

New Zealand Gazette

EIGHTEENTH YEAR OF PUBLICATION.

VOL. XVIII.—No. 13.

DUNEDIN: FRIDAY, JULY 25, 1890.

PRICE 6D.

Current Topics

AT HOME AND ABROAD.

NOT the least interesting of the working-men's AN IMPORTANT ASSOCIATION. associations, now become universal, is that formed twelve years ago in France under the guardianship and guidance of the Church, and which is known as the "Œuvre des Cercles Catholiques d'Ouvriers," or the work of the working-men's Catholic circles. Of the objects of this association and the success attending on its efforts we obtain some information from the report of the working of the branch at Nice, read there by the secretary at a meeting held last April to celebrate the twelfth anniversary, and which has been kindly forwarded to us. The report begins by reviewing the special conditions of the modern world that have made such unions not only useful and desirable, but absolutely necessary. Steam and electricity, it says, have altered the whole condition of things, and led within the last fifty years to a complete change in Europe, which is gradually extending itself to every part of the world. A formidable effect which the writer of the report expects to follow is an invasion of Europe by Asiatics. This, he says, is being provided for by the railways that Russia, in the North and England, in the South, are constructing. By their numbers, their patience, and their discipline, he explains, the greater part of the Asiatics are our superiors. They will first overwhelm us peacefully with the trowel and the hammer, and when we have driven them away they will return with guns and cannons. He is confirmed in this opinion, he says, by having seen Chinamen at Shanghai manufacturing Krupp guns without the aid of Europeans, and by finding them engaged at Tien-Tsin in making breechloaders and cartridges. The writer appeals to his'ory to testify that it is always from the elevated plains of Asia that Europe is over-run, and, in short, he sees in the invasion he speaks of a probable fulfilment of the prophecy made in the Apocalypse concerning the plague of locusts. The necessity, therefore, is evident, he argues, for agreement and union. But it is the part of the Catholic Association to march at the head of the movement to bring this about and make it general. For this especially five reforms are necessary:—First, the Sunday's rest, in accordance with the paternal bounty of the Creator, Who, in ordaining that man should earn his bread by the sweat of his brow, willed that he should rest on the seventh day. The second reform called for is that of the militarism which is taking so great a multitude of every nation away from the work of production, and making of them instead barren consumers and a burden on their respective countries. Concerning this point the writer quotes from the *New York Herald* the paragraph relating to the matter published in an interview between a representative of that newspaper and the Holy Father, and to which we recently alluded. The third point aimed at is the reduction of the number of public officials, who form another army. The fourth point calling for reform is the abuse of capital and interest which causes so much mischief. In connection with this point the writer mentions that a congress had lately been held of the representatives of several popular banks of France and Italy and other nations, to discuss the question of a mutual credit which would free the people from being preyed upon by the great banks. He, however, adds a warning as to the experience of popular banks in Italy. How many small village proprietors, he says, who had never had any idea of borrowing did so at once, when the bank was opened at their door. They, indeed, proposed, by means of their loan, an improvement of their farms or some other fruitful undertaking. Their foresight, however, was mistaken and ruin followed. The writer advocates, as a security, the homestead law existing in the United States, and adopted with good results by Germany, which is also supported by the Count de Mun, general secretary and originator of the Œuvre, in suggesting a law in France to forbid the seizure by creditors of any home not exceeding a value of 5000 francs. The fifth point of reform kept in view is that of education which, under existing circumstances, is too exclusively literary and too completely separated from family influences. Let us study these great questions, says the report, by the light of faith and

of the experience of other peoples; let us show forth Christian solutions of them by word and example and it will be said of us that we have passed away in doing good. The remainder of the report deals with more particular matters, which, nevertheless, possess an interest for us, as proving how well this great work is making its way in France and counteracting there the evils that are so prominent and alarming. In the condition of France all the world is interested, for, from the very position the country holds in Europe, and the natural character of its people, it must ever exercise a chief influence over the world at large. Voltairean infidelity, for example, had its origin in England, but it was not until it had been transplanted to France, and had made its home there, that it became active, and worked the ills for which it was so terribly accountable. A great Christian work among the people, the lords of the future, as existing and gaining ground in France is, therefore, infinitely important, and we may hope, according to an allusion also made in this report of which we have been speaking, that as the coffin of the Nineteenth century, now shortly to be sealed, will contain many carcasses of corruption that had its birth among the French people, so the cradle of the coming age will hold the germs, emanating from them also, of light to shine throughout a very different century. If we may take, as an example of the good that is being done in France generally, that which the report in question proves to result from the efforts of the circle at Nice, and doubtless we may do so, our hopes for the future of the country may well seem promising.

AFTER all, perhaps, there may be some advantage A MASONIC SITUATION. to some one involved in the introduction into New Zealand and the establishment here of the Grand Orient of France. It appears, for example, from a case which has just occurred in Italy that very considerable advantages are occasionally to be derived from their membership by members of the body of Continental Masons. The case to which we especially allude is that in which a Grand Master of Italian Masons has profited very desirably, so far, at least, as he himself is concerned, by the consideration shown for him as a brother Mason and dignitary of their order by Signor Crispi the Italian Premier, who is also a Grand Master, and the Cabinet over which he presides, and which, with one or possibly two exceptions, are Freemasons as well. Indeed the Parliament itself consists chiefly of members of the same Society, 300 out of a total of 504 being so. And among the revelations made in connection with the matter to which we particularly allude was one to the effect that Signor Crispi further shows his love for his Society by subsidising out of the public funds the 300 members in question, a fact which they say, moreover, accounts for the Premier's being at any moment able to command a majority in the Chamber. The particular instance, however, in which Signor Crispi and his Masonic colleagues have shown fraternal affection for a Grand Master of their order is that in which they have permitted a certain Signor Lemmi, holding the high office in question, and who is also agent for an American firm with which the Government contracts for a supply of tobacco—in Italy a Government monopoly—to make an excellent bargain for the firm represented by him, and, no doubt, with an eye as well to his own individual interest. Signor Lemmi, in fact, was permitted by the Government, so to manipulate matters that his firm sold their article to the Government at a very much higher price than that for which other firms in the United States were ready to supply them—the result being a loss to the Italian tax-payer, a person already in various other measures rather heavily dealt with, of a sum of two million and a half of francs. The fraud, indeed, was so flagrant and so undeniable that, even among Freemasons themselves, it caused a good deal of disturbance, and, as it is not unfrequently happens when certain worthies fall out, not a little took place that might be made use of in the interests of truth and honesty. Something was begun in the way of appointing a Parliamentary Committee of inquiry into the matter, but, on consideration, the Ministry thought better of the matter and their consent to the proceeding was withdrawn by them. We do not know that we are particularly interested about general details of the manner in which Italy is governed. What takes place among a usurping and plundering faction in itself need concern us little. The accommodations, however, that occur among the members of an institution of similar