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Current Topics

AT HOME AND ABROAD.

THE LIFE EVERLASTING. WHAT is the reason that the Press, especially the "evangelical" Press, of this colony, has not recorded the most wonderful gift of grace that has distinguished this century, or any century, or, in fact, the whole course of the world's history taken together? We should have expected it to have been printed in large type, at least in every religious paper belonging to the religions concerned, in New Zealand; but we have looked in vain for it. Not one of them has a word to say on the subject, and yet it beats the big pyramid hollow. Do not our "evangelical" friends know, have they not heard, that there is now not the slightest reason in the world why anyone of them should die? Their doing so is a mere idle patronage of the undertakers, for there was not, and is not, a man, woman, or child, of their sort on earth who need have died, or need die now, since the year of our Lord 1866, unless such was, is, or shall be, his own good pleasure. There is an association at Dublin, in a word, that tells us this, and its leading member is a most respectable and even famous minister of the late Established Church—no less a personage than that screamingly anti-Popish champion, the Rev. Tresham Gregg, D.D. Dr. Gregg informs us that, although he is now in his 80th year, he intends to be as brisk a century nence as he is at present, and to keep on addressing just such meetings as that addressed by him at the second annual meeting of the "Conditional Immortality Association," and to recommend to them at every meeting, we suppose, his "Key to Perpetual Life" at the cost of two shillings sterling per copy. We confess we admire Dr. Gregg. We knew lots of people who were persuaded the world was to come to an end in 1866, but who, when that year had passed by like any other year, were obliged, and we may add with not much disappointment either, to look out for a new starting point, and a new point of conclusion; but Dr. Gregg was as staunch as he would have been with his hand upon the Pope's windpipe, and determinedly refused to loosen his grip. He not only prophesied that the world was to end in the year referred to, but now he sticks to it that it did end in that year, and he says he has attained to "all his salvation and all his desire," and he, and such as he is, have only to fall into the knack of it and they need never die, which, considering the great advantage their lives have been to society, is a comfort to think of. But why do not our worthy "evangelical" friends here take the matter up and proclaim their immortality likewise? Surely they are no less vessels of election than is the Dublin doctor. What is the attraction presented to them by the worms and the mould? We would gladly prevail with them to allow themselves to be persuaded by Dr. Gregg. Let them consider the benefit to be conferred on the community by such a course—every platform, as at present, brilliantly manned; every pulpit eloquently filled, as now; each tea-meeting with its president for ever unchanged; above all, each "evangelical" journal edited with all the sweet freshness of the primary schoolroom, as to-day; everywhere a blessed continuity of immortal pap. We do trust the example of the Rev. Dr. Gregg may be followed here. For ourselves we are without the pale; the doctor tells us that from this great salvation Romanists are, by their own principles, suicidally cut off. It is, however, a position that would hardly have sufficed to afford us sufficient space to ridicule the anti-Catholic screechings of Dr. Gregg and his followers, and to suffer the nausea that necessarily arises from their spiritual utterances and, indeed, from a good many of their temporal utterances likewise.

FORGOTTEN LABOURS. WE have just come across a number of a certain periodical, from which, once more, we learn how history repeats itself. The periodical is entitled "The Catholic Magazine" and the number to which we allude is more than forty years old, as it appeared in July 1838. From a paper in this number, then, we learn that, more than forty years ago, there was a prodigious distribution of tracts being

carried on with a view to the "conversion" of France. One individual alone claimed to have distributed, within the year, between twenty-five and thirty thousand of the documents in question, and the general annual distribution was reckoned at about half-a-million. Nor were these tracts confined to the French language only; eleven different ones had that year been translated into the tongue of Lower Brittany, and doubtless a wide dissemination of them had taken place there. Spain was also an object of solicitude to Protestants of the "evangelical" stamp, and eleven tracts had also been translated into Spanish for the benefit of the people speaking that language. From this it would appear that the "evangelization" of the Catholic countries of Europe has long been zealously carried on, and it is hardly fair of the "evangelists" of the period to omit all mention in their lucubrations of the labours of those who have gone before them. If they say, however, that labours which have produced no fruits are not deserving of a niche in the temple of posthumous fame, we may reply that they establish a precedent that hereafter will excuse forgetfulness of their own works also on the part of posterity.

SIR HENRY PARKES, the well-known statesman in New South Wales, delivered a speech lately in the HENRY PARKES Parliament at Sydney, relative to the education question, and which has been considered by some people to have added much to his reputation as an able politician. It must be remembered, however, that circumstances are favourable to such a view of the matter. The majority leans to the side advocated by Sir Henry Parkes, and in consequence he has gained an applause that hardly seems merited by the matter of his eloquence, which, in sooth, appears to us to be altogether devoid of argument, and for the most part composed of mere trickery. We take that portion of his speech, then, in which he refers to the address of His Grace Archbishop Vaughan at Balmain, and we think no one can justly question the fact of its affording a clear proof of the correctness of our view. Sir Henry said: "The Archbishop went to Balmain, and after complimenting the poor working men of Balmain for their great sacrifices concerning the Church, he reminded them of how the flesh of their forefathers had been wounded and their blood spilled for conscience' sake. As to him, he said it would be no martyrdom to him to spill his blood; it was his business his mission—(laughter)—but for these poor simple innocent men, it was necessary for him to remind them that their forefathers spilled their blood for conscience' sake. For what? For the terrible persecution which went on in this country—a persecution which none of these people had yet been able to see." Of course, for the terrible persecution which went on in New South Wales; that is just what the Archbishop meant. But if he did not mean it, Sir Henry Parkes was talking rank nonsense. What is the argument contained in this kind of jargon we should like to know. The speaker went on—"He would not go further with the Archbishop were it not that that gentleman had taken the trouble to write to the newspapers to tell them that he had written every part of his inflammatory speech, delivered it to the reporters of the Press, and believed that it was published as he had written it:—'What did we suffer as slaves and belots for at Home? Because we preferred torture and death to acting against our conscience, and to be butchered and disembowelled rather than allow those for whom we were responsible to be tampered with in their faith. He hoped that we had escaped from all forms of tyranny and persecution by coming so far away—where, we were told, that all were equal, and all were free,' Disembowelled!" That ejaculation disposes of his Grace completely, the hands of free-born Britons never were known to have been engaged in so indelicate a task. It seems to the Parliament of New South Wales a most preposterous statement. "But all this seems to be a vain illusion—a dream from which we are to be aroused by about the most ingeniously-devised piece of scientific persecution that has been invented in modern times.—(Laughter.) The end of the more brutal form of persecution and of the more cultivated is one to destroy our holy religion. I believe the scientific method is more effective, and I believe more odious, than the more expectant way of tearing out the heart and bowels of a living and grown man.' He had never heard so much about the tearing out of human bowels in his life." This is strange for a gentleman who, nevertheless, is ready to fly to history on the slightest