

few random readings of the thermometer in the shade: Lismore, 112; Adelaide, 114; Braxton, 116; Sydney, Parramatta, and Burke, 117; Mildura (Victoria), 121.5; Mount Hope, 124; Berrigan, 125. These readings by no means constitute a record, but they represent a little world of physical discomfort and suffering. At Euston (N.S. Wales), for instance, the thermometer reached 124 in the shade during the heat-wave that ushered in the new year of 1898. And Baron von Mueller, in his 'Select Extra-Tropical Plants,' tells how a district in the Riverina (N.S. Wales) once stewed to the tune of 124 degrees in the shade. The deserts of the interior, however, seem to be the recognised hot-blast furnace of Australia. Lumholtz, in his work, 'Among Cannibals,' describes them as 'hotter and more arid than any other part of the earth.' An idea of their higher capabilities may be gained from the experiences of Sturt and his fellow-explorers in the intensely hot summer of 1844. 'The earth,' says Sutherland, summarising their report, 'split the hoofs of the horses; it scorched the shoes and feet of the men. . . The heat was sometimes 130 in the shade, and in the sun it was altogether intolerable. They were unable to write, as the ink dried at once on their pens; their combs split; their nails became brittle and readily broke, and if they touched a piece of metal it blistered their fingers. In their extremity, they dug an underground room, deep enough to be beyond the dreadful furnace glow above. Here they passed many a long day, as month after month passed without a shower of rain.'

During the heat-wave of the past few days, New South Wales has been the chief sufferer. The Mother State has had keener sufferings than those that arise from unpleasantly high temperatures, and the devastation caused within its borders by bush fires recalls in a measure, the agony which Victoria went through on the day known in its history as Black Thursday, when almost the whole colony was ablaze, when the ashes from its burning fields and forests fell thick on the decks of vessels sixty miles out to sea, when the smoke impeded navigation, and many of the scared inhabitants fancied that the world's last day had come. Vast and widely separated areas of New South Wales have been afire during the past few days. Reports trickling through the submarine wires tell, for instance, of fires that swept an area of fifty miles by thirty between Tuntut and Junee; 200,000 acres in the Carcoar district; ten miles by sixty around Burrowa; and a hundred and fifty miles square about Gundagai. Grass, crops, stock, fences have been eaten up by the flames—1000 sheep destroyed here, 2000 there, 10,000 elsewhere. One station alone in the Riverina lost 40,000 acres of grass. The destruction on Kimo station is set down at £10,000. Numbers of farmers and pastoralists have been ruined. Exciting tales have been told of townships combating the advancing fires for dear life, and (says one of the latest cable messages) 'many harrowing details are given by those suffering losses, as well as narrow escapes by women and children, who saved themselves by lying in tanks, in water-holes, and in the rivers, while their menfolk fought the flames.' As we write, the fires have been somewhat checked by welcome falls of rain, and the end of the spell of red destruction has, we hope, at length come to our afflicted fellow-subjects beyond the Tasman Sea.

Notes

Thanks, Kind Friends!

Our unpaid pen is unable to thank individually the scores of kind friends in every part of New Zealand who have honored us with Christmas and New Year greetings. We ask them to accept this cordial assurance that our heart beats a grateful measure to them, one and all.

Port Arthur.

Port Arthur has fallen, after Jap and Russ on each side of its vast fortifications had been injecting hypodermic arguments into each other at long and short range for three hundred and twenty-eight days. In duration, and in the valor displayed alike in defence and attack, the siege takes its place among the great events of the world's military history. But, thanks to God, the agony is over.

Togo a Catholic.

Here is an interesting note from the Boston 'Pilot': 'A correspondent of the "Westminster Gazette" makes known for the first time the interesting fact that Admiral Togo is a Catholic. His conversion took place many years ago in England. Simultaneously with his instruction in the art of modern warfare, he directed his attention to the evidences of Christianity. As a result of this study he decided to become a Catholic, received the necessary instruction, and was duly received into the fold. While he studied at Woolwich, England, he frequently assisted at the service of the Mass.'

Rampant Meddlers.

The Rev. S. Lawry, President of the Methodist Conference, has had a characteristic sample of the nose-poking and petty tyranny of the Christchurch Protestant Offence Association. In the sacred names of 'liberty and truth' (!) the members of that delectable association have twice publicly interfered in the domestic concerns of the Rev. Mr. Lawry by pillorying him for the heinous crime of sending his daughter—for reasons which many of our readers will readily appreciate—to a Catholic school. The Offence Association, by the way, is not a Methodist society. It is an Orange 'concern,' that carries on its operations in the dark, like rats in a cellar. Its impertinent interference with the Rev. Mr. Lawry's private affairs is a fair sample of the wider tyranny which its saffron-sashed members would exercise if they had the power.

A Hokitika Snake-yarn.

In the process of snapping up sundry unconsidered trifles of 'late mail news,' the 'Hokitika Guardian' recently inflicted upon its readers the following painful yarn: That a 'Roman Catholic sect' in Bucharest, known as that of 'Notre Dame de Lira,' has 'for a number of years been permitted to carry on educational work in Roumania'; that the lady heads of this 'sect' have taken a number of 'the daughters of the highest families,' instilled into them 'the tenets of Rome,' forced them to 'become nuns and sign over the whole of their property to the superiors,' and then spirited them away to places unknown; and that 'a rigorous investigation has been ordered and is proceeding in the Roumanian capital.'

No information is given by our Hokitika contemporary as to the source of this rawhead-and-bloody-bones tale. But our readers have legitimate grounds for doubting that it came from the alleged place of its origin—to wit, Bucharest, the capital of Roumania. Its substance and diction, moreover, stamp it as apparently one of the savage anti-convent fictions which (as we showed some time ago) are being industriously invented and disseminated throughout Europe by a gang under the leadership of a Swiss criminal) whose headquarters are in Milan. For the present, it will be sufficient to lay the following information before our readers: (1) Catholics are only about one in forty of the total population of Roumania, the overwhelming majority of which belongs to the 'Orthodox' Greek Church. (2) There is no 'Roman Catholic sect' either in or out of Roumania. (3) There is no Catholic religious Order, Congregation, or community, in all Roumania—or, indeed, in any part of the world—known as 'Notre Dame de Lira.' There are only two Catholic Sisterhoods in that kingdom. One is the famous teaching Congrega-