

GENERAL NEWS.

(Summarised from our exchanges.)

ENGLAND.

Sir John Bennett has announced his intention to offer a premium of one hundred guineas for the best English national song and chorus, a jury to be appointed to decide upon the merits of the composition offered.

Monsignor Capel, preaching in St. George's Cathedral, chose for the subject of his discourse the persecution of the Church in Prussia, which he denounced as an attack without right or reason, whilst he scornfully exposed its impotence to the hundreds of Protestants present.

So impressed does Mr Arch appear to be with the success of his mission to Canada, that he declares publicly, that if the condition of the rural working population of England is not improved by the landholders he will drain the country of laborers. Such a declaration has startled a good many easy-going people in Great Britain, and accordingly, we find a certain section of the agricultural press busily engaged in picking to pieces the character and conduct of the man who thus boldly attempts to prescribe a remedy for a condition of things which we believe to be in many respects a disgrace to the boasted civilisation of England.

An American recently visited Mr Thomas Carlyle, at his residence near London, and the vigorous old thinker called out during a talk on politics in America and England:—"We are all going to the devil together—we here in England—we have nobody to rule but this Gladstone, who is a bagman, or he they call Dizzy, who is a pedler."

We are glad to note a marked decrease in the commitments of Catholic prisoners to Liverpool gaol during the past year. Probably the Temperance Pledge has had something to do with this improvement.

Mr Gladstone has replied, through his private secretary to certain charges of a leaning towards "Popery," and of being, in fact a "Papist" and not a Protestant at heart. These charges were advanced in a speech delivered by Mr Arundel Rogers, a Conservative candidate for Bodmin; and Mr Gladstone, in his reply, says they are "wholly and absolutely void of truth."

Mr Butt in London. The 'Cork Examiner' of Jan. 1, says: "Mr Butt, M.P., is to meet some of the leading members of the Home Rule party in London in a few days, for the purpose of reorganising the various associations in the English Metropolis which are not in a satisfactory condition. Difficulties having arisen from the action of some individuals who have made themselves rather conspicuous as the exponents of somewhat communistic principles. It is reported that Mr Butt will be accompanied by several Irish members.

Mr J. Bamber, the father of several priests of that name, and who died lately, was born at Manchester in 1794. It is remarkable what a change he lived to witness in the religious aspect of his native town. When he entered into life there was only one poor chapel in Manchester, on the first floor of a building, hidden in a small back street; now there are twenty churches and chapels, many of them very beautiful edifices. One solitary priest—old Father Broomhead—sufficed to supply the spiritual wants, not only of the town, but of the neighborhood for miles around; now there are fifty in Manchester and Salford, and within the circumference of twelve miles there are no fewer than ninety priests actively employed in the work of the Mission.

One of the largest meetings ever held in Manchester for any purpose assembled in the Free Trade Hall for the purpose of proclaiming to England, and to the world, that "self-government is the inalienable right of the Irish people"—that, in the words of John Martin, "we will never give up the struggle for this right, which is our inheritance," and that we pledge ourselves to use every legitimate means to secure the return of members of Parliament for Manchester who will support Home Rule for Ireland." Long before the time advertised for the opening of the meeting, the great hall was filled almost to its utmost capacity. The greatest enthusiasm was displayed during the evening.

FRANCE.

M. Pierre Guizot, cousin of the celebrated statesman, died lately at Nimes at the age of 94 years, after having abjured Protestantism.

It is currently reported that the great conflagration of the French Opera last spring was the work of the Communists and that the London police have intimated to the French government what they have lately discovered about the matter.

M. Nigra has returned to his post as Italian ambassador of Paris. This shows that Marshal MacMahon has no fear of imperial intrigues against the present state of things in France.

Duke Decazes, the new Minister of Foreign Affairs in France, has sent orders to the French Consuls at the ports most in communication with Spain, to stop the transmission of arms and ammunition to the Carlists. Up to this time France had been neutral.

Marshal Bazaine arrived at his place of detention in the isle of St. Marguerite on December 26. St. Marguerite is one of the Leries group, a cluster of islets nestling under the southern coast of France a few miles off that "warm Provençal shore," which in old times, was "the chosen home of chivalry, the garden of Romance." In this little island of St. Marguerite is a grim old fortress of the middle age. This fortress is to be the residence of the Marshal. It was once the scene of one of the most famous dramas in European history. It was the prison of "the Man with the Iron mask," that mysterious and unhappy being, the question of whose identity has exercised the most acute minds of many generations, and still remains an insoluble mystery. This island is only three miles long and less than one mile broad, and the fortress or State prison is the only building it contains, the rest of the ground being covered with orange trees and myrtles.

According to the last census in France, in 1872, there is a diminution of about 1 per cent in the population, in the last six years. In the ten years ending 1871, the population of Italy increased more than 7 per cent. While Corsica, under France, had remained nearly stationary, Sardinia, under Italy, has increased 8 per cent. There is something very remarkable in this difference, especially if it be observed that there is very little emigration from France, while from Italy there is very much.

