

Correspondence.

DEATH OF MR. P. H. HACKETT.

(We are not responsible for the opinions of our Correspondents.)

To the Editor of the NEW ZEALAND TABLET.

SIR, I regret to announce the death of Mr. Philip H. Hackett, for several years proprietor of the Market Hotel, Grey street, which took place at his late residence at half-past two o'clock on the morning of Saturday, the 24th inst. The late Mr. Hackett, in company with some members of his family, left for a trip to the North Shore at 4 p.m. on Friday, the 23rd, and on arriving at that place was seized with a sudden illness, which terminated fatally at the hour above-mentioned. Mr. Hackett was for many years a resident in the southern provinces, particularly on the West Coast, where he was known and esteemed. None more possessed that sterling, patriotic zeal for the dear old land which gave him birth, and he was in every sense of the word a true type of a genuine, and high-minded Tipperary man. His death leaves a blank among a wide circle of attached and devoted friends to whom the gentleness of his disposition as well as his obliging manner and personal gifts endeared him, and a drearier blank still in the hearts of his widow, children and relations. His remains were interred on Sunday, the 25th inst., in the Roman Catholic Cemetery, Symonds street, the Rev. Father O'Dwyer officiating at the grave. The Very Rev. Father Walter McDonald was also present at the obsequies. The funeral was the largest attended for some time in this city, there being no fewer than 1,000 in the procession, and on arriving at the burying-ground it was computed that at least 2,000 persons were present, to pay the last tribute of respect to one who was widely esteemed.—R.I.P. T.J.F.

HISTORICAL DISCUSSIONS AMONG AUCKLAND LITERATI.

I noticed in the 'New Zealand Herald' a little while ago, that some of the numerous literary associations now at work in Auckland, discussed the question whether the execution of Mary Stuart, by order of her loving kinswoman, the "good" Queen Elizabeth, were justifiable or not. Yes it was, the majority decided, if I recollect aright. I wonder if any of those who voted for the execution ever adverted to the opinion or feeling of the maiden queen herself on that point. What did she think of the bloody deed after it was done? To me it seems that she would have given almost anything if she could have had it undone, both for the sake of her reputation and her peace of mind. She was anxious, most unjustly, to cast the odium of the deed upon others, and it is too plain that she never afterwards enjoyed one moment's peace of mind, but sullenly sunk into the grave at last, a prey to the deepest melancholy and remorse. As the hour of her death drew near, and she felt that she was about to appear before that awful tribunal where justice will be impartially done to all, can we be surprised if her mind was troubled, and she were ready to give way to despair, as she thought on the many unjust and cruel deeds which she had authorised to be done in the sacred name of religion, and, most of all, when she called to mind what she had done for the long period of nineteen years to embitter the existence and blast the reputation of her unfortunate cousin, Mary of Scotland. What after all was Mary's chief and most unpardonable fault in Elizabeth's eyes? It was her devoted attachment to that religion which, in her heart, she believed to be true. Had she but renounced that all would have gone well with poor Mary Stuart, so far as regards this world. But she preferred her duty to her interest, and like many before her, and after her too, paid the penalty of her life at last for her constancy.

Let any one who is unbiased by sectarian prejudice look at the demeanor of both these queens when the prospect of death was immediately before them, and then say which of the two they think was the better Christian. Mary, in presence of the terrible headsman and the block, shows the fervent yet unaffected piety, the calm and dignified resignation of a Christian martyr; while Elizabeth, dying in her bed within her own palace, and surrounded by obsequious courtiers, exhibits the moping melancholy of "a mind diseased." Her bosom seemed foul with some "pestilential stuff, which weighed upon her heart." She passed away, and, if my memory serve me right, gave no sign, or but very faint signs, of either Christianity, faith, hope, or charity.

I am not going into any vindication of Queen Mary's conduct generally. That she was always a prudent woman I do not think, and probably she did not think so herself. But I do not believe that she ever conspired against Elizabeth's life or throne, or was guilty of the dreadful crime which her Scotch enemies and rebel subjects laid to her charge. She had not a fair trial. A mystery certainly even yet hangs over many of those transactions with which her name has been associated; a mystery which probably never will be fully cleared up till the great day of final reckoning comes, when she will be confronted by her accusers before an omniscient Judge, who will not be influenced by passion, prejudice, or self-interest. Then it will clearly appear to all men whether her execution, and what was even more cruel, her 19 years imprisonment, were justifiable or not.

I find it difficult to believe that any one with the guilt of treason and murder on their soul, could meet death as Mary did. It must have been something different from pride and physical courage which could so sustain her spirit in the trying hour of her execution. Consciousness of her innocence of the crimes charged against her, and the well-grounded hope of the favor of God, could alone, one would suppose, have enabled her to conduct herself with so much tranquility, and in so dignified a manner at the fatal block. It was not for the interest of her enemies that the suspicious circumstances connected with her life should be fully cleared up. During her life-time she was in their power and at their mercy.

