

# New Zealand Tablet

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## Current Topics.

AT HOME & ABROAD.



IT SEEMS to us that the time has come for the British Government once for all to acknowledge the right of the Irish nation to the control of their own affairs. The time, indeed, when this might have been regarded as a gracious concession has passed, and we regret it; but still it must always be satisfactory to see justice even at length gain the day. England is no longer strong enough to brave in difficult conjunctures the disaffection of Ireland. In case of a European struggle now, all the forces she could muster would be required for other purposes than those of covering a disaffected dependency. Irish disaffection, moreover, would now present a more serious aspect in itself than that shown by it of old, when its chief hopes were grounded upon the aid of a foreign power, that in truth felt no sympathy whatever for the needs of the people it was only willing to help if it suited its own ends to do so. There is now in existence a great organisation, all of whose energies would be bent upon exciting and maintaining discontent in Ireland, and which would be ever on the watch to strike a blow there when the opportunity offered. It is vain to undervalue the gravity of the Fenian movement in America; viewed in the light of a senseless and unsuccessful raid on Canada, it may seem contemptible and stupid; but, taken in connection with such an exploit as that of the fitting out and despatch of the Catalpa expedition, it must be acknowledged to be by no means despicable. A corporation numbering certainly some hundreds of thousands of people that can watch and wait, and all the time act with the closest secrecy, is undoubtedly a most formidable body. It might, indeed, be hoped that the unpopularity of the Russians in Ireland, where their cruelty during the Crimean war is well remembered, and their name detestable because of their oppression of Poland, would be a pledge for the cordial support given by the people to the Government in the case of war, but who shall say it would certainly be so? The oppression of Poland is carried on at a distance from them; the mis-government of England is at their doors. They may hear of bloodshed now in a far off land, but could they be much blamed if they were incapable of realising it as vividly as that of which they have heard from their fathers, and which reddened the soil of their own country? They still suffer themselves from the effects of the harsh laws made in bygone days for the repression of their own land, and which to the present day the Government has shown no due disposition to atone for. We need not now speak of the slaughters and abominations of Elizabeth and Cromwell, let us consult, instead, the list given recently by Lord Dufferin, Governor-General of Canada. His lordship, indeed, begins with Elizabeth, and tells us how by an Act of her reign, Irish cattle were declared a "nuisance" and excluded from England, as were also in succession salt meats and leather, prepared in Ireland. He then goes on, "Irish wool was declared contraband by a Parliament of King Charles II. . . . By an Act of William III. the woollen industry of Ireland was extinguished (in breach of the Treaty of Limerick which the said William had signed), and twenty thousand manufacturers left the island. . . . We next made a dash at the silk business, but the English silk manufacturers proved as pitiless as the wool-staplers. The cotton manufacturer, the sugar refiner, and the soap and candle maker, . . . and any other trade or interest that thought it worth its while to petition, was received by the Parliament with the same partial cordiality, until the most searching scouting failed to detect a single vent through which it was possible for the hated industry of Ireland to respire. But although excluded from the markets of Britain, the hundred harbours of Ireland gave her access to the universal sea. Alas! a rival commerce on her own element was still less welcome to England. As early as the reign of Charles II., though Irishmen fought and bled to procure his return from exile, the Levant, the ports of Europe, and oceans and countries beyond the Cape of Good Hope were forbidden to the flag of Ireland. The colonial trade alone was in any way open, if that could be called an open trade which for a long time precluded all exports whatever, and excluded from direct importation to Ireland such important articles as sugar, cotton, and tobacco. And what has

been the consequence of such a system pursued with relentless pertinacity for two hundred and fifty years? Thus debarred from every other trade and industry, the entire nation flung itself back upon 'the land.' . . . But even here again the difference of race, creed, and class legislation placed the principal interest now left, that of the tiller of the soil, and the man who claims the soil as his property, in positions of relative suspicion and antagonism, until even this last resource fails to yield food and shelter to a people so highly gifted and so industrious, and nothing remains for them to preserve life but to hurry away *en masse* to other lands." The Ireland of to-day presents to her people continually the memory of these wrongs, and unfortunately, likewise, reminds them that the spirit which prompted them has by no means died away. An alliance between Ireland, or between any body of Irishmen, and Russia would be a most unholy alliance. We should very deeply deplore it, and very strongly do we deprecate it. Unless, however, some effectual steps be taken to prevent it, and the most effectual would be the manifestation on the part of the British Government of a disposition to atone for the past by the concession of Home Rule, we can not with truth say that we regard it as impossible.

THERE is a little bit of a weekly in Dunedin called the *Christian Record*. It is a production of the most narrow kind, a mawkish chronicle of sectarian small beer, and thoroughly contemptible even from a literary point of view. We are acquainted with the thing, and occasionally look through its columns to see what may be the line taken by its peculiar twaddle from week to week; and to do these columns justice although we often find them filled with folly, there is not often to be found in them anything decided enough to be mischievous. Whether it be, however, that the visit of Dr. Somerville has revived the editor of this journal of which we speak, so that he has been favoured with an extra conversion and actually overflows with evangelicalism, we know not. We do know that he last week published a leader as distinguished for spite and mischief as it is for stupidity, in which it is, at the same time, quite a match for any of its forerunners. The fact appears to be that the late reception of Sisters into the Order of St. Dominic in Dunedin has caused a wild commotion in certain quarters. Here have these people and their kind been declaring for the last three hundred years that Rome was on the last gasp, but Rome has kept growing all the time, and is now as fresh and vigorous as she ever was. It is a distracting sight, and it certainly appears to have driven our Editor out of his wits, or he never would have tried to breed ill feeling between colonist and colonist, now at a crisis when it may possibly happen that some need may arise for their close union and co-operation. It is a queer time for him to attack the Irish when a period is about to open during which the Irish may be called upon to aid in defending the colony, not only against a foreign enemy, but even against a body of their own fellow countrymen. This is the policy of a fool, but the bigot and the fool go ever hand in hand. He begins his article, then, by reference to the 'Taking the Veil' at St. Joseph's Church, and goes on to speak of the number of Catholics who are now coming to the colony, probably assisted by friends who have taken advantage of the Government regulations, and then he says "It would be well if Protestants showed equal zeal in making use of the same facilities. Otherwise it is evident that at the present rate of increase, Protestants may by-and-by wake up to discover that they are out-numbered by the sworn subjects of the Pope, who have nowhere in the past shown themselves trustworthy supporters of that religious liberty which we prize so highly. Let Protestants, then, take the hint in time. It is lawful to learn even from an enemy." Irish Catholics, then, are the enemies, not of Protestantism, but of Protestants. This is the first time we have heard this fact, and now that we do hear it we do not believe it. It is simply a falsehood. There is, however, another false statement in the paragraph also. The "sworn subjects of the Pope," have shown themselves "trustworthy supporters" of religious liberty. Religious liberty was maintained in the Catholic colony of Maryland, while in Protestant New England no such thing was heard of. Our Editor is here totally at fault. He ought to have known better than this. He then goes on with a lot of rubbish about the zeal with which the views of Catholics have been disse-