

pursue a policy, as a recent writer has put it, of 'least disturbance of anterior conditions,' there is some prospect that the pacification of the country may in time be made permanent and complete. The task of governing South Africa will undoubtedly for many years be a delicate and difficult one, but it is generally agreed by those best acquainted with the country that it is only by treating the conquered peoples with a measure of respect and sympathy that they can be made contented and loyal, and that the great scheme of Sir GEORGE GREY for a federation of South African States, based on federal home rule and a 'union of hearts,' can ever have any chance of becoming an accomplished fact.

Notes

The Belgian Socialists.

The recent elections in Belgium have resulted in the gain of two seats by the Clerical party, and this throws a little light on the game of political see-saw now going on in that country. The Socialistic outbreaks there have led some people to imagine that there is urgent need for a reform of the suffrage in that country. All Belgians who are twenty-five years of age have at least one vote, and tax-payers and married men, as well as those possessed of certain educational qualifications, are entitled to cast additional votes. The Socialists have during a considerable period been clamoring for universal suffrage, because they believe that the one-man one-vote system would give them a majority and place power in their hands. When the Clerical party declared that they were not unwilling to grant universal suffrage if children and youths under twenty-one were debarred from voting and if women were granted a right to vote as well as men, the Socialists objected on the ground that as the Belgian women are true to the Church this change would only strengthen the hold of the Clericals over the country.

Some Eruptions.

The man at the European end of the cable to the Antipodes is frequently as much astray with respect to his grammar as he is untrustworthy with respect to his 'facts.' He told us on Monday that gas was escaping from a mountain between Genoa and Nice, said mountain having been 'quiescent' for centuries. This unfortunate mountain has apparently given up the attempt to become quiet. If 'quiescent' means anything, it means beginning to be quiet. The most rudimentary acquaintance with Latin tells the halting scholar that verbs which end in 'esco,' and so on, denote the beginning of an action, and are termed inceptive verbs. From such roots we have a number of words such as convalescent (beginning to be well), senescent (beginning to be old), and so on. In this class is quiescent, which simply means beginning to be quiet. If, therefore, Mount Trabocchetto has been for centuries beginning to be quiet, we are justified in assuming that the subterranean forces have grown tired of the effort, and have impatiently burst forth. Seriously, however, these subterranean forces seem particularly active just now. They are still rumbling and fuming under Martinique, and threaten to again convert those lovely islands into an inferno. [Sixty-seven years ago a similar calamity befell these islands, but it was of a less disastrous nature, only 700 people being killed. The equatorial and tropical regions are particularly unfortunate in this respect. In 1797, 40,000 people were buried in one moment in Central America. In 1812, Caracas was subjected to an eruption which killed 12,000. Peru and Ecuador saw about 25,000 people killed in 1868. In 1883 the island of Krakatoa in the Java group almost entirely collapsed, with the loss of 35,000 lives and the dust furnished lurid sunsets for many months afterwards. More recently Amboyna, one of the Dutch West Indies, was visited by an earthquake, and 2000 persons perished. Altogether, history records some 200 or 300 disasters of the kind of the first magnitude. The most memorable of these are as follow:—1693, Sicily, over 100,000 people killed; 1703, Jedda, Japan, 200,000 persons killed; 1731, Peking, 100,000 people swallowed up]

Arctic Exploration.

Whatever may be the value of the narrative that tells of the discovery of the remains of the Andree expedition in search of the North Pole, the melancholy certainty is now inevitable that the intrepid aeronaut and his companions have perished, and have added their names to the long list of those who have failed. The first recorded attempt to reach the North Pole was made by Bardson in 1349, and since that date no fewer than 37 expeditions have set out. Nansen's attempt in 1893 was the one which attained the point nearest to the coveted goal, but since that attempt Peary, the Duke

