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Current Topics

AT HOME AND ABROAD.

A WARNING
FROM
NOUMEA.

WE find in the columns of our contemporary the *Nouvelliste* of New Caledonia a few remarks on the dangers of science, as separated from religion, that are very apposite to the present state of the world. The Rev. Father Felix, says our contemporary,

referring to an ecclesiastic of European fame, and whose conferences at Notre Dame in Paris were wont some years ago to draw vast congregations together, long before the invention of dynamite and the application of petroleum to the ruin of palaces, had foreseen the fatal result of the simultaneous progress of the Revolution with that of science, and announced to the Governments what has now come upon them. Dynamite and the recently discovered explosive matters appeared to be reserved to the working of mines and mountains only. But abuse follows closely on legitimate use—and those who despise the Divine law employ dynamite first against the crosses and images of the Saviour of mankind; then against private dwellings, against palaces, and finally against men themselves. Dynamite and nitro-glycerine in the hands of revolutionaries become the great threat against thrones and social rights. A hundred sous worth of dynamite can overturn a palace worth a hundred millions. For twenty francs a whole town-ward is blown up; for a hundred francs a city. A bomb worth four sous destroys a sovereign. States will expend their last centime, and even more, to maintain armies, fleets, gendarmes, and police, but they will not succeed in stopping the explosion of a tunnel in London. Twenty-five malefactors armed with dynamite, or nitro-glycerine, or panclastite are more powerful than a nation.—Our contemporary then proceeds to quote from a journal named the *Lutte*, which includes it among the means it seems to recommend for the speedy removal of the *bourgeoisie*, a recipe for setting fire to buildings or burning alive obnoxious persons without running the least risk.—As we do not, however, suppose that any of our readers desire to be made acquainted with such means for the disposal of a friend or his property, we refrain from giving the receipt in question.—The *Lutte*, significant title! nevertheless, supplies the following example of its practical effects. "You pass before a house in whose cellars there are combustible matters (cotton, stuff, chips), you let a phial containing the solution fall down through the air-hole and then go tranquilly on your way. The phial is broken and the liquid is spilled. A quarter of an hour or twenty minutes afterwards the conflagration manifests itself." And, no doubt, a most comfortable assurance it is to somebody or another that such effects can be quite simply and at hardly any cost secured by a person who runs no risk whatever. The *Nouvelliste* declares that nothing which material power can do is of any avail to hinder these hideous and destructive undertakings—One preventive power alone exists in the world—the discipline of souls. In proportion as science puts at the disposition of men new forces, it is necessary that moral discipline should become more imperious, more universal and respected. But, continues our contemporary, it is quite otherwise. We see the moral law relaxed according as the material force of man is increased. And who is the guardian of those moral laws, the depositary of those social traditions, without which there are only anarchy and disorder, unless the Church? Still, by an astonishing mistake, at the very hour when perverse instincts make use of the most efficacious means, Governments persecute the Church, and have children taught in the schools that there is no God, or that, if there be one, He does not occupy Himself with them, and they should not busy themselves about Him.—To what epoch of the world, asks our contemporary in conclusion, should we go back for an equal madness?—And, verily, we for our part cannot point out to him such an epoch.

THE report compiled by Mr. Eugene O'Connor for the Westport Harbour Committee, should be found especially interesting under the present circumstances of the Colony, and should go a long way towards illustrating the soundness of Major Atkinson's opinion re-

specting the absence of all grounds for despondency concerning the future. The report in question is a very full and clear, but at the same time concise account of the wealth of the Buller coal-field, and of the improvements necessary to be undertaken in the Westport Harbour so that it may be developed and worked to the great profit of the whole Colony. The Coal-field, Mr. O'Connor tells us, is situated on an elevated plateau on the Eastern side of the Buller River—from which its nearest workings are distant twelve miles. It is of enormous value to the Colony—especially as being the means by which expenditure on steam subsidies and railways may be reduced, as well as an ever increasing source of revenue. Already, indeed, it is the source of a considerable revenue, for the net profit on the out-put of the last financial year was something over £14,000. In the future, however, with facilities for exportation, it might be looked upon as certain that it would obtain a preference for steam purposes generally, as it has been pronounced by the Consulting Engineer to the British Admiralty superior even to the coal of the North of England and Wales. There is, besides, an immense trade with the various colonies, San Francisco, and some States of South America, amounting yearly in the aggregate to 3,350,000 tons, for which it might successfully compete. To open this coal-field to the markets of the world but one thing is necessary, and that is the improvement to the Westport Harbour—into which the Buller River flows with great force and volume of water. Sir John Coode has, moreover, reported favourably of this harbour, assigning to it a greater depth of water on the bar than that to be found at any other river entrance on the same coast. Nevertheless, he added, that in order to insure a permanently good depth it would be necessary to have breakwaters of great length constructed, and the works recommended by him to be undertaken would need an expenditure of £488,776. Mr. O'Connor, a little further on, shows that, even as trade now is, those works might be constructed by means of borrowed funds, and with the very handsome profit of £241,604 per annum as a result. "Then, upon a very moderate estimate," he continues, "within three years of the completion of the Harbour the work would be paid for out of the proceeds, leaving a net annual and increasing income of a quarter of a million, Westport a free port connecting New Zealand with all parts of the world, and adding to the exports of from the Colony probably half a million sterling, whilst decreasing the imports of coal by £100,000 per annum. Let it be noted that this estimate is made without taking into consideration the great industries of Iron and Copper, now showing signs of vitality in the Colony. To these, cheap and good coal is a necessity; nor have we taken into consideration the saving to the Colony which would accrue in the working of our railways, by the reduction in the price of coal. Neither have we taken into consideration the further increase of revenue by other leases being taken up, and worked upon the Buller Coal Reserve, of which only a very small part is now occupied. Suffice it, that in New Zealand, as in England, the great source of manufacturing and commercial prosperity, must be cheap coal. In quantity and quality, in facilities for working, the Buller Coal-field will compare favourably with the Coal-fields of England, or any other country. A trade in coal of almost boundless extent is open to the Colony. The private enterprise of our fellow-colonists is retarded, ships have been built, and plant laid down, anticipating the removal of the obstacle. Delay is ruin to the trade. It is useless to accumulate arguments any further. Either from a public or a private point of view, Harbor improvement must be accepted as urgent and necessary. We have ascertained the precise work required, and have a reliable estimate of the cost. There remains but to provide the means to do it. It was proposed at one time, to land over the whole property, Coal and Harbor, to a Company, on a guarantee for the completion of the Harbor Works within a given time; this proposal was condemned as involving too great a sacrifice of the public interest. Next comes the proposal to have the work done by the Colonial Government by instalments, dependant upon votes of the Legislature. Under ordinary circumstances, if other large works of the same character were in course of construction by the Colonial Government, and no limit placed upon Colonial borrowing, this course might be advisable, but it is accepted as more in unity with the policy of the Colony in regard to Harbors, that a Harbor Board or Trust should be created; let us accept that provision on the understand-