental in establishing the fund for the relief of the suffering population in China."