

New Zealand Gazette

VOL. XVI.—No. 19.

DUNEDIN: FRIDAY, AUGUST 31, 1888.

PRICE 6D.

Current Topics

AT HOME AND ABROAD.

A TERRIBLE PICTURE. THE commissioner of the *Pall Mall Gazette* does not give us a picture of Prince Bismarck that is in the least reassuring. He shows us the Chancellor in a light even less favourable than that in which

we had been hitherto taught to regard him. The Chancellor controls the world by means of a reptile press hired by secret service money to do his bidding, and in the most cunning way carrying out its task. But if any editor less degraded than the rest attempts to offer any resistance, his fate is sealed. Some breach of the law, for example, is brought home to him and his ruin is easily effected. Nor is the power of Prince Bismarck confined to the Press of Germany. Correspondents of newspapers in other countries are also under his influence and notable among them are certain correspondents of the *London Times*. It was to serve the Chancellor's purpose that the late reports of a Russian advance towards the German frontier were spread abroad. He wanted to obtain a vote of the Reichstag for the addition of 700,000 men to the German army, and also to persuade Austria to increase her military expenditure. Therefore the mere trifle of a despatch of 4000 soldiers from Moscow to Warsaw, was magnified and distorted in every part of the world. The Russians themselves were puzzled and astonished. The Bourses of Europe were disturbed. But Prince Bismarck carried his point. And how is the welfare of Europe affected by this "Demon Omnipotens at Berlin," as the Commissioner calls him? Despotism rules supreme in Germany, and freedom is unknown there. "Germans have disappeared. Only Germany remains—a gigantic figure which has only one brain, and the grey matter of that brain is Prince Bismarck." "Prince Bismarck recently boasted that the Germans feared God but that they feared no one else. Excepting on his authority Europe would have been incredulous, for to other nations the Germans seem not to fear God so much as Prince Bismarck, and, unless he is cruelly maligned, there is very little fear of God before his eyes. What is said in many quarters is that the Man of Blood and Iron sticks at nothing in order to secure his ends. Falsehood, force, intrigue, treachery, war, are alike instruments in his hand, and are judged by him exclusively from the point of view of their relative efficiency. He will not lie if truth will suit him better, but if not, then for him, they say, falsehood is better than truth." As to the shadow which, says the Commissioner, "the success of blood and iron has cast over the human heart," so that men should admit it as excusable in Prince Bismarck to have no scruples, to have, for example, had Skobelev and Gambetta poisoned, as he is falsely accused of doing, perhaps it is more due to the failure of moral perceptions in the men who make such admissions than to the success in question. Men, at least have been able to look upon successful villainy with abhorrence. If men in Russia look upon it otherwise, perhaps the fault is in the men themselves. But this we confess to be deplorable, seeing the part that Russia must of necessity take in the future of the world. The Commissioner tells us that Prince Bismarck is at present accredited with peaceful designs. He, however, only gives him credit for such in so far as they are compatible with the interests of Germany. To these he is ready to sacrifice the rest of the world without scruple or remorse. To these, in fact, he has already sacrificed a good deal on the part of other nations, having encouraged France in her undertakings against Tunis, Tonkin, China, and Madagascar, and incited Russia in 1877 to go to war with Turkey. The Commissioner, nevertheless, believes that, as he says, "Germany remains at present the keystone of the arch of European peace." If England, Germany, and Russia, he says, hold together, the peace of the world is secure. We may, for our own part, inquire, meantime, as to how far it is to be desired that such should be the case, and as to whether those who are the advocates of peace under the circumstances are not the advocates of peace at any price. The picture we have been given of Germany under the control of Prince Bismarck, and as she must certainly continue, with increasing strength, under an Emperor and statesmen trained in the school of Prince Bismarck, is an alarming and revolting one. It is a condition of unscrupulous criminal despotism degrading to the country in which it exists, and dangerous as well as demoralising to surrounding nations. Is a peace

under which such a system of things must grow and strengthen a matter to be desired? A war for its destruction might, on the contrary, seem much preferable, and the chief thing to be feared from a war under the circumstances, would be a German success. At any rate, the Commissioner justifies most fully the rebellious spirit against German rule of Alsace-Lorraine, and the desire of France for their deliverance, which he deprecates as a possible source of war, and things therefore to be resisted. If his picture of Prince Bismarck, and of Germany under the control of Prince Bismarck, is true, in a word, he conclusively proves, contrary to his intentions, that in war alone lies the hope, even if it be a forlorn hope, of the world. To save the world, and even to save herself, the power of Germany must be broken.

A HORRIBLE SYSTEM. MR. T. WEMYSS BEID has published a life of the late Mr. Forster, which shows the frightfully demoralising effects of the task he had set himself to perform in Ireland. He began his work a humane,

kindly man, recognising the evil plight of the people whose fortunes were placed in his hands, and anxious to ameliorate their condition. The granting of loans; the reformation of local bodies; the compensation of evicted tenants; a liberal Land Act: such was the programme he proposed to himself. The first of these measures, however, taken in hand, that is, Compensation for Disturbances, was cruelly thrown out by the House of Lords, and this, unhappily, determined Mr. Forster's course. It would have been well for him had he followed his first impetus and resigned his position, but he held on, to his ruin. "The Czar of Russia," he said, "is not more of a personal and absolute ruler than I was during that last winter in Ireland. My colleagues left me to do as I pleased, and the whole thing was on my hands." A great writer has likened Hamlet to a china crock in which an oak tree is planted, with the inevitable result that the strong growth of the roots breaks the crock. Despotic power, in like manner, proved too strong for Mr. Forster. But, unlike the china crock, he did not break, but was distorted and bent all out of shape by the force that controlled him. He used his power as foolishly as tyrannously, going from one coercive step to another, although he was forced to acknowledge that every step was vainly taken. But so demoralised did the man who had begun with a kindly, pitiful, heart and good intentions become, that his resignation was at last caused by Mr. Gladstone's determination to put an end to coercion and try more merciful methods. Mr. Forster is dead, and another fills the place in which a power as despotic as that of the Czar of Russia distorted and demoralised his nature. But, in his successor, despotism takes root in a fostering soil, with plenty of room to grow. We cannot regard Mr. Forster's career without sorrow for the man himself as well as for the people he misgoverned. In Mr. Balfour, however, we recognise only the petty tyrant by nature, who carries out a congenial task, and in whom there is nothing to spoil. It is a hard case in which we find no relief except that arising from the knowledge that the minister of evil has from the first been on the level of the lowest, and had nothing in him that could possibly be degraded. Nevertheless, a system of government whose administration necessarily degrades good and honest men is a thing to be abhorred and detested.

WE have received yet another copy of the *Whitehall Review*, containing also a passage marked with a dog-ear, but this time with a lead-pencil as well, a lead pencil that scribbles, as if in the hand of one who would say to us, "Take that now." And we take it accordingly. It places before us with more or less severity, six points, as follows. (1.) It is a comfort to think the *Whitehall Review* is known in New Zealand, and circulates there among the Irish. (2.) The N. Z. TABLET is very unlike the *London Tablet*. (3.) The N. Z. TABLET deals with the line pursued by the *Whitehall Review* in terms that vary between personal and vulgar, and incoherent and incomprehensible. (4.) English Catholics were laudably consistent 300 years ago in throwing off their allegiance to the Pope. (5.) The N. Z. TABLET has had time to digest and profit by the remarks of Dr. O'Dwyer of Limrick. (6.) Irish Catholics are a nuisance, from a moral and criminal point of view, in comparison with the population of Great Britain, and the women are worse than the men.—Well, here is what we have to say