

instruction of a cavalry troop in mounted and dismounted drill, sword, carbine, and lance exercise, free of all charges, if it is determined to send such a force to the Soudan.

A land sale took place at Waikaiti yesterday. Owing to the indignation aroused at the offer of auriferous ground, there were no buyers. The sale was adjourned from the Courthouse owing to the risk to life in that place. The highest price offered for a section was 7s 3d.

In the course of an interview at Auckland with Sir J. Vogel, Mr. Joseph Banks, managing director of the Frozen-meat Company, undertook to experiment in tinning several varieties of fish with the object of ascertaining which are most suitable for export and consumption.

Messrs. F. Fulton, J. Jordan, and W. Lowcay (says the *Otago Daily Times*) waited on the Premier in reference to the proposal to raise a force here for service in the Soudan. They submitted to the Premier that 100 men could probably be got together, and asked, should their services be accepted, that the Government should assist the movement by giving free railway transport and providing arms. The Premier promised to bring the matter before his colleagues at Wellington next week, and to forward an answer.

At the Selwyn County Council yesterday it was reported that 33 acres of barley at Chaney's Corner, on the Northern railway line, have been entirely stripped of grain by sparrows. Other crops on the same farm were much damaged, and the owner's loss is about 2300 bushels.

The Prince of Wales will visit Ireland in April.

At a congress of dynamitards held in Paris it was resolved to extend explosive operations in England.

The Sydney patriotic fund now amounts to £30,090. Objections have been urged as to the legality of the action of the Government in despatching New South Wales troops to Soudan, and a petition against the expedition is being prepared.

England claims to be placed on an equality with Germany as far as Samoan interests are concerned.

Dispatches received by the Government from General Gordon, at Khartoum, have been published. The last, which was dated December 14, shows that Khartoum was then reduced to the last extremity, fighting going on day and night. The city was besieged by rebels on three sides. General Gordon concluded the letter with the words "Come quickly." His dispatches dated November 4, and received on the 14th inst., said he could hold out easily for 40 days, but afterwards there would be difficulty. He added that there were five steamers at Metemneh waiting Lord Wolseley's orders.

The Marquis of Salisbury has given notice in the House of Lords of a motion censuring the Government for proposing to abandon the Soudan, and declaring such a proceeding would be dangerous to the safety of Egypt and the British Empire. In the House of Commons on Monday night, Sir Stafford Northcote proposed a vote of censure on the Government. The motion set forth that the Ministerial policy in connection with the Soudan had proved resultless. In his speech he urged that it was imperative a stable government should be established in that country. Mr. Gladstone, in reply, warmly eulogised the late General Gordon, and pointed out that treason alone prevented his rescue. He demanded that the House should have confidence in the policy of the Government. The debate was continued to a late hour, and then adjourned. In the House of Lords the Earl of Carnarvon warmly eulogised the offers of the Colonies to send troops to the Soudan. Mr. Gladstone has refused to give a pledge that he will establish a government for the administration of affairs at Khartoum.

THURSDAY.

Some excitement has been caused at Christchurch by the exhibition of samples of quartz brought from Mount Haemon, at Browning's Pass. The quartz is calculated to yield at the rate of 50z. to the ton. A large number of applications for mining licenses have been lodged.

With the exception of one slight shower, no rain has fallen at Kumara for the last three weeks, and many miners are consequently idle.

The Ringarooma arrived at Sydney on Tuesday from Auckland. Soon after she was berthed it was discovered that a steward named Thomas James was suffering from smallpox. The passengers had disembarked, but 15 of them were subsequently secured and sent to the quarantine station. Several others of the passengers cannot be traced, and are still at large. The vessel has been placed in quarantine. It appears that the patient is one of the crew, and that on the last trip of the steamer to Sydney he was two days in that port, and it is believed he then contracted the disease. The outbreak created some little excitement at Wellington. The examination at New Zealand ports of each Sydney vessel will be a most minute one, and every precaution is to be taken to prevent the introduction of the disease into this Colony.

A smart shock of earthquake was felt at Hokitika at 2.30 p.m. yesterday. The direction was apparently north-east and south-west, and the duration of the shock about eight seconds. A smart shock was felt at Kumara at 2.30 in the afternoon. The oscillation appeared to be from west to east. Two shocks of earthquake were felt at 2.35 p.m. at Greymouth. The second shock was very severe, making the buildings rattle.

At a meeting of the Conservative party on Tuesday the Marquis of Salisbury stated that the Tories were fully prepared to assume office should the present Administration be found not to retain the confidence of Parliament. In the House of Commons Sir Stafford Northcote's motion of censure of the Egyptian policy of the Government was further discussed. After various speakers had addressed the House the debate was again adjourned. The division on the motion will take place on Friday next.

Mr. Neil McFadden's Glasgow and Londonderry Boot store now opened in George Street, Dunedin, continues to enjoy the high reputation that the admirable articles supplied by it have so long earned.

