

New Zealand Gazette

VOL. XV.—No. 28.

DUNEDIN: FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 4, 1887

PRICE 6D.

Current Topics

AT HOME AND ABROAD.

THE UNEMPLOYED. The tumultuous demands made during the past week or two for work by the London unemployed, naturally draw attention to the state of things that collects in great cities a vast labouring population. That the matter is a grave evil many things point out to us. The conclusions, for example, arrived at by Dr. Fothergill and replined by him at the late meeting of the British Association of themselves alone make this evident. A falling-off in the ethnic conditions of the race is a misfortune than which no heavier one can afflict any nation, and, occurring, as we are told it does, in the centres of population by which the state of the country generally is most powerfully affected, its evil influence must be felt in even an aggravated form. That Dr. Fothergill is right in his conclusions unhappily there are proofs that must strike us all as most convincing. The growth alone of an abominable vice, not only in English cities, but also in those of France, and possibly, if the matter were investigated, in those of other countries as well, serves to show very clearly that some abnormal force is at work creating depraved and revolting tastes and desires that betray decline in the scale of humanity, and a departure from natural instincts. The crowded life of the cities, therefore, stands condemned as tending to the destruction of all that is honourable to the people, and as likely to bring the nation down, not only in its relation to foreign States, but in its own internal character and constitution as a part of the great human family. We need not allude to what is also manifest, that the people gathered together in thick masses are more liable to be stirred up to a resistance of whatever they may feel to rest painfully or unjustly upon them. This may or may not be an evil as the circumstances of the case determine. If there be real grievances and if agitation be the only measure that can bring about their relief, then it is manifest that agitation is the right course to take, and that the more energetically and quickly it is employed the better. But if the inconveniences or privations experienced be inevitable and such as agitation can provide no remedy for, the facilities afforded for it owing to the presence of numbers and the influence of demagogues and anarchic leaders are much to be deplored. What, however, requires careful consideration is the causes which bring the labouring masses into the cities and lodge them there insufficiently provided with the means of earning a livelihood. One of these causes has been given as the spread of education among the rural population, which makes them ambitious of finding some other method of life than the monotonous and lowly plodding with which their forerunners were content. But other things there doubtless are that conduce to the same ends. There is, for instance, the extensive employment of machinery applied to agricultural processes. It is, we know, the decision of political economy, against which it would subject any man to a charge of gross ignorance were he to protest, that the labour thus liberated is provided for in other spheres. But it may still be permitted to enquire where those spheres are situated, and whether they supply the labourer with as wholesome work as that to which he was accustomed in the cornfield or the meadow. Do they, to any appreciable degree, in fact, promote the immigration to the cities that is now pronounced, and which certainly seems proved, to be followed by such deplorable consequences? It may be heresy in the eyes of the political economist, but it still seems to be an opinion not wholly unworthy of maintenance that it might be esteemed a noble work to preserve the race on a level with their higher standard, even though in risking a decrease in the commercial produce of the country, rather than to promote its deterioration in producing additional wealth for the capitalist. Nor is there any safety to be found for the wealthy classes in the fact that the workmen crowded together in the cities become, as Dr. Fothergill says, of a lower type. The fact, indeed, that it is so may, perhaps, be brought forward to account to some extent for the tumultuous doings of the London unemployed, for an enfeebled physical frame is less capable of enduring hardship or deprivation with patience, or of restraining anger, than is one of superior powers. The safety, no less than the welfare and honour of the realm, depends on maintaining the people

at the highest standard to which they are capable of attaining. People, then, who are congratulating themselves, as certain writers in Tory newspapers are now doing, at the failure of an experiment made in small farming in England, and at the proof, which they erroneously conclude it gives that farming on a large scale alone will pay, are enjoying a fool's paradise, and basing their hopes on what, if it were true, must prove the destruction of the nation's honourable standing. Large farms worked by machinery for the most part must necessarily drive the people out of the country into the towns, and the crowded towns, as Dr. Fothergill tells us, and as we see from other sources, are the centres of the nation's ruin. Whatever temporary alleviation may be found, therefore, of the condition of the unemployed, nothing can effectually remedy it but wholesome labour in the country, and this, we may add, can only be provided by the creation of a peasant proprietary. If riots in London could do anything towards bringing this home to the conviction of influential men, they would be a matter for congratulation rather than for regret.

SIGNOR CRISPI, it is reported, in speaking recently AN INVOLUNTARY of the great advantages likely to result from the PROMISE. newly formed alliance between Italy and Germany has again promised that the independence of the Papacy shall be respected. The question, nevertheless, is one that hardly rests on the decision of Signor Crispi or his Government. The position of the Pope is such that its independence must necessarily be acknowledged, and no attempt to make it subject to any particular power can be permitted by the other States of the world. If it were possible to destroy the Papacy, that might be done with the consent of other States, and some there are that, perhaps, would gladly give their consent. But the impossibility of such an undertaking only becomes more apparent as time goes by, and shows how, even under circumstances that might appear unfavourable, the strength of the Papacy grows, and its life and vigour become more evident. No power now that does not labour under insane hallucinations could attempt such a task. When, indeed, we contemplate the chances of its being undertaken, it is to those wild revolutionary forces we look which, though they struggle, and not without some appearance of eventual success, beneath the surface, have not as yet attained effective strength. When they break forth and gain the upper hand, among their first attempts will be that of the destruction alluded to, but, as it will be the attempt of insanity alone, it will have a suitable end. More sane powers, whatever their hostility may be, must curb their will and content themselves with inflicting such humiliations and embarrassments as lie open to them. A hostile Government may, for instance, set up the Quirinal vainly to rival the Vatican, or it may deprive the Church of the full control of her own resources, as in the case of the property of Propaganda, but it dare not menace the independence of the Pope, or do more than partially impede and annoy him in communicating freely with the Catholic world without. What would be done were the Pope made dependent on any Government would be the appointment of that power as the Pope's substitute. The Catholic people in every part of the world would be made more or less the allies and subjects of that power, whatever might be the dispositions of the several Governments towards it and its position would be one of unexampled pre-eminence. That Italy is not prepared to aspire to such a place we may readily believe, and, therefore, we may accept Signor Crispi's reported promise as sincere. What remains to be seen, however, is whether, now that it seems sufficiently proved that the Papacy is indestructible, that, in fact, the more it is opposed and hampered, the stronger it becomes, those powers which at one time may have admitted the dream that, if perchance it could not be completely destroyed, it might be broken so as to become helpless and unworthy of consideration, will perceive the incongruity and unfitness of permitting it still to occupy a place out of character with its attributes and universal influence, or, whether, while they admit its importance and court its support and aid, they will think it right to see without remonstrance or attempted amendment the indignities offered to it. As to Signor Crispi's promise, then, he promises to concede that which he knows he must concede, whether he or his Government like it or not. The gratitude deserved by him is, therefore, very trifling.