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Current Topics

AT HOME AND ABROAD.

THE progress of Catholicism in Dunedin is marked
A GOOD WORK. by the necessity that has arisen for the erection of a church in the North-East Valley. For some years past Mass has been celebrated there every Sunday in a public hall. The time, however, has arrived when this will no longer suffice, and when the need of having a church is pressingly felt by the Catholics of the district. A piece of ground has been secured for a site, in every respect desirably situated, and the intention is to erect on it a building which will not only serve as a church, to be dedicated to the Sacred Heart, but which, when the occasion arises, as the probabilities are it will ere long, may also be used for a schoolroom. The people of the Valley, who have always taken their full part in any charitable work connected with the city, and who proved themselves most generous when St. Joseph's Cathedral was in the course of erection, have a claim on the Catholic community generally which cannot be disputed, and no member of it will withhold from them such aid as it lies in his power to give. The sum required is not much. About £300 will be sufficient for the present need, and no very great effort should be demanded to make up the amount. As a beginning a concert will be given in the Garrison Hall, on Tuesday, February 10th., which, if as successful as there is every reason to hope it will be, should go a long way towards forming a substantial nucleus. The music will be under the direction of Signor Squarise, and the services of several of our most noted amateurs, including Mrs. Angus-Miss Blau y, and Mr. Densem, have been already secured. We need, however, hardly dwell at any great length on the matter. The task of marking the advance and growth of Catholicism by the erection of a church is one that every Catholic will rejoice to have his share in, and all that is wanted to obtain willing aid is to announce that the time has come for entering on the task alluded to.

TWO rather important publications with reference
STILL ON THE MOVE. to labour have just been made by the daily papers. The one contains regulations adopted by the U.S.S. Company in dealing with their men. The other takes the form of some rules proposed by the Building Trades' Union. The rate of wages paid, the hours of labour, and similar matters are explained by the Company, and they seem to be of a nature to which little exception can be taken. A wise arrangement, moreover, is that which provides for the settlement of doubtful or disputed questions by the appointment on the part of the crew of spokesmen, one for each of their two departments, to bring the case in point before the captain or chief engineer—the appointment only to last a month, so that each member of the crew may fill it in turn. But what if the spokesman for the time being be a man of few words? Men there are, as we know, who find it hard to express themselves, and who, for various reasons, prefer to leave the talk to others. Men there are, on the contrary, to whom the gift of the gab is a choice inheritance and a glory. Was it, for example, with some view towards the repression of such men that the Company adopted the plan of regular succession? It should, at least, have some effect in preventing what, perhaps, has occasionally been heard of, that is, the hatching of grievances by men gifted with a talent for speech, so that they might have a chance of exercising their endowment. To foster an interesting excitement, and then have it all spoiled by some fellow not having a word to throw to a dog would be but a melancholy undertaking. Had the U.S.S. Company something of this kind within sight in making their rule? In any case, it was a wise step to appoint means for a legitimate expression of dissatisfaction. The proposals of the Building Trades' Union are to make forty-four hours' labour—already to all intents and purposes existing as a rule, a fixed rule of the trades; to reduce the working day by a quarter or a half for a period not exceeding six months, should the step at any time seem desirable; and to permit members, unable to do a man's full work, to take lower wages. The intention of reducing the length of the working day is that of providing for the employment of a larger

number of men during slack times—it being understood that employers would be no less anxious for the completion of their jobs. The intention of the remaining clause is also benevolent—many working-men, for one reason or another more or less incapacitated, being, as circumstances are, in evil plight. Whatever may be thought of the two first proposals—and against either objections may possibly be urged—it is difficult to see that this last can deserve anything but approval. The labour world, as we see, therefore, is still on the *qui vive*. But whether, as Mr. W. Hutchison, M.H.R., in a letter to the *Otago Daily Times*, seems to suggest, our coming Parliament is to settle all its affairs once and for ever on a firm and progressive basis remains to be seen. As yet we see nothing of it—no, not even with the eye of the mind.

PEOPLE interested in the welfare of New Zealand
AN ALARMING RESPONSE. could hardly be pleased at the response made last week in Dunedin to an advertisement for pick-and-shovel men for a railway in Tasmania. Two hundred men were wanted, and we are told that nearly four hundred names were booked. We may, perhaps, make some allowance for the fact that Tasmania may now be regarded as, *par excellence*, the El Dorado of the colonies. As our knowledge of the Spanish tongue is limited, we may claim indulgence for a ball. Silver, not gold, is the metal in question. Doubtless some of the men applying, or even a good many of them, were attracted by the exciting prospects. Colonial experience would warn them against entertaining too exuberant hopes of becoming silver kings, but still something good they might look for. This, nevertheless, does not account for everything. The desired exodus must still reflect unfavourably on the state of things among us. Verily, it is not easy to forget Sir Harry Atkinson's airy explanation that the decrease of the population of the colony was due only to a laudable and spirited wish of the emigrants, which it would be a thousand pities to check, to see something more of the world. There can be little doubt that the great majority of this four hundred, notwithstanding the temptation of the silver fields, would vastly prefer to stay in New Zealand were the means of gaining a livelihood here open to them. And, even allowing for the silver fields, why should our people in such numbers seek to leave the colony? Are there not districts rich in minerals, within our own confines, awaiting only the prospector? A gold or silver-field attracting people from New Zealand certainly casts a sinister reflection on a Government by which mining interests have been so much neglected. This numerous response, therefore, to the advertisement referred to may be looked at from more points than one—and from no point can it appear a matter for congratulation.

THERE are countries besides New Zealand
HOW MUCH "DEVIL"? where labour is alive and even very much alive. Strikes are again the order of the day in many places, and in England, and Scotland especially, some rather rough work has accompanied them. In London, for example, non-union sailors have been brutally used, and on Scotch railways all sorts of horse-play has occurred. The primeval navigator himself, in short, hardly needed a stronger fortification of heart-of-oak and triple brass than does the traveller by rail now when attempts to wreck trains are, as we are told, frequent. Is it not, in fact, a matter of felicitation on some lines when the train, with every precaution taken, or believed to be taken, for its safety, arrives intact at the terminus? What must it be if an attempt to molest it by the way were the not uncommon course of things? Such tricks as this would be bad anywhere, but when played among a docile population what are we to think of them, or into whose hands, indeed, have Scottish lines of railway passed? Surely the native fed on cakes, or even though nurtured on something stronger, we have the sight of our eyes for it that the Scotchman, as a rule, bears his cups as dily, is never accountable for the like of this. However it be, folk there are who still are not satisfied. Mr. John Burns it seems has horrified the "unco guid" at Glasgow, as horrified they well may be, by exhorting the strikers to put a little more "devil" into the fight. And there in fact is the danger of the strike. Without some degree of "devil" in it, it would seem but a weak, or almost worthless, instru-