

don their faith and violate their consciences. The outer world is closed against them unless they perjure their souls. And a contemporary has had the hardihood to tell us, the Government, which has placed them in this dilemma, is not a persecuting Government. The charity of the humane throughout the world is prevented by Government from reaching them, and it is said this is a just and human Government. These devoted priests are in the last stage of want, and the humane and excellent Government of BISMARCK makes it a crime even in their own countrymen and relatives, to raise funds to relieve them. And yet the *Reptile Press*, and its dupes and imitators, persevere in repeating there is no persecution in Germany. Truly, this boastful nineteenth century, in which such hypocrisy and falsehood are tolerated, is after all a contemptible century. We recommend the extract from our Sydney contemporary to the notice of the editor of the 'Evening Star.'

OPENING OF PARLIAMENT.

We publish to-day his Excellency the Governor's speech at the opening of the Colonial Parliament on Tuesday last. As all will be sure to read this speech, it would be a waste of time and space on our part to state here the several topics with which it deals. We may, however, particularise two or three points, as they are of more than ordinary importance. Colonists were already aware that last year's revenue had exceeded the estimates; that arrangements had been made to lay down a cable between this country and New South Wales, and that a contract, subject to the ratification of the Legislature, had been entered into for a mail to and from Europe via San Francisco.

It was also known that a Bill would be introduced to do away with the Provinces of the North Island; and it was thought that the measure would be so framed as also to include the abolition of the Provinces of this Island. So far therefore, the announcements contained in the viceregal speech have caused no surprise to any one. All these were either actually known or divined by the public.

But there is one announcement for which we were not prepared, but which, nevertheless, gives us great satisfaction, and we feel certain it will also give great pleasure to colonists generally, and contribute in no small degree to strengthen the present Ministry. His Excellency says, "In view of the proposed constitutional changes, and of the approaching termination of the existence of the present Parliament, a readjustment of the representation of the people to meet the altered circumstances of electoral divisions has become necessary. Bills will accordingly be submitted for your consideration for amending the law relative to the qualification of electors, and for a readjustment of the representation." This is a wise proceeding; and we gather from it that the Government does not propose to do more in the present session as to constitutional changes than discuss the Ministerial resolutions on the subject.

There appears to us, however, a very serious omission. If it be deemed necessary to readjust the representation, and increase the number of votes before deciding the proposed constitutional changes, we are unable to see why the same reasons should not have induced Ministers to submit a scheme for the reformation of the Legislative Council. Should it unfortunately come to pass that this Chamber, remaining as it is at present, would reject a change or amendment of the Constitution passed by the House of Representatives specially selected for such purposes, the situation would be very grave indeed, and the consequences very serious.

Perhaps the Council would itself take the matter in hand. To do so would be both graceful and wise. The hon. members of that House cannot but be aware that there is wide-spread dissatisfaction as to its constitution; nor can they be ignorant of the direction in which, according to public opinion, reformation should go. It is to be hoped, therefore, they will employ the spare time which is certain to be at their disposal for some weeks after the opening of Parliament in devising a wise reformation of themselves. The public expects this, and will not fail, they may rest assured, in repaying them with the homage of their gratitude, should they do so. Were they to do this, few men, if any, in New Zealand, would be more popular, and more politically powerful than they.

NEWS OF THE WEEK.

