

Five main rivers, which mostly rise in the alps and average about seventeen miles apart, literally transverse the plains. Four of these rivers flow into the sea, and one runs into Lake Ellesmere. Many are the theories as to the origin of the plains. That they are an alluvial deposit washed down from the Alps on the South, by the rivers that now channel the plains, is one. Another that the plains are a submarine formation, and afterwards raised, and then the rivers cut their present broad courses. The former is the late Dr. Von Haast's theory, the latter Professor Hutton's. That the plains are mostly an old formation and more recent deposits overlay in some parts this first formation are moreover theories. A deposit about six miles wide extends to the East Coast and skirts Port Hills and Lake Ellesmere. The best land is in these localities, and ten or twelve feet of clay or sand rests on the gravel which in other parts of the plains is near or on the surface. Near our city is the Riccarton bush—of which a portion only now remains—and there was a bush at Papanui. But the latter forest was soon cut down. The plains were covered with tussocks under which a smaller but nutritious grass grew on which cattle fed. In some parts were tracts of flax, fern, and tute. The latter, a poisonous plant, often caused the death of horned cattle. There were likewise other grasses and a few small shrubs. Here and there was a solitary cabbage-tree or a group of these fair trees. The plain's chief native inhabitants were hawks, larks, lizards, and a spider whose cell was a marvel. This spider made a domicile under ground, the entrance to which was a passage upright and cylindrical, and at the top of which was a door or lid. The hinges were complete, and the lid fitted the aperture perfectly. Trickish boys were often wont to drum on the ground near a cell. Then the spider ascended the passage, raised his portcullis and looked round. In those days the aspect of the plains was brown and barren, and that they would ever remain a wilderness was an often repeated prophecy. But in many parts the soil is most rich, and now the plains are literally sudded with homesteads and plantations. At the present moment thousands of acres can be seen verdant with grass and with various crops. From the road, too, one can see the Southern Alps at once rising rugged and majestic to a vast height above the plains. Their summits are yet capped with deep snows. But these are but vestiges of a last winter's mantle, which draped to the base their sides, now dark and sombre. Compared with these mountains, what are many vaunted alpine heights in other climes? From Dyer's Pass a fair amount of Governor's bay, with its generally smooth waters, rugged outlines and numerous inlets and points, can be seen. The road down to the Bay is very steep, but not much more than a mile long. Near the Pass there is some bush, but the trees in it are small, yet they are native trees, and none are fairer. A return to Christchurch by the steam launch and train terminated a pleasant excursion.

### SHAND'S TRACK.

(From an occasional Correspondent.)

On Thursday evening last the quietness of the Track, was somewhat disturbed by a stampede to the Wheatheaf Hotel where a supper was given to the genial teacher of the Catholic school, Mr. John Farrell, previous to his departure for Geraldine. Private business compelled Mr. Farrell to tender his resignation to the school committee on Tuesday evening. Immediately steps were taken to make some recognition of one who had so many friends during his short stay here. The gathering included men of different shades of opinion and was one that shall long be remembered on the Track. In proposing the toast of the evening, the chairman in the course of his remarks alluded to Mr. Farrell as a gentleman who had won golden opinions from every one with whom he came in contact, and during the 18 months he had been in charge of the school had given universal satisfaction to the parents of children. During this time he had established a large circle of friends by his courteous and patriotic disposition. He felt certain Mr. Farrell was the sort of a young man who would make his mark in the world, no matter in what sphere he was placed, and concluded by hoping that he would be as successful in his new undertaking as he was in the last. The toast was drunk with musical honours. Toast followed toast and song, until the small hours had crept in after which the company dispersed, having spent a very enjoyable evening. Mr. Farrell goes to join the ranks of the Bonifaces and probably the Benedicts. I forgot to mention that the Rev. Father Chervier occupied the chair, but had to leave early.

PAKEHA.

### ST. CANICE'S SCHOOL, WESTPORT.

At the conclusion of the examination of this school (says the *Westport Star*) the Inspector, the Rev. Father Goggan, made some remarks. He said:—Although in some subjects, such as history the answering is rather weak, still a decided improvement on last examination was shown. Grammar and geography, weak before, were now considerably above the average, while arithmetic, composition, dictation, and spelling, reading, catechism, and writing were very good. Among the junior children, the reading, dictation, tables, and writing were very good, other subjects fair. He was much pleased with the good conduct of the children, especially their obedience to the teachers, and their desire to pass in their different standards. In any cases of failure, he attributed the cause to irregular attendance. When it was taken into consideration that the whole of the children on the roll were presented for examination, irrespective of regular or irregular attendance, he considered the percentage of passes very satisfactory. It would, of course, be made higher if those only were expected to pass who had made at least half the possible number of attendances within the year, which is the custom in public schools. As is usual in other places there are some parents who are never satisfied. He as an examiner was not known to over-rate teachers' and pupils' work, but in the case of this school, parents had no reason

to be discontented. He had examined in secular knowledge strictly in accordance with the syllabus set forth for State Schools in New Zealand, and had selected the questions from those recently given by the Inspectors.

