

# New Zealand Herald

VOL. XII.—No. 12.

DUNEDIN : FRIDAY, JULY 11, 1884.

PRICE 6D.

## Current Topics

AT HOME AND ABROAD.

**DISASTROUS POLICY.** In France the party of irreligion gains strength daily, an advance is made every day towards an undisguised and virulent persecution of religion.—The recent municipal elections in Paris have resulted in a victory for the intransigents, and thus the body that has driven the Sisters of Charity out of the hospitals, and dismissed thence the chaplains who ministered to the sick and dying has received an increase of intolerance and anti-Catholic hatred. All through the country the expulsion of the religious Orders is being followed up by various harassing measures. An attempt has been commenced and commenced with good effect to starve out the bishops and parish priests,—and churches, and sanctuaries are placed in the care of profane guardians whose delight it is to insult the feelings of religious visitors, or else they are being converted to needless secular uses as an outrage on the popular belief, and in defiance of the popular dissatisfaction.—The chief object of attack, however, is that wherein the most vulnerable point of the nation's religion lies,—the education of the children of the people. The schools are no longer merely the negative hot-beds of atheism; positive atheism is taught there vigorously, and the children of the people are forced to learn the lesson. Fine and imprisonment await, the father or mother who would rescue a child from the pernicious influence. To describe the manuals of so-called moral instruction that are actually used in these schools,—or that have been prepared for use in them at an early season must be a painful task to any Catholic writer. There is nothing more tiresome at any time than to review the works of pedants and shallow ill-instructed professors of a false philosophy but when to do so involves as well the perusal of blasphemy, of insults offered to the most sacred truths and the most holy saints of the Christian religion.—Yes, even to the Saint of Saints himself, to the eternal Father, to Jesus Christ, to the Immaculate Mother of God, the task is not one to be undertaken without the gravest reasons. Suffice it then, to say that all this is to be found put forth by the writers of the manuals in question with the utmost coarseness, illustrated in some instances moreover, by engravings designed to make the truths of religion and the sacred ones in whose lives they were best made known to the Christian Church, the objects of contempt, and ridicule and dislike to the children using these books.—But it may be asked how can these things be since the great body of the French people still continue to believe and profess the Catholic faith? since it is in their power at any moment to overthrow the Government that so abuses the authority committed to it, and to send back into a well-earned obscurity, the evil men who have done all this and who are rapidly preparing to do much that is still worse—and even a good deal worse? Is it not the people's own fault—and do they not deserve to reap the harvest of which they themselves have sown the seeds? It is hard, indeed, to absolve them, and, for our own part, we do not see what excuse can be made for them or how they shall, even in a slight degree, be held guiltless of the great and terrible crime of national apostasy that, without some stupendous miracle worked by Almighty God, must certainly ensue. An excuse, nevertheless, that we have seen urged is that the people have no leaders. The doctrine which we saw so finely condemned the other day in a passage quoted from a speech made by Sir Charles Gavan Duffy some years ago at Wexford—that the priests should not take a part in politics prevails among the French clergy, and, in consequence, it is said, the people have no leaders. We are, however, unwilling to believe that a clergy so wise, so learned, so charitable, so devoted to the cause of God, and to the salvation of the flocks entrusted to them, abstain from interfering in politics without having duly weighed the matter and come to the reasonable conclusion that their interference would do more harm than good. We dismiss as idle and wholly incredible the argument sometimes brought forward—that they are influenced by the pittance, now diminished, they receive as a salary from Government; and we also refuse to believe that among such a clergy there would not be found the martyr spirit, that would bravely meet the persecution and even the bloodshed that would undoubtedly be encountered at their

entrance upon a political struggle as the leaders of their people. But the doctrine that the priest should not interfere in politics—even when politics are so interwoven with religion as to form one and the same question, prevails—for some sufficient reason no doubt—among the clergy of France, and as a consequence the people are without leaders. On the other hand the people have temporal interests—and, as the case is with every other people in the world, their interests appeal to them and influence them strongly. It is in these the atheist and the enemy of religion find the weak point where they can make their mark. The infidel candidate is lavish in promises—all the wants of the district shall be carefully attended to, every saving shall be made, especially all the money needed for local works and undertakings shall be forthcoming—and where the people are very ignorant he can with advantage play on their fears by alluding to some hardship of the past—such, for example, as the *corvées*, or enforced labours on the lands of the lord-of-the-manor that prevailed in days before the Revolution and which are still remembered with horror by the people. These, he insists or some such thing, it would be the object of the Catholic candidate and his friends to introduce once more. But as for the Catholic candidate he can make no fine promises; he can honestly pledge himself only to do his best for the welfare of the constituents who elect him, and he is beaten in the contest. Temporal interests win the day, and thus a Catholic people become the dupes of atheists, and themselves combine to wreck the faith of the nation, and raise up generations of atheists—to prove the curse of France—the curse of Europe, of which France is the heart—and the curse of the world—that answers to the throbbing of Europe's pulse. So, then, France goes on from bad to worse. Her priests take no part in politics—no doubt for sufficient reasons, as we have already said—although we cannot see what those reasons are, or why a different course of action from that long taken with good effect by the clergy of Ireland—and the other day, as we may conclude, taken with success by the clergy of Belgium—should be condemned by the French clergy; the people look to their petty temporal interests, and elect the men who promise or seem able to forward them. The clever, or cunning atheist is successful, and religion perishes.

**BETTER LATE THAN NEVER.** THE speakers at the meeting held in Old Knox Church, Dunedin, on Monday evening, for the purpose of advocating the introduction of the Bible into the schools, are on the whole to be congratulated on the more liberal tone that characterised their speeches. It is at least something gained since it is acknowledged that even a return to denominationalism would be preferable to the total exclusion of religion from the education of children. Experience teaches—but it is not always that its teachings are acted upon, and it is a proof of wisdom that, before things have reached their last extreme, men come forward and even in a modified degree acknowledged that they had been mistaken. They had accepted the secular system as the alternative offered to them, so that they might avoid doing justice to Catholics, but they have already found out that their power of inflicting injustice has been purchased too dear, and they are inclined in a greater or less degree, to relax the terms of their bargain—if it be possible for them. But is it any longer possible for them—for there is the rub? The powers at whose bidding, in truth, the secular system arose, the secret societies of Continental Europe who planned the whole thing, did so with the intention of overthrowing Christianity in all its branches, and of destroying all its roots. They began their attack upon the Catholic Church, and were most violent and most determined in the undertaking they entered into against her, because, not being misled by the silly views and small spiritual conceits of any Protestant sect—they are confident that with the fall of the Church all Protestant Christianity must also topple down. They knew, moreover, that they were sure of the aid of the Protestant sects in their war upon the Church, and that these, blinded by their hatred of Catholicism, would eagerly set their hands to the work by which their own destruction must eventually be carried out. Nor were their calculations in any degree falsified—that is so far as to the ease with which the Protestant sects would be induced to play into their hands by their anti-Catholic prejudices—their plans so far succeeded quite as well as they could have expected, and godless education became popular among people who, nevertheless, themselves passed for being exceedingly godly. Into all the corners of the world the behests of