THE City of Melbourne, with the Californian mails, reached Auckland on the 16th, but not having received our files until the week was far advanced, we are unable to give more than the principal items received by telegram. The month has been more than usually prolific in disasters, and the catalogue of calamities is both extensive and diversified. As usual, the chapter of horrors receives its largest contribution from America, the State of Massachusetts bidding fair to rival Auckland in the frequency of the conflagrations which have to be chronicled. A most appalling catastrophe, and one which almost rivals in magnitude and its lamentable details the tale of woe caused by the burning of the Cospatrik, occurred at Holyoake, in that State involving the sacrifice of over 130 lives. It appears that during the services in the French Catholic Church a portion of the drapery with which the altar was dressed became ignited, and the flames spreading with amazing rapidity, the building was soon in a blaze. There were over 700 persons in the church, and so great was the panic that those in the gallery, forgetting the separate mode of egress therefrom, madly jumped down upon the mass below, and effectually checked all means of exit. Numbers were trampled to death, and thus escaped the more dreadful fate of being roasted alive. To add to the horrors of the calamity a number of the relatives of the hapless inmates were congregated outside the ill-fated buildings, and the shrieks of agonised despair at the utter helplessness to render aid contributed to add to the horrors of a scene rarely equalled. Some of the details are most heart-rending, the perusal of which is calculated to cause a thrill of horror at the bare thought of what the unhappy victims must have suffered. One lady was observed to rush wildly from the devouring element, and totter lifeless to the ground. Those who hastened to her found that she was literally a skeleton, every particle of flesh having been charred from the body, leaving the bones exposed to view. As a fitting sequel to the tragedy, at the funeral service, which was read over the remains of the victims, the floor of the building gave way, and the coffins and a number of the spectators were precipitated into the vaults beneath the building. A panic ensued, but luckily, although many persons were severely injured, none were fatally. A few days later an extensive fire occurred in the same State, and, though fortunately unattended with loss of life, hundreds of families were left destitute, and property destroyed to the amount of 2,000,000 dollars. By way of Havanna intelligence has been received of a terrible earthquake at New Granada, by which it is asserted no less than 16,000 lives were sacrificed. New Granada is one of the three republics into which Columbia is divided. Although most of the cities and towns of South America are subject to frequent earthquakes, and there is therefore much reason for putting some faith in the information, it is to be hoped that the number may have been exaggerated. The telegram, however, chronicles the total destruction of the cities of Ceccula and Cauca, the destruction of the former being caused by a ball of fire which issued from a volcano, setting the houses on fire. From Asia Minor another tale of woe is borne, the same destructive engine having laid several villages in ruins, and destroyed over 200 persons. Indeed, fires and earthquakes seem to have caused sad havoc with life and property, the catalogue of misery being still further swelled by a destructive conflagration which took place at New Brunswick, which left 150 families without a roof to cover them. The crusade against the Church in Germany still continues, the latest outrages upon the religious convictions of its subjects being the seizure and confiscation of the American journal the 'Catholic Gazette,' and the interdicting by the Berlin Government of processions in honor of the Pope's Jubilee. In the Upper House of the Prussian Diet a bill was brought in upon the 25th of June for the suppression of convents, which, it is needless to add was passed unanimously. No means is left untried by the wily and unscrupulous Chancellor to root out at all hazards the men and women who are such stumbling blocks in his pathway, but to his dismay he finds that his labors are in vain. Notwithstanding all the penalties and dangers attached to the defence of the proscribed religion, the journals which boldly vindicate its rights now number a hundred for every one in existence two years since.

THE vacancies caused by the retirement of Councillors Mercer and Barron for the representation of High Ward, have brought but two candidates into the field, Messrs. Chapman and Hardy. The former is the son of Mr. Justice Chapman, and a young man of great promise, for although as yet without experience in municipal or other public matters, he is possessed of good sound sense, a commodity which is not over-abundant in the Council. The nomination takes place next Wednesday, and the election on Monday the 2nd prox., but from present appearance, it would appear as if both candidates would enjoy a walk-over.

WE learn from [the leading columns of our High-street contemporary, that the 'Guardian' in future is to be raised to three-pence per copy. Of course it would be ill-advised on our part to pass an opinion upon a proceeding, the wisdom of which is best known to the directors. While not agreeing with the very elevated idea of the superiority of the 'Guardian' over all other journals in the Colony, which the writer of the article seems to entertain, we fairly admit that it is well able to hold its own with the best, and, therefore, entitled to be placed on an equal footing in a pecuniary point of view. The contemplated change may be fraught with difficulty; but it now seeks to obtain what it should have secured at its start—to be placed upon an equal footing with other journals to which it is not inferior.

WE have to acknowledge the latest accession to the ranks of New Zealand journals in the 'Saturday Advertiser and Literary Miscellany,' which put in a claim for public patronage on last Saturday. The new venture has been started by Mr. Thomas