Her reputation was no less at their mercy after the grave had closed over her. They have made the most of their advantages.

It is a good sign of our times when our ingenious youth have begun to study history for themselves in a critical and judicial spirit, and are no longer satisfied to pin their faith to their historical school books, often so meagre and misleading. Future times may, I will go so far as to say, will reverse the judgment which most Englishmen have hitherto formed of the character and principles of Queen Elizabeth. They will wonder why this able woman should ever have been called "good," and regarded with so much extravagant admiration by the professed friends of civil and religious liberty, when they consider the cruelty and tyranny of her public acts and the very suspicious nature of her private character. She has stamped on the religion, the Government, and people of England, a character in which they glory at this day.

The epitaph which Elizabeth wished inscribed on her tomb is highly characteristic of the woman: "Here lies Elizabeth, who lived and died a maiden queen." Pride and vanity appear in this, and possibly something worse. It is doubtful if it be true. Hume, who was in no way prejudiced against her, says, "Her chastity was suspicious." At all events, if she had wished posterity to believe in her chastity, she ought to have acted with more maidenly modesty, delicacy, and reserve towards some of her male friends and admirers. Yes, this is the woman whom the bulk of Englishmen, especially clerical Englishmen, regard as the pride and ornament of England; a queen, whose memory ought to be embalmed in every thoroughbred Englishman's heart, so completely are men's judgments warped, and their moral feelings perverted by long established political and religious prejudices, and by self-interest. When the truth of history is concealed or perverted, a great public wrong is done, no matter who does it or how it comes to be done, whether through ignorance or design. If sovereigns cannot advance the glory, honor, and wealth of the country they rule, except by the sacrifice of justice, humanity, truth, and morality, better far that their country should remain weak, obscure, and poor. The real grandeur and power of any country lie in the virtue of its rulers and people; a truism which our modern politicians often seem disposed to forget, notwithstanding the admonitions of the pulpit and press.

Auckland.

LAIC.

WORKS OF FICTION.

In this world there is nothing which is incapable of abuse, and but few things, if any, that are unmixed blessings. Of all discoveries which have conduced to the spread of civilization, there is none whose importance is assigned a higher place than that of the art of printing, and yet even this is subject to the general failing, and many times serves as an example of the truth of the adage "*corruptio optimi pessima*." The production and multiplication of good books is undoubtedly a great advantage, but the dissemination of mischievous literature is a drawback that justifies our opening assertion in this particular instance; for the press that supplies the means of publishing the one, affords also facilities for the spreading abroad of the other.

At the present day the minimum price to which all things connected with the issue of printed matter has been reduced, makes the supply of literary compositions especially abundant, and the mischief occasioned by those which are objectionable must be proportionately great. But amongst these are to be reckoned not only such publications as directly attack religion, or which are of so gross a nature as to fall under the censure of the law, or, at least, to be forbidden by all ordinarily prudent parents and guardians; certain generally accepted classes of works also come under the same heading. Amongst the light reading of the day are to be found numerous tales, the production of authors who have attained to literary fame, but which, nevertheless, aim only at awakening an unwholesome excitement in the minds of their readers, claiming sympathy for sentiments and actions which are at best of doubtful innocence, distorting by the contemplation of unnatural characters the just view of life, and suggesting an upright line of conduct to be humdrum and uninteresting, as compared with the questionable adventures and easy morality of feverish heroes of romance.

We are far from desiring to object extremely to the reading of novels; like most other things this also has its use, and it is frequently a short and easy way of restoring tone to an over wrought mind, so that even a frivolous tale—provided its only fault be frivolity—may prove a remedy, and thus assume a value it would not otherwise possess; or for mere purposes of recreation such might be perused without harm, should there be no transgression of due limits. Besides which certain master intellects have selected fiction as the means by which to give to the world the results of their study of humanity, and this to human beings must be ever precious. Altogether, then, to forbid the reading of such works would be a senseless act, and one that could only be performed by persons under the influence of ignorance or stupid prejudices.

The unrestricted study, however, of even the higher class of imaginative literature is attended by certain dangers. Uncurbed its tendency is to impair the memory, to cultivate a dislike for graver and more necessary courses of reading, and to form habits of superficial thought. All those, therefore, who are engaged in the all-important task of education, whether as parent or teacher, should bestow due attention on this weighty matter. But as we have said, many works which obtain credit at the present day, are an unmixed evil; the characters they depict are an impossibility, their events unnatural, their morality doubtful, and the time spent in following the highly coloured careers of their various heroes and heroines, if productive of no more immediate evil, is, at least, idled away, and expended in inducing a distaste for the inevitable routine of daily life. Such volumes as this should be rigidly withheld from those who are being prepared to struggle with the world, and their wide dissemination may well be regarded as amongst the blemishes that detract from the usefulness of the press. MENTOR.