

AMONG THE BOOKS.

THE 'DOMINICAN STAR.'

In our first notice of the *Dominican Star*—the literary annual edited at the Dominican Priory, Dunedin—we gave a detailed criticism of the budget of clever short stories which constitute the chief item in its pages. It only remains for us to offer some brief remarks regarding the other features of this excellent magazine—the essays, correspondence, literary and biographical notes, etc. The essays and sketches count an even half-dozen. The first in order gives an interesting and lucid account of the Marconi system of telegraphy as used at sea, in war, etc. Under the heading 'The Fine Arts' we have a brief and chatty article on Pastel Drawing—a revival of an old method of work which promises to be very fashionable in New Zealand. The article is headed by an excellent reproduction of a fine piece of pastel work done in the Priory Studio. There is also an interesting account (illustrated) of an eight-year-old prodigy who is the youngest art student of the Otago Dominican Studio. Father Tyrrell, S.J., contributes a very thoughtful essay on 'Sympathy,' and 'Bog-trotter' gives us a lively and pleasant description of 'A Run in the Rain' past the peat-holes and other sights of a bit of Irish bog-land. Ellen E. Woodhill has an interesting and accurate description of the process of sluicing for gold, and in the concluding portion of her article gives a very readable account of the shells, sharks' teeth, petrified coral, and other strange curios that are to be found among the gold-mines of North Otago. Under the title of 'A Social Misconception' an anonymous writer—who evidently knows his or her subject—deals trenchantly with the unfair competition of 'cash amateurs' with professional artists in the sale of their pictures.

Of the correspondence, the letter from London is written in a free and easy and chatty style, and tells of the voyage thither—Colombo and its divers and traders, the Red Sea, Suez, the Suez Canal, Port Said, Naples (with its beautiful churches and its nasty smells), Vesuvius, Pompeii, Marseilles, etc. The 'Home Correspondence' is from the pen of 'Imogen,' and is a well-written description of sea-bathing and mountain-climbing adventures in and about Whangaroa. In the South African correspondence (illustrated) 'Daisy Dolly Dimple,' despite her babyish name, proves herself an adept at descriptive writing. She gives amusing character sketches of the human curiosities one meets on board a passenger steamer, and writes tempting descriptions of Cecil Rhodes' residence, Cape-town, with its famous Victorian Road, etc. 'Isidora'—of whom an admirable full-page portrait is given—contributes an illustrated letter from India. It is cleverly written and contains a singularly interesting account of Hindu and Mahomedan customs—child marriages, the unfortunate position of women both in Hindu and Mahomedan households, suttee, polygamy, the laws affecting conjugal infidelity, caste, etc. One regrets that 'Isidora'—who evidently knows her subject thoroughly—did not see her way to extend her description of native life and customs over the space occupied by the uninteresting biographies, or rather panegyrics, of this or that prince or premier. Six of the nine portraits illustrating 'Isidora's' letter, would have greatly improved the appearance of the annual had they been re-drawn in wash instead of being taken direct from coarse wood-engravings. In 'Chats in the Library' a brief and timely bit of literary criticism is followed by an able disquisition on the anti-Semite movement, in the course of which the writer pays a graceful tribute to the N.Z. TABLET. The biographical matter includes life-sketches of St. Brigid, Mother Mary Russell, an interview with Amy Castles, and a lengthy and sympathetic notice of the life of the ex-Empress of the French, Eugénie-Marie de Guzman. The writer, by the way, does not inform his (or her) readers that the mother of the beautiful Spaniard was a Scotswoman—Dona Maria Manuela Kirkpatrick, of Closeburn, Dumfriesshire, Countess-Dowager de Montijos (not Montijos or Montijo). The original poetry in the *Dominican Star* is nearly all of a high average of excellence. We except two nonsense-stanzas which are left 'in the air'—without a title—on p. 142.

One piece ('A Prayer') is from the pen of Lady Mnholland Gilbert. There is plenty of life and 'go' and merry young faces in the 'G.O.M.'s' portion of the annual, and the boys' and girls' prize essays are remarkably well written for youthful contributors. Altogether—in literary merit, in paper, letterpress, illustrations, and binding—the *Dominican Star* for 1900 marks a distinct advance on its predecessor, and is a really excellent magazine.

The *Academy* has a very poor opinion of Mr. Swinburne's sonnet on the South African war. Says our contemporary: 'It is not patriotic poetry, it is not poetry of any kind; it is hysteria.'

In a letter to a correspondent in Wellington, Sir William Preece, the well-known electrical engineer, mentions that he has succeeded in telephoning a distance of two miles without the aid of connecting wires.

It is reported from the White Nile that Major Frederick Lenox Fredergast, R.M., second in command of the Ninth Soudanese Regiment, has died from the effects of a wound accidentally received while with the Sirdar's expedition on October 24.

Sir John and Lady Arnott are shortly leaving Severnleigh Bristol, for Ireland, where they purpose in future residing, as since his father's death Sir John has become the head of the many business concerns, including the *Irish Times*, which belonged to the late Sir John Arnott.

Miss Anna Elizabeth Klumpke, of San Francisco, to whom Rosa Bonheur left her large fortune, has decided to give one-half of the amount to Mme. Bonheur's relatives, all of whom were disinherited and who were preparing to contest the will. All the paintings and other valuables left by the artist will consequently be sold.

The retirement of Messrs. Thompson and Cadman from the Ministry will necessitate the rearrangement of portfolios. Among those mentioned as likely to be called to the Ministry is Mr. James McGowan, the member for Thames. Mr. McGowan is a native of Belfast, Ireland. He went to Auckland in 1866. In the old days, when Sir Frederick Whitaker was president, Mr. McGowan was a member of the Auckland Mechanics' Institute. He went to the Thames in 1870, and was chairman of the School Committee for many years. He was the means of changing the Thames Mechanics' Institute into the first public library in the province. He has twice filled the mayoral chair and acted as chairman of the Harbour Board. Mr. McGowan filled the post of junior Government whip during the last Parliament, and has a thorough knowledge of mining and mining laws, so that as Minister of Mines he would be thoroughly conversant with the requirements of the post.

The special attention of our readers is directed to the notice in our advertising columns regarding the train arrangements for the Christmas holidays. On Saturday at 10 35 p.m. an excursion train will leave Dunedin for Christchurch, calling at various stations, and arriving at its destination shortly before nine o'clock on Sunday morning. A special train will also start from Dunedin at 11.20 p.m. on Saturday for Invercargill, and will call at intermediate stations. An excursion train will be despatched from Christchurch for here on Saturday night, and a special will leave Invercargill for Dunedin also. On Christmas Day a train will be despatched from Dunedin for Oamaru at 9 a.m., returning from there at 2.45 p.m. With regard to the other trains running on December 25, the times will be found in the official notice. The events which take place on Boxing Day, and for which special train arrangements have been made are the races at Palmerston, sports at Waikouaiti, Maori fête at Puketeraki, the Blueskin A. and P. show at Waitati, regatta at Port Chalmers, Caledonian sports at Outram, sports at Balclutha and Kaitangata. A special train will leave Owaka for Dunedin on the evening of the 27th. The goods sheds at Dunedin and Port Chalmers will be closed on Christmas Day and Boxing Day.—* * *

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