

Current Topics

The Irish Delegates

The Irish delegates (Messrs. Devlin and Donovan) have had something like a triumphal progress through Australia. From all sections of people in those home-ruled lands they and their mission have received a friendly greeting:—

'Sirs, you are welcome to our house;
It must appear in other ways than words'.

One of the 'other ways' in which Australia showed the delegates a welcome to its house was the generous pile of contributions—estimated to touch £15,000—in aid of the cause of Home Rule for Ireland. We have been in communication with the delegates, and on Monday night received the following cabled reply from Mr. Devlin, who was then in Tamworth, New South Wales: 'Letter just received. Can only give December and half of January in New Zealand. Will consult Mr. Donovan and write you fully at end of week'.

The Exhibition

The New Zealand International Exhibition, which opens in Christchurch on November 1st, is not of local or provincial but of national interest. The vast labor and preparation involved in so great an undertaking seems to have been carried out, as to its main features, with commendable completeness, and the opening day should witness a noble world-exhibition in a substantially finished condition. The historical interest of the exhibition will be notably enhanced by the reproduction of old-time Maori life in a stockaded pa. The educational, scientific, artistic, and commercial value of the exhibition will, we believe, amply realise the hopes of its public-spirited promoters. And incidentally, it will serve an important purpose by giving the Colony to feel how sweet are the uses of advertisement, and attracting to our scenic wonderlands a fast-increasing stream of tourists from afar.

That Petition

King Edward has thanked the Orangemen of Australia for 'the expressions of loyalty' in their petition against Home Rule. That was, perhaps, about the most unkindest cut of all that the brethren have received from him since the day (September 1, 1860) when, as Prince of Wales, he refused to accept the proffered hospitality of the mayor and corporation of Kingston (Ontario), 'on account of the extent to which they had permitted their Orange zeal to interfere with the invitation'. It will—if we may judge by sundry of his Majesty's previous experiences—strain the philosophy of his ultra-'loyal' subjects to take this rebuff smilingly. We shall watch the air for flying brickbats. The good men's claim as specially 'loyal' upholders of the Crown and Constitution reminds us of an Irish legend of the corn-crake. In the sweet old Gaelic tongue its name is 'treun' (which, being interpreted, meaneth 'strength'). According to a legend of 'ould Donegal,' the bird received his name because he lies at times on his back in the rich, soft meadow-grass, raises his two lank red legs in the air, and cries in Gaelic: 'Strength with strength! What wonderful strength for the two little feet of one bird to hold up all the skies!' When—in July—the northern summer-days are long, the Lodge cries in ecstatic self-admiration: 'Loyalty, loyalty, conditional loyalty! Behold how with my two little feet—my wonderful strength and my conditional loyalty—I hold up the Empire!' It is a harmless illusion, and one has not the heart to disturb it by pelting it with chunks of history.

White and Brown Tohungas

Bridge is apt to snub pak-a-poo, and the Caucasian fortune-teller and quack would scorn to brush skirts with the brown tohunga (witch-doctor and seer). But, meth-

ods apart, the difference between them is pretty much like the difference between tweedle-dum and tweedle-dee. Dr. Pomare (Native health-officer) said some days ago to a 'Lyttelton Times' interviewer: 'The only difference is that with the tohunga there is a certain amount of incantation, and in this way the follower might get a little more for his money. You had the same thing yourselves in England 200 years ago,' he added, 'until they commenced to burn the witches.' Dr. Pomare might have also added that the officialdom that roasted supposed witches, also issued licenses to fortune-tellers. It was like the old days in Alexandria, where astrologers were likewise licensed, and paid the State a tribute which went by the highly appropriate name of 'fool's pence'—the fools being, of course, the gullible innocents upon whom the fortune-telling birds of prey waxed fat. There never was, perhaps, in history a period in which such vast sums were filched from the pockets of gobe-mouches by hordes of arrant quacks and white tohungas, who

'Make fools believe in their foreseeing
Of things before they are in being,
To swallow gudgeons ere they're caught,
And count their chickens ere they're hatched.
But still the best for him that gives
The best price for't, or best believes'.

'Twas ever thus (as the rationalist Lecky admits) in ages that were marked by a decline of religious faith. 'It's dredful easy to be a phool', says Billings; 'a man can be one and not know it'. And in the matter of tohungaism, gudgeon-swallowing, and such-like follies, the 'superior race' and the 'higher civilisation' in New Zealand cannot afford to throw stones at our brown brother, the Maori.

Yellow-Fever Day

In our issue of October 11, we told how the Orange lodges of Queensland had arranged to send a deputation to the Home Secretary with a modest proposal to have 'the date of their annual outbreak of Yellow Fever' (as the Brisbane 'Age' happily describes it) 'proclaimed a public holiday.' Well, the brethren came, and saw, but did not conquer. 'The Home Secretary,' says our esteemed Brisbane contemporary, 'may not be, all round, the "strongest" Minister in the Cabinet', but on this occasion he 'proved himself the right man in the right place'. 'He presumed', says the 'Courier' report of his reply to the deputation, 'that they made the request from a conviction that there was an existing public demand for such a holiday. Before they could expect the Minister or the Cabinet to take action on such a matter, they must put before him facts to show that such a demand existed. They alluded to the twelfth of July as having a certain historic interest, but did that historic interest justify it being made a public holiday in Queensland? The position with regard to the seventeenth of March was that it had been generally celebrated prior to it being gazetted as a public holiday. The Government had not taken the initiative in that matter, but had simply recognised a holiday that was generally observed. He could only say that, so far, they had given him no evidence that there was a public demand for the holiday which they asked for. He could mention several occasions that were quite as important dates in the Empire's history as the twelfth of July—the occasions of the passing of the Reform Bill, the Catholic Emancipation Bill, the Education Act, or even in Queensland the passing of our own Education Bill, or the date of the passing of that little measure, "one-man-one-vote."'

The Home Secretary dismissed the deputationists with this Parthian-arrow advice: that 'the next time they came to him, they would come, not as Britishers, but as Australians'. This friendly counsel (says the 'Age') 'contains a volume of wise statesmanship in a nutshell'. The Queensland Government is evidently not prepared to proclaim a public festival for the benefit of

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