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Current Topics.

AT HOME & ABROAD.



THE topic of the moment is, as it may well be, the terrible colliery accident at Kaitangata. We do not know that anything so deplorable had ever before taken place in these colonies. Thirty-four human lives have been sacrificed at one blow, without a warning, and in all the horror that attaches to the darkness and mystery of subterranean works, and a crowd of women and children have been thrown, widows and orphans, on the world. Of the immediate cause of the accident nothing is known or probably ever will be known. There is not one man left alive who was in the mine when the fatal explosion took place. All that is known is that there was an explosion of gas, followed by the inevitable after-damp, and that those who were not killed by the first perished in the second. The accident has been a most terrible one and it has been attended by scarcely a feature of alleviation. If there have been any such it would appear that they exist in the facts that most of the men killed seem to have died an absolutely painless death,—one was found with a pipe still in his mouth, and another in an easy attitude of meditation, and that blame can be reasonably attached to no one. The mine had been recently examined by the Government inspectors, and everything in connection with it appeared in safety and good order. Subsequent to the sad event everything that could be done has been done, or is now in process of completion. The men who were called on to aid in digging out the dead bodies worked almost heroically, and held out in many instances until their strength had failed beyond the power of being further availed of, and a subscription, which we doubt not will meet with a noble response, as indeed it has already done in part, has been set on foot in aid of the destitute families that survive too many of the dead miners. The joint funeral took place on Sunday last; some few of the bodies being brought to Dunedin, but most of them were interred at Kaitangata, where the Rev. Father Larkin officiated at the burial of those who had been Catholics. We need not say a word towards recommending the subscription in aid of the poor people who have been so piteously left without provision to our readers. The case speaks for itself and it is unnecessary to advocate it.

RELATIVE to the "poppycock," as the Yankees call the false boasts made by certain preachers as to the "evangelical" conquests gained by them, we have lately, in the course of turning over various newspapers, come across a few items that throw a little interesting light on the matter, and furnish us with additional means of judging of the value of the "poppycock" alluded to. The subject particularly illuminated by the items to which we refer is the "reformation" in Italy, of which occasionally a good deal seems to be made on the "evangelical" platform. We learn, then, from the *Voce della Verità* that out of 286,000 people that form the population of Rome, and are a medley made up of many ingredients, "these missionaries of Satan have scarcely inscribed 700 persons on their tablets of perdition, while in other Italian towns the failure has been even greater." This seems a very astonishing truth; it even, in a manner, raises our opinion of the infidel masses amongst the populations alluded to. One would naturally have supposed that, considering how for eight years an immense amount of labour and very large sums of money have been expended by enthusiastic Englishmen and Americans who delight so in helping on their spiritual works by conferring temporal advantages on those in whose interests they profess to labour, a great many more hypocrites would have been found to profit by the advantages offered. We perceive then, at all events, that Italian infidels possess the one virtue of preferring wickedness undisguised, so far as it is a virtue. Of the manner in which the professors of "poppycock" have been enabled to make a very little appear a very great deal, we learn from a source, which, even amongst folk who sympathise with these people, must pass for authentic. It is no less a source than a certain Baptist minister, who, although sincerely attached to his own sect, is honest and manly, and has come boldly forward amongst his brother ministers in New York and given them

the results of his observations, made during a recent tour in Europe. This is what he says: "In Rome deception is practised by multiplying the same congregation by the number of services and then reporting the aggregate as the number of persons who have heard the Gospel during the year." He strongly condemned the support of American missions in Rome and Paris, and as a sample of their working in the second of these cities, he said that at the principal Sunday services there he had found only seventeen Frenchmen present; this is the result of a mission costing annually thousands of dollars. But of the character of the people "converted" by Protestant missions in Italy a striking example has been lately given to the world. Passante, the would-be murderer of the King, was such a convert." The following questions and answers occurred during the course of his examination:—"Do you believe in God?" "I do." "Are you a Catholic?" "I was once." "What are you now?" "A Biblical." We again say, as we have said before, the day for a genuine Protestant Propaganda has gone by. It is an anachronism, and, wherever it is tried results only in the further demoralisation of a few unworthy people, who, whether or no, would almost certainly have gone to the dogs.

THE Rev. Dr. Potter, of the Sixth-street Baptist Church, New York, to whom we have already referred, must indeed have spread abroad wild indignation through the assembly of ministers to whom he read the report of his recent tour. It was quite enough, it strikes us, to have driven at least some of them half the way into Bedlam. That the truth, albeit regretfully in some measure, should have been told amongst such a gathering by the lips of one of their own most reputable members must have been particularly shocking. Only listen to this, and judge what any discreet "evangelical" mind must have experienced at hearing it from such a quarter. "It has been asserted for many years that the Roman Church is losing its power over the masses of Europe, but this is not so. Romanism is not dead: I candidly believe that it has just begun to live. Its power, vigour and life are manifested in many things. They are seen in its vast cathedrals and in the hastening of long-delayed works. During the last ten years, 2,000,000 dols. have been spent on the Cathedral of Cologne, under the especial patronage of the King of Prussia. Throughout Europe I expected to see nothing but decay, but I was greatly disappointed. The power and vitality of the Romish Church are further shown in the great congregations which gather in its places of worship, in the exhibition of a true Catholic spirit and in the wonderful adaptation of the Church to the necessities of the times and to modern methods of work. . . . Protestantism in its aggressive work does not anywhere show such proofs of foresight, earnestness and devotion as does the Catholic Church." The doctor, however, has himself suffered nothing in his orthodoxy; by no means. He was disappointed, he says, to find that in his expectation to see "nothing but decay," he had been totally misled. After the fashion of his kind he would have preferred to see faith all over the continent replaced by atheism, and the sight of the red revolution reigning paramount in every heart would have been more welcome to his eyes than that of loyalty to the Church. How great a delusion is that which forces even well-meaning and naturally candid men to mistake for charity the malice that rejoices "in iniquity." Despite of this, however, he could not help admiring what he did see instead of the decay he had looked for. It edified him to find that the Catholic Church looked upon all men as equal. "The attention paid to a coloured lady in Cologne cathedral, and to a coloured man with a wooden leg in a church in Paris," filled him with amazement. The excellent understanding that evidently prevailed, too, between priest and people was a feature much worthy of admiration; and then the poor were welcomed at all times with open arms in the Catholic churches, half-clad fellows, shoeless and covered with mud were not disturbed even when they slept amidst the splendours of St. Peters. "I have always been taught," said he, "that there is nothing good in Romanism, but I know that is not true." Amongst the good he found to exist in spite of the teaching he had received, there were the great charities of the Church. At St. Bernard's Hospice alone there are fed annually between eighteen and twenty-five thousand persons, of whom, out of every sixteen, fifteen are fed gratuitously, and this has been done for over nine hundred years. He has no faith, as we have elsewhere remarked in Protestant efforts, as at present carried on in Italy. "Van Meter may boast of his