

New Zealand Gabel

VOL. VII.—No. 350.

DUNEDIN : FRIDAY, JAN. 2, 1880.

PRICE 6D

Current Topics

AT HOME AND ABROAD.

"GODLESS"
SCHOOLS.

"ARGUS," by a letter in last week's *Saturday Advertiser*, takes the Most Rev. Dr. Moran to task for using the term "godless" in connection with the secular schools. This, says he, cannot be just since

the "Royal Reader" contains several passages in which allusion is made to God, the benefits conferred by Him, and the duties men owe to him. But "Argus" is mistaken—the moderate and gentlemanly tone of his letter leads us to conclude he is mistaken only; the contents of the "Royal Reader" cannot be received as a criterion by which to judge of the system in question. The "Royal Reader" is not read in all the schools, it has only been accidentally retained in some of them, and its occasional use here and there determines nothing that bears upon the case. The principle on which secularism is based is the total exclusion of all religious teaching, all mention of the name of God, His attributes, or man's duty towards Him, from the schools; therefore, the secular system is justly to be stigmatised as "godless" and the mere accidental use of certain books, some passages in which infringe both the letter and the spirit of the regulation by which it has been established, cannot at all affect the matter. We have no doubt that Dr. Moran will continue to use the very expressive and most justifiable epithet to which "Argus" has erroneously taken exception.

BELIEVED!

ONCE more we breathe freely! About a week or two ago we fell upon a paragraph in one of our Northern contemporaries that most seriously disturbed our peace of mind. It ran to the effect that in Dunedin men were devoid to a great extent of "wut," and engaged principally in the absorption of oatmeal, the shorter catechism, and whiskey. Now the vulgarity of the oatmeal and whiskey by no means disturbed us; oatmeal is a very excellent aliment, and if it be below their notions in the North, we may attribute the reason of their contempt to a motive akin to that by which the fox was influenced in the well-known fable concerning the "sour grapes." They cannot eat oatmeal because their climate is too hot to permit of their using it. We do not know whether they can drink whiskey or not, but if they find it disagrees with them we will be bound they have provided themselves with a grateful substitute. However, what disturbed us was to find it rumoured about that piety in these parts could not digest its spiritual pabulum without the aid of alcoholic stimulants. We had indeed heard that it had once happened in some English electorate that "Beer and the Bible" had been made the cry upon which the election turned. But still whiskey and the Shorter Catechism appeared to us a most extraordinary combination. Had it been milk and water and the Shorter Catechism, or even vinegar and water, we should have supposed it was quite *en regle*, but whiskey and the Shorter Catechism we felt must be a calumny on our Presbyterian neighbours. And we are glad to find that such proves to be the fact, —not indeed, as we might have expected by the exclusion of the whiskey, but, as we did not at all expect, by that of the "Shorter Catechism."

We find, in short, that Presbyterians in Dunedin know nothing whatever about this Catechism! We ourselves of course knew not a word about it; but we supposed the utterances of Presbyterian doctors amongst us were crammed with its tenets. We judged it by their utterances, and it is needless for us to note what kind of a publication we considered it to be. But, lo and behold! we were mistaken, they did not know a single thing about it, their utterances have been systematically made in defiance of it, and, whatever may be said of the oatmeal and whiskey, it is quite false to assert that the "Shorter Catechism" rules the roost in Dunedin. We have found this out by accident; in the columns of a contemporary we stumbled on the following, and now we know the "Shorter Catechism" is held in the utmost contempt by doctors in Dunedin. Here is the tell-tale quotation:—Q. 76. Which is the ninth commandment?—A. The ninth commandment is, Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.—Q. 77. What is required in the

ninth commandment? A. The ninth commandment requireth th maintaining and promoting of truth between man and man, and of our own and our neighbour's good name, especially in witness bearing. Q. 78. What is forbidden in the ninth commandment? A. The ninth commandment forbiddeth whatsoever is prejudicial to truth, or injurious to our own or our neighbour's good name." Who is there, whom stern duty has compelled to keep himself *au courant* of our doctors' utterances who cannot at once perceive that they know nothing whatever of this catechism? We now repel with scorn the accusation of our northern contemporary; no one in Dunedin cares a straw for the "Shorter Catechism;" it is not to be estimated alongside of our oatmeal and whiskey.

PEASANT
PROPRIETORS.

Now that the question of a peasant proprietorship has become of so great an interest, some lectures delivered several years ago by John Mitchel on "The Land Tenures of Europe," and in which the

subject has been very ably and exhaustively treated, have been exciting attention. They have been republished by the *Dublin Freeman*, and we take the following extracts from them. The lecturer has surveyed the condition of the peasantry throughout Europe and his conclusion is that those of Ireland occupy a position whose wretchedness is not to be equalled elsewhere. He says "Whatever oppressions and privations the people of any nation in Europe may endure, there is nothing like the oppression, plunder, and misery that afflict the country people of Ireland. You have seen that in many of the best-governed States the land, divided into small properties, is in the absolute ownership of the peasantry; and that in other countries custom, strong as law, and the universal recognition of title to live by independent industry on the soil that gave him birth, protect the rights of labour. The form of Government makes no difference in this respect. Under despotisms and in republics, Parliament or no Parliament, constitution or no constitution, you find everwhere that the peasants are either owners of the land they till, or are somehow or other secured a permanency of tenure and a sufficiency of the crops they sow and reap to sustain them. Even unfortunate Poland, with her ancient feudalism corrupted and destroyed, and no new agrarian system established, is no exception to this universal rule. The condition of an Irish 'tenant-at-will' is utterly unintelligible to most civilised Europeans. 'How shall I translate,' says the German Von Raumer, 'how shall I translate tenants-at-will? *Wegjagbare*? Expellable? Serfs? But in the ancient days of vassalage it consisted rather in keeping the vassals attached to the soil, and by no means in driving them away. An ancient vassal is a lord compared with the present tenant-at-will, to whom the law affords no defence. Why not call them *Jaydhare* (chaseable)? But this difference lessens the analogy—that for hares, stags, and deer there is a season during which no one is allowed to hunt them—whereas tenants-at-will are hunted, and may be hunted, all the year round. And if any one should defend his farm (as badgers and foxes are allowed to do), it is here denominated—'rebellion.' Those who have the heart, my friends, can laugh at the whimsical analogy of the witty Prussian; but it is not easy to be amused when we know that those at whose expense he is so merry are our kinsfolk, the very bone of our bone, with whose fortunes are bound up the lives and liberties of ourselves and of our children." The lecturer further concludes that the exterminating landlords of Ireland are a unique race, and that in Ireland only men are adjudged unworthy to subsist on the food raised by them. "Two other facts are plain even upon this cursory and imperfect recital: First, that nowhere in Europe, even in countries far more thickly peopled than Ireland, are to be found the race of consolidators or exterminators; great tracts without people are not accounted desirable anywhere save here—on the contrary, wherever property is most minutely subdivided there are to be seen the richest harvests and the most independent people. Second, that in all countries of Europe, but one, the cultivators of the soil are thought worthy of their bread out of the very crops they themselves raise, instead of having to ransack the globe for cheaper and coarser kinds of food. Yes, you will search the Continent in vain for a nation of men who are strangers, and vagabonds, and beggars in the land of their fathers. To find tillers of the soil oppressed as the Irish are you must pass beyond the limits of