

New Zealand Gazette

VOL. XII.—No. 52.

DUNEDIN: FRIDAY, APRIL 17, 1885

PRICE 6D.

Current Topics

AT HOME AND ABROAD.

HOPE
FOR THE
MISERABLE.

SHOULD Russia prove reckless enough to undertake a war against England unaided and receive the chastisement that in such an event undoubtedly awaits her, it is to be hoped that into her punishment there may also enter the performance of one particular act of justice and mercy so far undone—an act for whose accomplishment alone a humane and civilised nation might well take up arms against her. We allude to the emancipation of Poland. The condition of this unfortunate country under the rule of its tyrant still continues such as to form a reproach not only to the infamous power by which it is enforced, but to the whole of Europe that suffers it. In its favour alone no voice has been raised, of late years, and, while in every other case oppression has been vigorously protested against or successfully resisted—nay, when even cases in which there was no shadow of oppression have been made the object of a loudly expressed sympathy, or substantial aid, the most cruel, inevitable, and real sufferings of the Poles have been passed over in silence. We are told that Russia is, in fact, a weak power, that her internal rottenness makes all her appearance of strength vain, and that she will not be found a formidable enemy. But for the Poles, she has proved strong as she has been merciless, and in their own country under her wicked hands they lead a life that it is hardly an exaggeration to describe as a living death. Their only hope, they tell us now, is that they may be allowed to live. The power that is weak, and that we shall, perhaps, fortunately see prove weak, before an external enemy, is all too strong towards them, and when they are asked why they no longer think of resisting it they point in despair to the forts and batteries that have been erected to subdue them. Even the spirit of the Poles that had done and dared so much is at length broken, and all they think of asking is that no heavier a burden may be laid upon them. But what a history of infamy has not that of the Russians been in connection with them. Everything that the tyrant and persecutor could do is engraven on its pages, and Czar after Czar seems to vie with the memory of his predecessor as to the reputation he may bear for cruelty inflicted upon this people. The chronicles, for example, of the late Emperor's reign, are stained most foully by the records of his dealings with Poland. In every shape in which cruelty could be visited upon them it was practised by his emissaries, and, in particular, some of the proceedings carried on with respect to the religion of the people would seem outrageous beyond belief even if related of some pagan persecutor. It was nothing that the people should be sabred as they knelt within the walls of their churches—finding no safety even there from the horse-soldiers who rode in through the open doors to put them to the sword. But a more atrocious deed was done when the Blessed Sacrament was thrust down their throats on the point of the bayonet. Slaughter, sacrilege, infamy ten thousandfold stains the memory of the miserable Alexander II, and if he went to his grave the victim of bloody murder, there had gone there before him thousands whose death at his hand had been no less guilty and no less horrible. Outrage of every kind lies at the door of his memory, and his successor, short as has been his troubled reign, gives signs that he has no intention of departing from the paths in which his father walked. Alexander III. is also a zealot in persecuting the Church, and, while under his rule it is not lawful for any Catholic bishop in Poland to hold a visitation, the very sacrament of Penance itself is placed under the supervision of the police, and the priest who hears a confession or gives absolution without being duly authorised is liable to transportation to Siberia. The Czar, in the matters that concern religion, gives full evidence that he is of one mind with his father, and years alone are needed by him to serve the Orthodox Church of which he is the head as well. In other matters, meantime, he has gone further than his father and completed the work begun by him. A ukase, for example, was issued on the subjection of the insurrection of 1863, by which it was provided that no Pole could own, buy, or inherit land—and ever since has continued in force—the Emperor, however, finding that, in consequence of the embarrassments of those Russians who had become possessed of the lands of Poland, the Poles to a large extent had become mort-

gagees of these lands, has lately issued another ukase forbidding such mortgages and annulling all that had been made—a measure that robs these unfortunate people anew and consummates their ruin. They may, indeed, utter the sole wish to be allowed so much as to live, but it is to be feared that their wish is uttered in vain. The country, then, that shall conquer Russia will have it in her power to perform this great act of justice and mercy—to free this country whose wrongs cry to Heaven for vengeance, from the hands of her infamous oppressor—or, even if she fails to undertake this noble action, she may still so weaken the power of Russia, as to make it possible for the Poles themselves to work out their freedom, as their efforts already made show us they are capable of doing under circumstances in any degree favourable to them. Should a war with Russia, therefore, occur we shall watch it with great interest, discerning in each reverse the chastisement due to the past, as well as hope for Poland's future. It may even fall to the lot of these colonies by thwarting Russian designs in some respect or other to have a part in so great and good a work.

PEOPLE who are inclined to be terrified at the prospect of the possible visit of a Russian cruiser to one or other of our ports have been comforted a good deal lately in one or two quarters.—Major

WORDS OF
COMFORT.

Cautley, for example, gave the people of Oamaru extreme consolation the other day by telling them that it was quite impossible they could defend their port at all under present circumstances, and that the best thing they could do was to accommodate their Russian visitor in every way he demanded of them, to grin and bear it, in fact, as the saying is. And the good people of Oamaru, moreover, would have no reason to do anything worse than grin, if, as the Major also informed them, they could obtain from their visitor written orders for everything requisitioned by him, so that it might be presented to Government with a claim for payment. The *Lyttelton Times*, again, in a reassuring leader, published by the way on All Fools' Day, if there be anything in that, says that it is the losing side which would have to pay for all goods so supplied, and, if we have any patriotism at all in us, we must certainly expect that the losing side will be our Cossack friends. What then, according to the *Lyttelton Times*, should we desire more than several visits from Russian cruisers at all our ports? Are not colonial producers in want of a market, and here, behold, is a chance for them to sell at their own prices. The conqueror of course will not bargain with them. It would be a good thing, in short, under such circumstances, if we were to start several new industries without any further delay. What is there that is particularly agreeable to the Russian taste? Or even to that of the Tartar, for the scratched Russian, let us recollect, is a Tartar, and if the Russian comes here at all he is sure to come in a scratched condition. What is it, then, that the Tartar particularly fancies? Let us store it up, and sell it to him at our own prices, for must not Britannia continue always to rule the waves? The Russian is sure to get whipped as well as scratched, and to take up his position finally on the losing side. There is a whole mine of wealth to the colony in this discovery made by the *Lyttelton Times*. It seems again, that it is only Government property that a cruiser might shell without a gross breach of the laws of civilised warfare. And it is, further, consoling to know that as Major Cautley adds, there would, of course, be the possibility of the miscarriage of shells intended for Government property, or of a mistake's being made as to the exact situation of Government property, and the consequent damage of private property, as it happened at Odessa at the beginning of the Crimean war. A comforting item mentioned by the *Lyttelton Times* is that Russia was a party to the Declaration of Paris, whereby Privateering was once for all abolished—and now we are told that the Russian press is clamouring for the renunciation of the Declaration of Paris, and the Russian Government had, as we know already, in a very bare-faced manner violated certain articles of the treaty that was made at the time alluded to. Finally the *Lyttelton Times* says that a belligerent is acting within his rights in destroying any private property that he may judge likely to be converted into army stores or supplies, or, we presume, to be applied in any other way to the use of hostile forces, and this leaves an opening for a very liberal interpretation indeed. On the whole, then, there is a good deal of the comfort employed by Job's comforters in that given to us by Major Cautley and the *Lyttelton*