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Current Topics

AT HOME AND ABROAD.

WHAT is the use of misrepresentation like the following? The special correspondent of the

A STUPID PARAGRAPH.

Manchester Courier writes, under date Wellington, November 23, as follows, and his paragraph has

been copied by the *Irish Times* of January 9:—"After considerable delay and alteration of dates, the Irish 'envoys,' Mr. Dillon, Mr. Deasy, and Sir T. Esmonde duly made their appearance in Wellington on the 15th of November. They landed at Auckland some ten days before, and made their way down country for the most part overland, of course haranguing as they went. The devotees of their cause appeared in force, and made the most of the occasion, but the great majority of the people treated their visit with supreme indifference, and the general feeling was in condemnation of an effort to convert the colony into a battle-ground of English politics. It was this latter view that was mainly adopted by the Press, though the Irish party has its organs, and does not keep them unemployed. I learnt, for instance, from one Wellington paper that the delegates were met at the station by a large and enthusiastic crowd which cheered them heartily; but, as an impartial witness of the scene, I can testify to the presence of some fifty or sixty people only, not all of the most desirable class, who certainly made as much noise as could be expected of them. It is a curious fact that the eternal gales at Wellington have a disastrous effect on the human voice, and that no such thing as a hearty cheer can be raised in the town. In the evening the 'envoys' held their meeting, to which the prices of admission were so high as effectually to exclude all but the sympathetic, and the proceedings were, of course, most harmonious. So far as I can gather, the reception of Mr. Dillon and his colleagues in Wellington is typical of that which has greeted them in every town that they have visited in New Zealand so far, excepting that perhaps there has been in some cases more overt opposition to them than was displayed here." This "impartial witness" states that an Irish party, belonging to an undesirable class and with newspapers of its own, alone showed any interest in the mission of the delegates to this colony. But is it not a patent fact only to be denied by unscrupulous people writing for readers at a distance that men of all classes and shades of opinion, embracing some of our most prominent citizens and statesmen, gave their strong support to the delegates? Is it not also a patent fact, only to be contradicted by people who are completely careless as to their word, that the Press of the colony, by no means to be confounded with the organs of an Irish party, with hardly an exception, admitted at least that the delegates' mission was important, and deserving of fair and attentive consideration, while the large majority of the newspapers were the warm advocates of their object? As for the opposition given it was contemptible in Auckland and ridiculous in Wellington, and elsewhere it was not heard of, even by this correspondent himself apparently, who has so much of the remains of honesty about him as to throw doubt on his own statement in this respect. Has this special correspondent at Wellington, of the *Manchester Courier* any particular reason for misleading the readers of his newspaper, or is he foolish enough to believe that a danger is made less by being concealed? The only possible use that can be made of his misrepresentation is to deceive the Unionists as to the disposition of the colony, and, therefore, to help to place them in a false position. We can however, readily believe that a correspondent who is certainly stupid is foolish as well.

IT seems almost superfluous to refer again to the A LAST WORD OR reception everywhere given in New Zealand to the TWO. Irish delegates. It was enthusiastic and sincere everywhere, and no district fell behind another in this respect. Everywhere the utmost was done that could be done. From Auckland to Wellington, and from Wellington to Hokitika, Christchurch, and Dunedin, there was but one spirit shown. It was that of a thorough sympathy with the mission and a determination to promote its object. The results speak incontrovertibly for the

success obtained. It is hardly exact, moreover, to speak of an Irish party in connection with the matter. In many instances Irishmen were less prominent in the receptions and on the platforms than men of other nationalities, and in all instances they had the sympathy and support of many such men. While, as for the newspapers, we confess that many of the articles published by our contemporaries were quite as favourable as anything we could ourselves produce. It is true the Irishmen of the colony did their duty manfully in the matter. The reception given to the delegates in Auckland, and in which they bore their part well, was a presage of what took place everywhere else. In the South we were not more, nor were we less, enthusiastic than they were in the North; and East and West a like disposition was as ardently manifested. There were well proved by the visit to the colony of the Irish delegates, the unvarying fidelity of the Irish immigrant to his far-off home, and his union in this regard with his brother in exile. From a Catholic point of view, again, the mission was most consoling, showing us, as it did, the union of priests and people without a single exception. All this is palpable, and hardly needs to be recalled.

THE AFRICAN RUSH.

THE advice given recently in an official report by the French Under-Secretary of State for the colonies, to the effect that France should seek to extend her influence in Africa, and to reap the full

fruits of her enterprise there, seems to have been adopted. Such, at least, is the conclusion suggested by the news that the French have taken it upon them to prevent one of those frightful slaughters of his subjects of which the King of Dahomey has been constantly accused. Even the King of Dahomey, nevertheless, has found a defender, and we have seen it stated that his cruelty was grossly exaggerated, if not altogether invented, by Europeans interested in the ultimate fate of his territory. The country over which he rules we may add, is one favoured in the highest degree by nature, and almost incredibly productive of fruits and vegetables. Experience probably is wanting to show whether, like other places on or near the West Coast of the continent, it would prove the grave of white men. But we are pretty safe in concluding that its climate would not prove very healthy to them. In this respect, however, the nations that aspire to colonize Africa must make up their minds to run some risks, and the occupation of Dahomey may not be found more dangerous than that of many other places. The French, in any case, seem to be entering on the course already pursued by them in Tunis, where we know straits were imagined and massacres invented to forward the interests of their secret design of annexation. We are told, for example, that French troops in Dahomey are in danger, and that a larger force is spoken of as about to proceed to their rescue. We may be almost certain, therefore, that a protectorate, at least, is contemplated, and that the days of the King's independence, let all that has been related of his cruelty be true or false, are numbered. England, meantime, has been suspected of an intention to steal a march on France in the matter of African annexation. One of the negotiations entrusted to Sir John Lintorn Simmons at Rome, for example, is said to have been that of obtaining for the Bishop of Malta jurisdiction over all future sees established in Africa, a project actively opposed by Cardinal Lavignerie, and whose end was decidedly that of utilising the Catholic and even the French missions to forward English interests. But, we may remark in passing Cardinal Lavignerie's interference proves, at least, that his Eminence has confidence in the fair dealing of the Republic with Catholic affairs outside the boundaries of France. France and England, therefore, have virtually come into contact with respect to African annexation. The object, however, with which the Under-Secretary for the Colonies advised the Government of the Republic to take into consideration the uses to be made of the territory already acquired was that of fostering the commercial interests of the country—especially by a system of mutual protection; and it is with such a view, we may conclude, that France has determined on the annexation of Dahomey. How far the promotion of such interests in such a manner will clash with those of other nations, and more especially with those of England, remains for us to see. But commercial rivalry, as we have said before, has often been productive of evil.