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Current Topics

AT HOME AND ABROAD.

PARLIAMENT was opened on Friday by commission. The event of the opening was the election of the Speaker of the House of Representatives,—not only a very important matter in itself, but especially interesting as proving the strength of parties. The result left no doubt as to that, Mr. Rolleston, the candidate of the Conservative party, being defeated by a majority of seven in favour of Mr. Stewart, candidate of the Liberals or Radicals, or whatever we are to call them,—a matter not as yet by any means certain. Mr. Stewart, however, is a perfectly fit and proper person to fill the office, and there is every reason to expect that he will perform its duties in a satisfactory manner. At the same time, as much might be said for Mr. Rolleston had he been elected. The state of the case, meantime, had evidently been anticipated, and on the termination of the election Mr. Mitchelson announced that the Government had sent in their resignation, and only held office until their places could be filled. Mr. Ballance, on the other hand, announced that the Governor had requested him to form a Ministry—a task which he undertook to perform by Tuesday, the 27th inst. Sir Harry Atkinson, the late Premier, we may add, who has been obliged by ill-health to retire from the more stirring sphere of politics, has been appointed Speaker of the Legislative Council,—a position upon which he enters with the general approval of the Colony. We do not know that Sir Harry can be looked upon as a very successful statesman. At least, the condition of the country at the moment of his partial retirement does not seem to warrant the formation of any such conclusion. Possibly, however, under the circumstances in which he was placed, he did as well as, or even better than, any one else could do. It is certain that he laboured long, honestly, and without paying any undue regard to his own private interests. He, therefore, has fully merited the provision that has now been made for him; and of his competency to perform the duties of the position there can be no doubt whatever. As to the other appointments that have been made to the Legislative Council, their being made at all has been the occasion of much complaint. Lively opposition, in fact, was offered to them as an unheard-of and outrageous undertaking, considering that the Government recommending them had forfeited the confidence of the country, and was in a moribund condition. His Excellency the Governor, however, supports them as quite legitimate, having abundant precedent, derived from the House of Lords, in their favour. It is hardly necessary to say that the members appointed are highly Conservative. Mr. Ormond, in fact, one of the most remarkable among them, represents extreme Conservatism, as we understand the term in the colonies—that is, as signifying the hindrance of genuine settlement, the monopoly of the lands, and everything consequently that offers an impediment to progress. The appointments have decidedly been made with a view to check expected extravagances—or what are regarded as such—on the part of the Lower Chamber. We should say that a Tory Governor, in considering the influence to be worked at Home by Colonial example, would willingly support such appointments. But what are we to expect from our new Legislature? It is not as yet easy to predict. The only particular of their probable proceedings that we find quoted is retrenchment. Indeed, one of our new Dunedin Members seemed timely in giving warning of this by protesting, during the election of the Speaker, that the salary attached to the office in question was too high. The Civil Service of the country, in short, is once more threatened with heavy reductions. Certain offices are to be done away with altogether, others are to be amalgamated, and salaries are to be reduced all round. It is to be hoped, nevertheless, that such a scheme will not be carried out without very full and impartial consideration. What New Zealand needs is such a course of government as will enable her to be generous and open-handed in adequately rewarding services worth having. The hope of the Colony does not lie in a doubtful parsimony, but in a

bountiful production, and, above all, in the wise and effective settlement of the lands, on which this depends. It is, however, idle to speculate. We shall see in the course of a week or two what the new material is good for; and, if we do not expect very much, let us hope we shall be the more agreeably surprised.

CHEERING NEWS.

TWO events have occurred during the course of the week which may be looked upon as of happy significance, in the present state of the Irish affairs. The one is certainly so; the other may be so interpreted with a high degree of probability. The one is the return of a Home Ruler in the bye-election for Hartlepool; the other is a speech made at Cambridge by Lord Salisbury. The result of the election, in which Mr. Furness a Home Ruler defeated Mr. Gray a Unionist by a majority of 298—being elected, moreover, in the room of a Unionist lately deceased, shows that, whatever divisions may unfortunately have arisen among the Nationalists of Ireland, the end they still continue to seek has not been affected in the eyes of the English masses but rather gains in favour there. The cable-agency, it is true seems to make an attempt at lessening the significance of the matter by explaining that certain promises given by Mr. Furness had secured for him the support of the labour unions. If the labour unions, however, find the support of Home Rule consistent with their own interests, their doing so is of a different import and strengthens hope for Ireland—since we may justly take the unions as representative of the masses, and likely every day to become more so. If Ireland obtains the cordial and full support of the English masses, her success is insured. At this particular juncture, we say, the result of this bye-election authorises us in believing that such will be the case. As for Lord Salisbury's speech—its pertinent point was that in which the speaker, as reported, "referred to the dangers which would result from the enormous influence of priests, and to the sinister domination of Archbishops Walsh and Croke in a purely Irish Parliament." The interpretation we should be inclined to place upon this utterance is that Lord Salisbury, seeing the failure of all other measures by which Home Rule could be opposed, found himself forced to take refuge in the traditional cry of "No-Popery," and, in this case, also, we would see clear evidence given that the attempt of his Lordship's Government to influence the Vatican, and to call the Pope to their aid, had singularly failed. There is, however, another interpretation possible—though we admit barely possible. It is that Lord Salisbury, still hoping for success at the Vatican, was appealing to English public feeling to choose the lesser of two evils, and to withdraw its opposition to an alliance with Rome, so as to curb the power of the Irish hierarchy and clergy. The interpretation, nevertheless, which we have first proposed is that which we prefer as far more probable. Meantime, from both these events to which we have alluded, our conclusions are comforting. Neither Mr. Parnell's defalcation nor the consequent divisions have injured the cause in the eyes of the English masses. The Irish hierarchy and clergy, too, are still determined that the nation shall obtain its rights. Nothing that has happened has given them a moment's doubt in the justice of the cause and the great benefits to be obtained by victory. The Tory Prime Minister, besides, fully perceives the formidable nature of the situation, and is driven to extremes in an attempt—a vain attempt—to provide against it.

AUSTRALIAN governments are requested by the A FORLORN HOPE. Colonial Secretary to be on the lookout for an illustrious wanderer, more illustrious even than the famous "Claimant," who is now missing. The wanderer in question is one John Orth, otherwise known as the Archduke John Salvador, a prince of the House of Hapsburg, and son of a late Grand Duke of Tuscany. It seems that at one time the Archduke John Salvador had really a notion of emigrating to Australia. He was then, to be sure, in love, as, of course, being a married man, if he is still alive, he may be taken still to be. The Paris correspondent of *Truth*, however, lately quoted an amusing letter written by him to a young English lady by whom his heart or his fancy had been captured on board a Lloyd's steamer in the Mediterranean, and whom he proposed to marry. He professed a horror of Imperial rank