

# A Deadly Danger.

A reply to "The Extinction of the Colonial" by W. G. McDonald, NEW ZEALAND

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R. McDONALD'S semi-scientific article on "The Extinction of the Colonial" is an attempt to deal, from a purely optimistic point of view, with what promises to be one of the most burning questions of the future. Unfortunately, any value the article might have is entirely discounted by most illogical reasoning, and what is worse, by a false ethical standpoint, and by rather cheap sneers at a body called "The Purity Brigade," among whom are many leader-writers of the Press. No attempt is made to deal with an evil. It is rather treated as the natural outcome of civilisation, a thing destined to benefit the race, and help the slowly-grinding processes of evolution. Quality not quantity, cries Mr. McDonald, while he quotes Professor Geddes and G. A. Thompson in support of what is called neo-Malthusianism. This is their summary of the advantages of checking the growth of population:—(1) Prevention of a too rapid rate of increase; (2) possibility of earlier marriages bringing about a diminution of vice; (3) an increase in the fitness of the race by lessening the propagation of unfit types, and the exhaustion of the mothers by too frequent child-bearing; (4) a heightened standard of comfort.

Such are the advantages the neo-Malthusians urge in support of their philosophy, and some of them are false advantages, while the others are immoral if gained by immoral means. It is quite unnecessary to explain what neo-Malthusianism means, but at present, as is even tacitly admitted by Mr. McDonald, its teaching is bearing fruit in the practical

shape of checking the growth of population by artificial means. Mr. McDonald says morbid delicacy makes inquiry difficult, and certainly the fungus has not yet got sufficient root to render all feelings of modesty dead. Still there is little doubt that certain trades in New Zealand could tell an extraordinary story which, while not answering the above quoted summary, would definitely show the effects of its plausible teaching, effects so apparent that they have crept into the everyday knowledge of the whole youth of the colony.

Although this article can do nothing to practically check the evil, it may open the eyes of those who read it to the worthlessness of any justification given in "The Extinction of the Colonial," or for that matter of any general justification whatever for interfering with the most sacred of the laws of nature, a law sacred from the distant time when the stern God of the Israelites first blessed man with the injunction to "be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth and subdue it."

However, to take the summary in order:—(1) Prevention of a too rapid rate of increase. This is the old Malthusian fallacy. Political evils such as the unjust distribution of land and wealth conspire to make it appear true, together with the herding of people to the great centres of population; but to the more observant it is apparent that the world is not overpopulated, and so far as human history is capable of teaching, it is doubtful if Nature's law of natural increase will ever, in the case of man, outgrow Nature's power to provide for what, according to that law, is produced. At any rate in