

# New Zealand Gabel

VOL. IX.—No. 454.

DUNEDIN : FRIDAY, DEC. 23, 1881.

PRICE 6D.

## Current Topics

AT HOME AND ABROAD.

THE *Times* is much disturbed by the attitude of the United States towards the Panama Canal. The PANAMA CANAL. claims of the States it says had not been generally understood in England until the communication made to the Senate the other day of a letter sent to Mr. Lowell last June, and in which Mr. Blaine had repeated with emphasis the declaration already made, on the first mention of the canal scheme, by the President, that the United States must have the control of any canal cut through the territory of Colombia. In 1846 a treaty had been made between the United States and the Republic of Colombia, guaranteeing the perfect neutrality of the canal, and now when the Republic wishes to terminate the treaty, and obtain from the European powers a joint guarantee of the neutrality of the isthmus and the sovereignty of the State, "Speaking in the name of the Executive of the United States, Mr. Blaine declares that there is no reason for any change. The treaty of 1846 is sufficient. That guarantee 'does not require reinforcement, accession, or assent from any other power ;' and it is added that 'any movement in the sense of supplementing the guarantee contained therein would necessarily be regarded as an uncalled for intrusion into a field where the local and general interests of America must be considered before those of any other power save those of the United States and of Colombia alone.'" The claim made by the States refers only to the political control of the canal, and does not purpose to interfere with commercial enterprise. The *Times*, however, questions the right of the States to make any such claim, and cannot see why England and France should not be permitted to join in a guarantee. "One consideration strongly urged by Mr. Blaine in favour of his country is that its possessions on the Pacific coast 'would supply the larger part of the traffic which would seek the advantage of the canal.' This assumption is very questionable. Indeed, it scarcely admits of a doubt that the great bulk of the vessels which for some years to come would pass through the canal would be English. At all events, dues paid by the American mercantile marine in its present unhealthy state are not likely to form at an early date a considerable part of the shareholders' receipts. Great though the interests of America are in this matter, and necessary though it is for her that there should be free communication between her Atlantic and Pacific States, this does not efface the fact that England also is at once an Atlantic and Pacific Power, and that she is bound to have regard to the welfare of her subjects in British Colombia, and to think of securing free access to her Australian colonies."

THE following paragraph from the San Francisco A FREETHINKER correspondence of our contemporary the *Otago ON Daily Times* strikes us as of considerable importance. It requires no comment on our part : "At HIS SYSTEM. the head of American Freethinkers stands the Rev. Dr. Frothingham. He is, by long odds, the ablest exponent of the Gospel of Doubt. For many years the head of the Universalists, he drifted away from that exceedingly latitudinarian sect, and took up with Freelvism, Freethoughtism, eternal Nihilism, and, indeed, every other 'ism' opposed to creeds and Christianity. Yet his life has been a pure one all through. Like Colonel Ingersoll, he stands free from reproach among men—a saintly character, clothed in white raiment, compared with that sensual gospeller Henry Ward Beecher, and many others that could be mentioned. Well, this champion debater has published a card, addressed to the American people, in which he admits the failure of his mission and life. While recanting nothing, and regretting nothing, he is yet forced to admit that there is a subtle power in Christianity too strong for the combined assaults of pure reason. Every attempt to substitute something else for Christianity he admits has failed, and in presence of this fact he doubts the propriety of continuing the fight. He is filled with gloom. Faith he has not and cannot have himself ; it is repugnant to his reason ; but he doubts if he should continue to undermine the

faith of others. It may be said that this proves nothing. To my mind it proves a great deal. It proves that a conscientious Freethinker who stops to consider the merits of the whole question, and who realises the momentous issues of life and death which faith and no faith open up for mankind, is unable to preach the doctrine of cold negation with the moral and spiritual forces of Nature manifestly against him. Colonel Ingersoll has not ceased to lecture for coin. With him the lecture-field is his means of livelihood. The time may come when he, too, will be true to his better nature, and with the still greater doubter before mentioned exclaim in substance : 'I doubt the purpose and scope of my work. It has been a failure. Men cannot rest upon a mere negation of a future state of being as the end and outcome of life any more than they can sustain their bodies without food and air. Hope springs perennial in the human breast, and though I am without hope myself, I will live and die in gloom, but I shall refrain from casting the chilling shadow of doubt over the fair and brighter domain of simple faith.' Those who know Colonel Ingersoll best believe that he is a man capable of making as heroic a confession of the failure of the Gospel of Doubt as Mr. Frothingham has already done. The cause of religious truth would be promoted thereby."

### GOOD WORKS.

WE had lately occasion to refer to some of the good works performed by Catholic ecclesiastics in South America during past times, and we are happy to find that the successors of the devoted priests we chronicled are treading carefully in their footsteps, as the following paragraph, which we clip from the London *Tablet*, testifies :—"The Church by the ministry of the great religious Orders has ever been the pioneer of civilisation. While these have preached Christianity, they have at the same time taught their heathen converts the arts of civilised life. It was so in the middle ages—witness the Benedictines, the Cistercians, and other religious communities in various parts of the world ; and the Jesuits in more recent times. It is so still ; the propagation of the faith and reclamation from savagery go hand in hand. We learn that in Parana, in South America, a Capuchin Friar, Frey Luis de Cimitilli, who arrived at the San Jeronymo settlement of Indians on July 25th, reports that along the banks of the Tibagy many Indians were beginning to hire themselves for farm work and to form a settlement. At San Jeronymo many Indians are employed in agriculture and in making sugar and rum. The same friar was, at the time of his writing, about to meet 2,000 wild Coroadas who had shown a desire to settle down into civilised life. At the Indian settlement of San Pedro de Alcantara, which was founded about 25 years ago by F. Timotheo de Castel Nuevo, there are now about 600 Indians, who are gradually being brought to lead a settled life."

### MORE TESTIMONY.

YET another testimony to the good deeds of the religious Orders, and this time from a writer in a Protestant paper, published at Bolton. Referring to the lepers in Trinidad, he speaks as follows :—"They are attended in the most devoted and loving manner by French Catholic Sisters of Mercy, who have given up all—friends, home, pleasures, everything—and have come out to an almost deadly climate to attend these poor creatures afflicted with the most horrible disease that it is possible to conceive. I cannot speak too highly of the devotion of these truly saintly women. I feel it a duty and a pleasure to testify to the earnest, loving labour of the Roman Catholic Church in the island of Trinidad, and especially would I wish to say that more complete self-sacrifice, more total self-forgetfulness, more noble surrender to a painfully arduous duty cannot possibly be conceived than that shown by the Sisters of Mercy labouring in the leper hospital of Trinidad."

### THE TURNING OF THE WORM.

THE worm, it appears, has turned, at last, and refuses any longer to be looked upon as the vilest and most insignificant of creatures. He claims, in fact, by the mouth of his advocate, Mr. Darwin, to be one of the most efficient fertilisers of the soil and most industrious agriculturists, if not the very chief of all. Mr Darwin speaks of him as follows :—"Worms have played a more important part in the history of the world than most persons would