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## Current Topics

AT HOME AND ABROAD.

ABSURDLY  
REPORTED.

HERE is another very remarkable cablegram, published by our daily contemporaries on Saturday:—"The Pope is desirous of being restored to temporal power. The Jesuits and bishops, with the exception of the Italian, are favourable to his aspirations."—The Pope is desirous of being restored to the Temporal Power! This is news, indeed—almost as well worth cabling to the colonies as the fact that there is a Pope in existence. But, doubtless, even Mr. F.'s aunt had some meaning, deep and hidden though it might be, in her remarkable declarations.—"There's milestones on the Dover road," for instance.—In the profound mind of some telegraph agent or newspaper correspondent some meaning is also in all probability attached to the information alluded to. But inscrutable, we know, are the minds of telegraph agents and newspaper correspondents. Who, therefore, shall interpret to us their meaning? Is it, perchance, to be found in the second part of the message? The Jesuits and bishops, with the exception of the Italian, we are told, are favourable to the Pope's aspirations. But, verily, this is a piece of news almost as good and useful as the foregoing. In the exception, however, we seem to find the essence of the whole affair. The Italian Jesuits and bishops, we are told, are the exception. They, it appears, are opposed to the aspirations of the Pope for the restoration of the Temporal Power. The Jesuits we may probably leave out of the question. The average bigot, whatever may be his particular way of thinking otherwise, invariably includes the Jesuits in whatever, as a bigot, he has got to say. Therefore, we may take for what it is worth the implied absurdity that the Italian Jesuits are at variance on this matter of the Temporal Power with the members of their Order who belong to other countries. The Jesuits, in short, have got into the cablegram in something of the same way as the head of King Charles I. used to get into the manuscript of Mr. Dick. What this cablegram, then, is probably meant to suggest to the colonies is that the Italian bishops are opposed to the Pope's demand for the restoration of the Temporal Power. In other words, the bishops most affected by the existing state of things—who at every moment of their lives feel the inconvenience and hardships attending on the usurpation, who are hampered in all their actions, whose charitable resources have been plundered, the revenues of whose sees are in some instances withheld, and whose personal liberty has been curtailed and placed in danger by recent penal enactments, these bishops are opposed to a demand whose fulfilment would remove from them all these disabilities and restore them to the position rightly belonging to their high office. The credibility of this piece of news is, therefore, apparent. No sensible man knowing anything at all of the matter could for a moment receive such news as true, or even probable. What the particular effect of spreading it abroad may be we cannot tell. As the Roman situation is at present, however, even the most foolish and contradictory report may not be without some importance. Something has possibly occurred to call out another remonstrance, or a repeated condemnation of the usurpation, from the Holy Father, and an intelligent agency has cabled information respecting it in the manner we see.

"BULLETS and Bibles," such is Count Caprivi's NOTHING NEW. hope for the civilisation of Africa. The new German Chancellor, if reported aright, says that he views the colonial policy of the empire with misgivings, but that retreat is now impossible. His reliance, therefore, he says, is placed upon bullets and Bibles. The association, perhaps, may seem a little startling at first sight, but on reflection it will hardly be found so.—At least the composure arising from familiarity may be felt respecting it. Have we not, in fact, been familiar with such an association form of old? It has about it the genuine Puritan ring with which history has acquainted us. Such worthies, for example, as William the Silent abroad, and Cromwell at home, men of piety and valour all of them, have given by-gone ages practical examples of it. But,

in our own day, Africa itself has had practical experience of it.—What people have ever been reputed of more devotion to their Bibles than those sturdy Africans, the Boers, who, nevertheless, where the civilisation of the native races was concerned, have had a firm reliance on the efficiency of the bullet. In this regard the Germans can introduce into the country little which the Dutch had not previously introduced, though their greater strength and much vaster resources will doubtless enable them to work on a larger scale and with more striking results than the Boers have been able to attain to. The Bible and bullets and the Koran and bullets—the African tribes have had abundant experience of both associations, and it would not be surprising to find that they had come to look upon both as pretty much the same. The fear is, meantime, lest the Bibles having failed in the task allotted to them, and, indeed, if in this case also we may reason from analogy, the probabilities are in favour of their failure, the bullets may be called upon to make up for what is wanting, and the beginning of more evil days has dawned upon the people of Africa. There is, besides, some slight cause for alarm in the boldness of the manner in which Count Caprivi has spoken out and the complete absence of concealment with which he has expressed his confidence in a union of religion and blood-shed. The matter smacks over much of the olden times, and seems to indicate that the ideas of the day are not quite so firmly settled in new channels as we had been led to suppose. Circumstances, perhaps, might arise in which bullets and Bibles would have a wider application than to Africa alone. The expression is certainly one very capable of sinister interpretation.

As the question of Free-trade or Protection is one that seems always current, and which, therefore, possesses a continual interest, the following remarks which we take in substance from our contemporary, *La France Australe*, of Noumea, will be appreciated by our readers—differently, however, as they happen to be respectively Free-traders or Protectionists. Our contemporary, we may add, takes the article from the *Petit Journal*, a Parisian newspaper, by which it was published *à propos* of the appointment by the Chamber of Deputies of a committee to investigate the all-important question. The *Petit Journal*, then, begins by stating the argument of the free-trader that the consumer should be permitted to buy in the cheapest market. But, he replies, the consumers who are not also producers form a minority in the country. The power of the consumer as such, moreover, depends on his selling his own produce at remunerative prices. If, then, says our contemporary, by a too widely opened competition, you injure production as a whole, the consumers as a whole also will be obliged to restrict themselves, and consumption will suffer by it. Our contemporary takes as an illustration the case of a workman whose produce yields him a wage of six francs a day. He will spend five francs and save one. But unloose foreign competition, so that his produce can only be made to yield a wage of four francs and a half. The workman's means as a consumer will be reduced, and he will be unable to save anything. It is, therefore, the producer, says our contemporary, that we must consider. It is to him that we must ensure the just remuneration for his labour, and he in time will become a valuable consumer, furnishing to the other producers of the country an advantageous market. In answer to the argument that each country should import from another what it can produce more cheaply, our contemporary quotes the case of France as a wheat-growing country compared with the United States. The Free-trade doctrine, he says, will have this wheat admitted to benefit the French consumer. Those, however, who have raised wheat in France would be ruined or very nearly so. The operation being repeated yearly, they would have to suffer losses which would discourage them. Land would fall in value and the public wealth would be injured. Several other examples of a similar kind, says our contemporary, could be cited. But as to treaties of commerce, our contemporary treats them with the utmost contempt. They were invented, he says, by England and almost for her own sole profit. The *Petit Journal*, in fact makes short work of the arguments in favour of Free-trade—although we fancy he has by no means said the last word on the subject.