On the 9th January took place at Versailles the ceremony of conferring the hats on the three recently created Cardinals. As the Mass was concluding the Cardinals arrived at the cathedral in state carriages, with Marshal MacMahon's livery, mounted attendants before and behind. The Cardinals were placed on the left of the Marshal. The Abbates delivered to each of them the Bulls of their creation. Then each Cardinal came and knelt before the President's chair. Each Ablegate presented the hat on a golden tray, and the President of the Republic placed it on the Cardinal's head.

It is pretty certain that the costs of the Bazaine trial amount to upwards of £10,400, the greater part of which the Marshal himself will have to meet. Madame Bazaine has sold all her jewels, and, it is believed, the Queen of Spain has offered the family a large sum, which has been respectfully declined.

The ministerial crisis has been solved, just as most persons foresaw it would by a vote of confidence given to the Cabinet, or rather to Marshal MacMahon, for it was he who was in reality at stake.

The death, at the Monastery of La Trappe, is announced of Brother Ambrose, who had been a member of the community for the last ten years. He belonged to one of the most noble families of France, and had filled a very high position in the world, namely, Ambassador to St. Petersburg under the Government of Louis Philippe, his real name being the Marquis Emile de Beaumont de Montifco. His brother, M. Eugene Martin de Beaumont, is at this day employed in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

President MacMahon, on the 9th inst., performed the ceremony of delivering the hats to the newly appointed French Cardinals. In his speech on the occasion he thanked the Pope for conferring these honors on citizens of France, and added: "The Holy Father knows our filial attachment and our admiration at the manner in which he supports his trials. His sympathies were with us in our misfortune, and ours are with him.

During December last a shipload of Neapolitans eight hundred in number on their way to America, fleeing from Italy in order to avoid starvation, arrived at Toulon and were put into quarantine. Father Blanc, the superior of the Jesuits at Nice, went to shut himself up with them in order to instruct, confess and communicate them. This he did with the most consoling success.

The French Minister of War, General du Barail, is making vigorous efforts to discover the officers of the army who write to the newspapers, under assumed names.

HISTORY OF OUR SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST.

By the Abbé J. E. DARRAS.

(Translated from the French for the 'New Zealand Tablet'.)

23.—HEROD'S LAST WILL AND BURIAL.

SALOME, immediately after the death of her brother, set at liberty all the unhappy prisoners who were shut up in the Hippodrome. She hoped, by this act of clemency, to gain for herself in the future, a popularity which might serve her ambitious designs. Herod's will was read in the amphitheatre of Jericho, in presence of the soldiery and the assembled multitude. The old King "declared, in formal terms, that the provision of his will could have no force till they should have been confirmed by Augustus" (1). He bequeathed to Cæsar, all the vessels of gold and silver, with the most precious objects of art in his palace, and a sum of ten millions in money; five millions were bestowed on the Empress Livia. These liberal bequests would, no doubt, aid powerfully in obtaining the imperial ratification for the remainder of the will, which invested Archelaus with the title of King of Judæa; gave to Antipas the tetrarchies of Galilee and Bœrea; to Philip, those of Gaulonitis, Trachonitis, and Batanea; and to Salome—aunt of the three young princes, and sister to the deceased King—the cities of Jamnia, Ashdod, and Phasaelis (2). The people responded to this announcement with acclamations and cries of "Long live King Archelaus!" The funeral obsequies of the tyrant were conducted with a pomp hitherto unknown among the Hebrews. The body was carried from Jericho to Herodium, a distance of two hundred furlongs, upon a golden bier, enriched with precious stones, and it was covered over with purple as well as the body itself. He had a diadem upon his head, and above it a crown of gold; he had also a sceptre in his right hand. The royal guard, composed of Thracians, Germans, and Galatians, opened the march. In view of our national origins, this particular of the presence of Galatian bands in Judæa, at the beginning of the Christian Era has not been sufficiently noticed. We have already drawn attention to the fact which goes back to the time of Herod's relations with the famous Cleopatra. These children of Gaul, in the pay of the King of the Jews; these fellow countrymen of Verungetorix, transported to Jerusalem, heard the narrations of the Magi; they were witnesses to the agitation of the Hebrews, at the news that the star of the Messiah had appeared in the East; the heart-rending cries of the Bethlehemite mothers resounded in their ears. Perhaps, some among them saw, later on, the miracles which were wrought by the divine son of Mary. At least, the authenticity of the fact, as it is attested by Josephus, cannot be questioned. Gaul, at the epoch of Christ's birth, was not a name unknown to the Jews, and reciprocally, the name of Jerusalem was familiar to the warriors of Gaul and Germany. These official relations existing between the two countries, prepared the way for the evangelisation of the Galatians. Be that as it may, the funeral procession marching along in magnificent array, halted after every eight furlongs. Incense was offered, and perfumes burnt around the royal litter, and while the mourners wept the death of the tyrant, choruses of musicians chanted his praises. It was thus, in the midst of those demonstrations of a deceitful mourning, that Herod was laid in the tomb which he had raised for himself.

(1) Josephus, Antiq. Jud., lib. xvii, cap. x. Here is another clear denial in fiction of the rationalistic theory of the independence and inviolability of the domain of the Herods.

(2) Phasaelis had been built by Herod, who called it after his brother Phasael. It was situated in the valley of Jericho, to the north of that town. (Reland, Palaestina illustr., tom. ii.)