DEATH.

McMULLAN.—On Thursday, June 2, at the residence of her parents, Arthur's Point, Maggie, youngest daughter of James and Margaret McMullan; aged 16 years. Deeply regretted.—R.I.P.

THE NEW ZEALAND TABLET

To promote the cause of Religion and Justice by the ways of Truth and Peace.

LEO XIII. to the N.Z. TABLET.

THURSDAY, JUNE 16, 1904.

WAR AND SIEGE

'THIS is a very respectable age,' says an American humorist, 'but it's pretty easily riled: and considerin' upon how slight a provocation we who live in it go to cuttin' each other's throats, it may, perhaps, be doubted whether our intellecks are so much massiver than our ancestors' intellecks were, after all.' For the stone axe and the knotted club we have substituted long-range guns and smokeless powder. With these, Jap and Russ are pounding each other to pulp in the back-yard of Port Arthur. But their instruments of conviction are merely variants of the same old arguments that Saxon and Briton used against each other in the days of Hengist and Horsa. Man-slaying was then done by hand; it is now accomplished by machinery That is all. In the olden days men fought in the open, with a cowhide shield. The tendency of modern armed conflicts is to centre around fortress warfare, when the fighter's shield is a thick rampart of earth The American Civil War of 1861-4, the Franco-German campaign of 1870-1, the Russo-Turkish struggle of 1877-8, all point steadily to the increasing extent to which modern warfare is influenced by fortresses. Vast treasures have been lavished upon them by France and Germany since 1870, by Russia since 1882, and by Austria, Belgium, Switzerland, and Italy; and their respective frontiers have become great armed camps covered with lines after lines of defensive works and roads and railways specially constructed for the rapid movement and concentration of troops.

The main interest of the present war in the Far East centred, from the first, on Port Arthur. Thus far the campaign has furnished a further confirmation of the expert military opinion quoted by Bloch that 'the war of the future will result primarily in a series of battles for the possession of fortified positions. In addition to field works,' he adds, 'the attacking troops will have to overcome auxiliary obstacles of every kind near the regular fortifications—that is, at the place where they will run the greatest risk from the defenders' fire. Such obstacles will be constructed of beams, wire entanglements, and pitfalls. Their destruction will require immense sacrifices. The effect of artillery upon such defences is insignificant. Wire entanglements can only be destroyed by taking them to pieces by men acquainted with the methods of construction. But for this much time will be required. Meantime the foremost of the attackers will be under strong fire from the defence, and may very easily fall under the fire of their own artillery which will be supporting the attack.' 'The defenders of a fortress,' says he elsewhere in the same noted work, 'will oppose the enemy with four consecutive lines of obstacles—that is, a first line of opposition; a chief defensive line; an intermediate line or line of reserves; and, finally, a fortified unbroken rampart or central citadel. The capture of even the first line will require considerable effort, since this will consist of a series of field defences. The field will be strewn with numerous but small earthworks in the form of pits, which the enemy cannot see from afar, and upon which artillery will have little effect, while, on the other hand, the skilful marksmen concealed in these pits may cause considerable loss.'

The dashing little men of Nippon have a red and toilsome track to travel before they set their feet among the ruined streets of Port Arthur. Before them are the frowning ramparts of a first-class fortress manned by the stolid and hardy race that faced the Anglo-Frank alliance so gallantly before Sebastopol and uncomplainingly endured such deadly hardships in the passage of the Balkans during the fierce winter days in the campaign of 1877-8 against 'the unspeakable Turk.' A noted German military specialist, Fritz Hoenig, thinks that we are returning once more to the epoch of long sieges—not, indeed, like the leisurely, easy-going, ten-year investment of Troy—but like the steady, business-like attacks upon Belgrade, Mantua, and Plevna. But there are two great fighting generals on the side of the Japanese that surround Port Arthur—General Time and General Famine And unless the unforeseen happens, the latter will soon be at work sapping for Japan within the fortress walls. For there is an end to the provisioning of the besieged. And Admiral Stoessel may not look for the miracle of the widow's cruise. In the great Franco-German struggle, fortress warfare attained an importance never before known in military history. Yet Strassburg, Metz, Belfort, and Paris—the last-named the greatest city that ever yet was regularly besieged—all fell. Hunger, in nearly all these cases, did what burning gunpowder and bursting shells had failed to accomplish. Marshal Bazaine, when bottled up in Metz, found that he had to feed 170,000 mouths besides those of his fighting men. So he and they were starved into speedy surrender. So was Paris—months after a cat had sold for £2 16s, a dog for £5 to £10 (according to size), and rats and mice at pretty