The examination occupied two days, during which 147 children were examined. On the evening of the second day the report was read in the presence of a large number of visitors.

Summary.—IV, V, and VI, Standard's showing percentage obtained in each subject—English composition, 97.5; arithmetic, 75.6; reading, 92; grammar, 68.8; geography, 68.5; dictation and spelling, 100; history, 41.4; catechism, 75.6 writing, 100. Average on the whole 80 per cent.

Standards I, II, and III.—Preparatory class—Reading 95 per cent; spelling, 66.6 per cent; copying, 76.9 per cent; tables, 84.6 per cent. Standards.—Reading, 100 per cent; spelling, 86.5 per cent; dictation, 100 per cent; tables, 81.8 per cent; arithmetic, 64 per cent; writing, 98.5 per cent; grammar, 78.9 per cent; geography, 78.9 per cent; catechism, 68.6 per cent.

### IRELAND'S CAUSE IN ENGLAND.

London, October 23.

THE election at Brighton last Friday was the exception that proves the rule of a general tendency towards the endorsement of Mr. Gladstone's Home Rule policy. The contest was to fill the seat made vacant by the death of Sir Wm. Tindal Robertson, Conservative. Mr. Loder, the Unionist candidate, received 7,132 votes, and Mr. Peel, Gladstonian, 4,625. Sir Wm. Tindal Robertson was elected in November, 1886, without opposition, but in the previous election the Conservative candidate received 5,963 votes, and the Home Rule candidate, 2,633.

Compared with the election of 1886, the figures are comforting enough, because the Liberal poll has increased by 2,000 votes, as against a Tory increase of 1,100, and the Tory majority has been pulled down from 3,500 to 2,200. But it is no use discussing the fact that the general election of 1885, which, there being no Home Rule question to divide the party, resulted in the return of a Conservative majority of 2,100, is the real criterion, and by that the Brighton result is not so satisfactory. The figures show that about 300 Liberals have deserted their leader. Of these 100 voted for the Tory candidate, and the remainder abstained altogether. But the election has proved that the number of Liberals still alienated by Home Rule at Brighton is proportionately much smaller than was the case throughout the country in 1886, when party desertions raised the Conservative majority of 2,100 to a Tory-Unionist majority of over 3,200. It is evident, therefore, that the flowing tide, if it has not submerged Brighton, has at any rate touched it. But, of course, the Liberals require for a complete victory simply to win back the seats lost in 1886 through the Home Rule schism, and Brighton was not one of these.

Mr. Gladstone made a powerful speech at Southport on the previous Wednesday, before a crowded house. He reviewed the Liberal party during the past twenty-one years. He paid a tribute to the laudable anxiety of the Powers to postpone a European crisis. He referred to the Cretan question as a formidable menace to the peace of Europe. He criticised at length the Government's work, and claimed that all its useful measures were liberal. He made a point by declaring that the principles of the dock-strikers, applied to tenants and tradesmen in Ireland, would have been penal. He was touched by the election gains, and believed that if they could end the Septennial Act and appeal to the people to-morrow the verdict would be in favour of the Liberals and justice to Ireland.

The bulk of the speech was devoted to Irish grievances. He said that the necessity of the continued proclaiming of new districts was evidence of the failure of the coercion policy, and declared that the crime rate was now the same as in 1884, when, in order to secure the support of the Parnellites, the Tories declared that coercion was no longer necessary.

Mr. Gladstone said he was unable to lay before his hearers a scheme of liberal policy for the future beyond the outlines already well known.

A revolution broke out recently in Guatemala, Central America, and ended on October 30 in the defeat of the rebels, followed by the execution of their leaders.

New postage stamps put in circulation in Spain contain a bust of Alfonso XIII, the three-year-old king.

In crossing the English Channel from Folkestone to Boulogne, recently, says a correspondent of the *Pilot*, the Rev. Patrick A. Stanton, D.D., of St. Augustine's, Philadelphia, then on his way to Rome to attend the general assembly of Augustinians, was in the steamer on which Mr. and Mrs. Gladstone travelled on their way to Paris. Toward the end of the journey Dr. Stanton entered into conversation with Mr. Gladstone, and highly praised the great and noble work which the statesman has so vigorously undertaken, expressing the hope that he might see it brought to a successful termination. Mr. Gladstone, in most gracious words, thanked Dr. Stanton, saying that years were now pressing on him, but that it would be a great consolation to him to live to see the work of justice accomplished. On Dr. Stanton's referring to the warm and affectionate welcome Mr. Gladstone would receive should he visit the United States, the latter said that he was well aware of the kindly feelings that generous nation had towards him, and that he had frequently received pressing invitations to go, but that his age and engagements did not allow him to avail himself of them. Dr. Stanton expressed his opinion that, in the ordinary course of nature, Mr. Gladstone had still ten years of working life before him; on which the latter thanked him and expressed the hope that it might be given him to see the happy completion of the work of justice to Ireland, and of bringing about a true and heartfelt union between her people and the people of England. The interview between the priest and the statesman was most satisfactory to both.