of Abruzzi, and now Andree have sought to place their feet upon the northern axis of the globe. Nansen once said, when questioned as to the motive for planting the standard of discovery on the desolated spot, that his sole desire was not to see a pendulum beating at an angle of 90 degrees, and this *quasi* scientific remark produced a multitude of conjectures as to its meaning. It is a fact that a pendulum beats in the same plane always in relation to the centre of the earth. If it were possible, then, to suspend a pendulum right over the axis of the earth, it would be found that when the earth had completed half a revolution the pendulum would beat at a right angle to a line drawn upon the surface. This was what Nansen meant, but the sight would be merely the gratification of an idle curiosity. The discovery and exact location of the North Pole mean more than this. The use of Polar exploration is not that it promises any immediate return of food, or gold, or land, but that it adds to the sum of human knowledge. Observations on terrestrial magnetism have enabled scientific men to make progress in working out the laws which govern the movements of the magnetic pole and the changes of magnetism which affect the compass of every ship that ploughs the deep. Polar observations are enabling men to compare and test the theories about the origin of weather changes, and are thus aiding towards the determination of the true laws of storm and cold waves, which knowledge may in time be worth millions of pounds to the world. Polar observations have also added much to the knowledge of the life of plants and animals under extreme conditions. It is also found that bacterial life, such as that from which most diseases are derived, does not and perhaps cannot, exist in the polar regions; so that Nansen suggested that this region may be the future sanatorium of the human life.

Dredging in Southland.

Mr. McNab, M.H.R. for Mataura, has compiled for the *Southern Standard* an interesting table setting forth the results to December 31, 1901, of gold dredging in Southland. The figures are interesting chiefly because they show what profit has accrued from what is known as dry land dredging, from which so much was expected at the beginning of the dredging boom of two years ago. It was then thought that a new era had dawned on the mining history of New Zealand, because if dredges could make their way into the flats, whether in the valleys of rivers or not, large areas would be brought under exploitation not possible by any other known method, with the hoped-for result that large gains would accrue. It was chiefly in Southland that such areas were accessible, for in Otago, and in Westland these claims were mainly taken up for speculative purposes, and have since failed to give results consistent with the rosy pictures of the prospectus. In Mr. McNab's return the figures are thus summarised:—The public have invested in all £129,639, of which £96,723 is sunk in companies still in operation, the balance having gone into companies since liquidated. The yield from the investment so far has been £64,421, of which only £4660 has been rescued out of liquidation. The return embraces 26 companies, of which eight are operating in the Waimumu district, a similar number in Waikaka, six in Charlton, and four are in outlying districts. Of the total net yield of gold, which is valued at £59,761, only £8681 has found its way into the pockets of shareholders so far. The Waimumu dredges have been the most successful, up to the present date, having won gold to the value of the eight which have been built, the Waikaka group comes next, the Charlton next, and the outlying group a bad last, with no dividends at all, and with a gold return of only £2511 against an expenditure of £13,612. Incidentally Mr. McNab's figures give the cost of running a dredge under the exceptional circumstances which prevail in dry land dredging. Three of the dredges were dividend paying in December, 1900, and for the year they produced a total yield of £10,987, of which £3421 was paid in dividends. The balance, namely £7566, represented the cost of working, and this works out at about 12½ per week. Certainly the number of dredges is not sufficiently large to furnish an accurate estimate, but it was expected at the outset that the cost of running would be much smaller. The moral to be derived from Mr. McNab's calculations is that which might have been anticipated. No phenomenal fortunes are to be made by investments in dry land dredging, and the investor is extremely lucky if he gets that fair return for his money that an investment should give. Of course such a view of the position takes no account of operations on the share market, which are susceptible to other influences.

A Petition.

A petition, which we understand originated in Wellington, was open for signature at the door of St. Joseph's Cathedral on Sunday morning. It is to be sent to the Right Hon. R. J. Seddon, asking him to bring before the Conference of Colonial Premiers in London the subject of Ireland's discontent which, as the document rightly says, it would be to the best interests of the British Empire to have