DISCOURSE BY THE HOLY FATHER.

MISS M. ORR, of St. Kilda, has kindly forwarded to us (*Melbourne Advocate*) from Rome the following by letter:—

On Christmas Day the Sacred College of Cardinals was received in audience by the Holy Father. The Dean, Cardinal Sacconi, read an address of congratulation, to which his Holiness responded as follows:—

"The solemn festival of the Birth of our Lord, which brings gladness to the whole Church, is a source of joy also to us, and we accept with heartfelt pleasure the congratulations and good wishes which you, my Lord Cardinal, for the first time, have offered to us in the name of the whole Sacred College.

"This joy would be more unmixed and exhilarating were the times less sad for the Church, and the government of it in consequence less difficult.

"Among the many difficulties which encompass us the greatest is that of our present position—a position which we have always declared to be intolerable, and which is proved so by the course of events.

"The year which is drawing to a close has clearly demonstrated, as you, my Lord Cardinal, have just observed, that in the present state of things not even in the exercise of charity is the Sovereign Pontiff free in his own city of Rome. Everyone remembers with what violence the greatest portion of the public Press assailed our design of opening in case of need a hospital for cholera patients at our own expense in the vicinity of the Vatican.

"The world knows how malicious insinuations and false constructions distorted the nature of that proposal; how by stratagem and threats an attempt was made to prevent its execution, or, at least, to bring home to us the bitter fact that under the new order of things in Rome the Pontiff is reduced to the ignoble position of a mere private individual.

"But this is not all—there is worse. It is a keen sorrow and a deep anxiety to us that Protestants are allowed to assail the venerable and sacred doctrines of our holy religion, and to disseminate without let or hindrance their heretical teachings here in Rome, which is the centre of faith and the See of the universal and infallible Teacher of the Church—here where the most effectual means should be adopted to guard the integrity of faith and protect the honour of the only true religion.

"It rends our heart to see that under the protection of public laws places of heretical worship are multiplied, and that it is legal in Rome openly to attack that unity of Italians—the brightest and most precious—their religious unity—by means of the insane attempts of those who have taken upon themselves the unhallowed mission of setting up for Italy a novel Church outside that one corner-stone laid by Jesus Christ as a solid foundation for his heavenly building.

"We have reason to dread other fresh and grievous affronts to religion and the Church. A bill to sanction divorce has again been laid before Parliament. A law which permits the dissolution of the marriage tie is in direct opposition to the command of God, given to man from the beginning of the world—'What God has joined together let not man put asunder.'

"The law of divorce is at open variance with the teaching of the universal law-giver, Jesus Christ, and with the prescriptions of the Church with regard to matrimony. It is a law which does not recognise in this great sacrament the lofty position to which marriage was raised by Jesus Christ, for divorce drags it down to the condition of a mere civil contract. It is a law which lowers woman and degrades her; it puts the education and well-being of children in jeopardy; it severs the bond of domestic life and destroys it; it sows discord in families; it is a source of corruption to public morals, and a fruitful cause of decay to nations. In fact, the experience of recent times has been so appalling and bitter that even the upholders of divorce have been forced to re-establish the indissolubility of marriage.

"Nevertheless, if the desires of secret societies and wishes of Freemasons be gratified, this law, which is so repugnant to Catholic principles, will be promulgated from Rome, whence only the pure light of revealed truth and the splendour of Catholic practices should originate and be diffused throughout Christendom.

"If God, in His mercy, preserves Italy from such a scourge, we will thank Him with a grateful heart, but we cannot dismiss our fears so long as the present state of things exists.

"Our present condition is so antagonistic to the dignity and independence of the Holy See, so destructive of the Roman Pontiff in the exercise of his sovereign power, that it forces itself to the front on every occasion; it make us feel the weight of a foreign power more intolerable, and it keeps prominently before the Catholic world the stern fact that it is impossible for the Holy See to come to terms with the present order of things, or to remain indifferent to its continuance.

"The Son of God made Man, who as an infant escaped the persecutions of impious men, and by His Divine power changed the face of the world, will certainly not fail to succour His afflicted Church and better the condition of His unworthy Vicar. But the Catholics of the world should hasten Divine Mercy by constant prayer, and more especially by a thoroughly Christian life in keeping with the faith and rules which they profess.

"These are the sentiments which animate us in return for the good wishes of the Sacred College; and as a pledge of the favour of Heaven and our special affection, we lovingly impart to the members of the Sacred College, to the bishops, prelates and others here present, our Apostolical Benediction."

It appears from the annual returns of the army that the number of recruits raised and finally approved for the service in the North British district last year amounted to 2,803, viz. —Glencorse, 599; Hamilton, 1,084; Perth, 289; Fort George, 162; Aberdeen, 125; Stirling, 225; Edinburgh, 192; and Ayr, 127.