

## Current Topics

### The Irish Envoys

A letter was received last week in Wellington from the Right Rev. Monsignor O'Haran, containing in substance the following information regarding the movements of the Irish envoys: They find they can shorten their stay in Australia; are not likely to visit Tasmania; and purpose leaving Sydney for Wellington in the first week of December. From Wellington they propose working southwards, returning by the West Coast, carrying on the campaign through the North Island, concluding with a stay of a week or two in the thermal country, and leaving Auckland for San Francisco on January 11. On behalf of a number of the southern clergy we have been in communication with the envoys in connection with their Otago and Southland itinerary. Incidentally, and by request, we also pointed out the probable disadvantages—from the points of view of attendance and finance—of conducting their campaign amidst the double distractions of annual holidays in Exhibition time. We are not, however, yet in a position to say whether the visitors from Green Eire will be able to modify the itinerary outlined above.

### The Morioris

The Maoris seem to be moving away from the race-extinction to which they had been steadily drifting—up to 1896. But their cousins, the Morioris of our Chatham Islands, seem to be following fast to the decay that has swept so many other aboriginal peoples 'afay in the ewigkeit'. Seventy years ago they numbered some twelve hundred. Then—in an evil hour for the Morioris—the existence of the Chatham Islands was made known to the New Zealand Maori by the crew of an English vessel. It was in the days when Te Raurapaha was on his wild raids throughout New Zealand, striking terror into the Maori, and leaving death and fire and desolation along his track. A strong body of armed tribesmen, smitten with fear of the conquering 'Raha', fled to the Chathams in the brig 'Rodney'. They slew great numbers of the unprepared and unwarlike Morioris, sent humbers of them to the cooking oven, and enslaved the poor remainder. At the census of 1891 only forty of the aboriginals of the Chathams were left. At this year's census their numbers were reduced to thirty. The doomed race is following fast in the footsteps of the black-skinned aboriginal of Tasmania.

### A Protest

Sir Wilfrid Laurier, the noted Canadian statesman, had scarcely given his recent pronouncement in favor of Home-Rule as an imperial question, when

'Straightway a barbarous noise environed him'.

It was the voice of protest, and it came from the lusty lungs of our old friends of the Saffron Sash. So much we learn from Monday's cables. It was not ever thus. In the days when the Union was being engineered 'by bribery, force, and fraud,' the measure had no more strenuous opponents than were to be found among the ranks of the Irish Orangemen. Great numbers of lodges petitioned against the Union; and the 'yellow' Home Rulers of those stirring times carried on a lively agitation in favor of 'the Old House in College Green'—until Beresford, their political standard-bearer, sold his country and his vote for gold. Then, by order of the Dublin Grand Lodge, the brethren brought their Home Rule campaign to an end. But in those times no 'Papist' could sit as a representative in an Irish Parliament. Under the same conditions, Sir Wilfrid Laurier's latest critics would probably be as ardent Home Rulers as their forbears were a hundred and six years ago.

### The 'Missing Link'

The discovery of the 'missing link' between man and ape is again announced—for the tenth, eleventh, or twentieth time. A few years ago, whole battalions of him were alleged to have been 'discovered' in Darkest Africa by a French scientist. But the coy creatures dematerialised.

'Too like the lightning, which doth cease to be  
Ere one can say "it lightens"'

and in their empty place

'We find but desert rocks and fleeting air.'

And now (in Monday's daily papers) comes the further announcement of the discovery, not indeed, of 'the missing link,' but only of 'a species of Darwinian missing link-person.' It is not the long-sought, long-hoped 'pithecoïd' or ape-like man, but 'a Port Keats black.' This 'Port Keats black' is alleged to have his big toes deformed or set out of the normal fashion. But he is no more a 'link'—much less 'the' supposed missing link—between man and ape than is Thomas Alva Edison or King Edward VII. The deformed black is no humanised ape or (if we may coin a word) apified man; he is a true human being, enjoying those two crowning faculties which constitute a hopeless and unbridgeable abyss—an impassable specific difference—between man and any and every form of lower animal: namely, the faculty of rational thought and (its corollary) rational speech, and the faculty of free will. Your dog, cat, parrot, or anthropoid ape can give (by sound or gesture) emotional manifestations of passive sensible impressions (as of suffering or of satisfied animal nature). But they have never yet made the smallest advance in the direction even of a code of signals, much less of language. Man, and man alone upon the planet, can (to quote Dr. Mivart's words) speak in rational language—can manifest general conceptions, and enunciate 'distinct judgments' as to 'the what,' 'the how,' 'the why.'

People have often to be thankful for small mercies. Assuming the truth of the cable message, the deformed Port Keats black is an interesting anatomical curiosity. He might make provision for grey hairs and rainy days by mortgaging his feet (with their alleged thumb-like great toes) to Madame Tussaud's or the Royal College of Physicians. But for those who have been, since Darwin's days, in search of the 'pithecoïd' man, it must be confessed that the splay-foot aboriginal is a disappointment. He leaves the 'links' still missing where they should most abound. The graduated series of the Darwinists, linking different forms together, are as totally absent to-day as in the years in which the 'Origin of Species' was written. The records of the rocks give us the same types as we have to-day—gaps and all. But if a glorified monkey should be found? What then? Just nothing. Atheistic or materialistic evolution would rest precisely where it rests to-day—as a theory which does not fit the facts, which fails to explain just where explanation is most urgently needed, and which leaves, in the 'Seven Enigmas', several miracles compared with which the Creation would be as simple as the making of a mud-pie. Pseudo-scientists who forget or ignore their logic, constantly assume that two different kinds of creatures are in lineal ascent or descent with each other, if only you discover another that stands more or less between them. And thus they fancy that the discovery of the 'missing link' between man and ape would establish the monkey-origin of man! It is droll and unscientific reasoning, in good sooth. The late Mr. Mivart, although a convinced (theistic) evolutionist, declared full many a time that the abyss which separates man from the highest ape is wider far than that which separates the highest ape from a rock-oyster or a field mushroom. The 'link' between two such extremes would be a long one indeed. The rocks, the sands, slimes, and ooze, should be packed—as a

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