



OF your charity pray for the repose of the soul of the late SISTER MARY ALOYIDS DUNCAN, of the Order of the Sisters of Mercy, who died at the Convent, Geymourth, on Tuesday, August 10, fortified by the rites of Holy Church.—*Requiescat in Pace.*

# The New Zealand Tablet.

FIAT JUSTITIA.

FRIDAY, AUGUST 20, 1897.

## THE MARCH OF THE WOMEN.



THE agitation among women for more independence, which has been so marked a feature in the social history of the last few years of the Victorian era, has extended to New Zealand and the new woman—we use the expression in its best sense—has now established a firm footing amongst us. Miss E. R. BENJAMIN, LL.B., the first woman lawyer in the Australasian colonies, who received her diploma at the recent graduation ceremony in Dunedin, made a statement as to the number of callings now followed by women in New Zealand which must have come as a surprise to most of her hearers. In returning thanks on behalf of the new graduates Miss BENJAMIN said:—"On an occasion like the present it will not, I think, be out of place for me to say a few words touching the advancement of our women, and the opening to them of the doors of professions hitherto kept fast locked against them. Last year our first lady doctor, Dr. EMILIA SILDEBERG, graduated from our university, and this year Dr. MARGARITA B. CRICKSHANK has not only taken her degree in medicine but has actually commenced practising in conjunction with Dr. BARTLEY, of Waimate. There are now few professions or occupations that have not been invaded by our women. New Zealand has her lady butcher, her lady commercial travellers, her lady auctioneer, her lady opticians, her lady dentists, her lady watchmakers, even her lady blacksmiths. Time does not permit me to further enumerate the occupations which are now taken up by our women, and in which until quite recently they were unknown." Miss BENJAMIN then discusses the question of the desirableness of this encroachment, and boldly nails her "woman's rights" colours to the mast. "Is it well," she asks, "that women should make such an inroad into the fields of labour? In my humble opinion, undoubtedly it is well. What does ISAAC ZANGWILL say on the subject? He says: 'The woman of the future is simply the working woman. All we really want is to make girls economically independent of marriage—able to choose their mates from love instead of selling themselves for a home.' Formerly women were compelled to marry that they might not have lived in vain. How dreaded was the thought of 'being on the shelf,' and for how many unhappy marriages has this same dread been responsible! But now women's lives are becoming fuller, freer. They have at last come forward and claimed their right to work as and how they will. The struggle for their rights is not yet ended. It is growing keener and keener day by day and year by year. For centuries women have submitted to the old unjust order of things, but at last they have rebelled, and as SARAH GRAND has it: "It is the rebels who extend the boundary of right; little by little, narrowing the confines of wrong and crowding it out of existence."

The question as to whether "it is well that women should make such an inroad into the fields of labour," or not, is a big question and an important one. So far as the right of women to work is concerned we do not see how it

can be fairly or reasonably questioned. Women are free human beings, and as such they have, generally speaking, a perfect right to work "as and how they will." Until the State is prepared to provide a living allowance for all single women it must be admitted that women have as good a right to work themselves to death as men have. But while recognising in women the fullest right to work we do not in the least admit the wisdom or expedience of their doing so. We are sure it would be a good thing if women could be relieved of all hard work, and indeed of any work at all outside their own homes. Unfortunately this is impossible until all the single women and widows are supported directly by the State. For some women, therefore, work is absolutely necessary, but it does not cease to be an evil because it is a necessary evil. Miss BENJAMIN and the leaders of the new woman movement appear to maintain that work for women is good; we hold that in some cases it is unavoidable but that it is not good. It is objectionable in the first place on economic grounds. Women workers are much more pliable to the demands of the employer, and they have invariably to work for low wages. The first effect, therefore, of women's labour is to send down men's wages—that is, in effect, to lower the standard of living in every workman's home throughout the country. If the women did not thus enter as competitors in the labour market their share of the wages would be easily earned by the men, and in most trades, moreover, the work would be better done. In the second place, work for women is undesirable on social or domestic grounds. The natural position of woman is to depend on man, and to sweeten his life and make him happier in return for the home and livelihood which he provides. The boon of economic independence operates in the direction of seriously disturbing, if not of actually overthrowing, this natural relation of the sexes to each other. Moreover, close observers aver that women detest involuntary and regular labour, and that it has a souring and depressing effect upon them. If that be so it must tend to reduce their capacity for being good sisters and daughters and wives and mothers. Finally, the encroachment of women in the field of labour is objectionable on hygienic grounds and in the best interests of the race. They are not fitted to bear the physical strain of involuntary and severe labour, and it is certain that they are healthier and happier when free from it. Medical science, which regards the sex almost entirely from the point of view of motherhood, declares that the strain and excitements which women are now heaping upon their lives, will, before long, very seriously impair both their own health and that of their future children. We hold, therefore, that though work for women is in some cases a necessity, it is a painful and injurious necessity, and one which should not be commended and encouraged. In a proper state of society women would not be compelled to either work or starve, and we contend that those who praise and encourage work for women are helping to keep back the day when that finer state of society shall be evolved.

ON Sunday last the Feast of the Assumption, Pontifical High Mass was celebrated at St. Joseph's Cathedral at 11 a.m. His Lordship the Bishop was celebrant; the Rev. Father Ryan, deacon; and Rev. Father Murphy, sub-deacon. Rev. Father Ryan occupied the pulpit, and preached on the text "Mary hath chosen the better part, taken from the Gospel for the day. The music for the occasion was Gounod's *Missa Solenne* which was well rendered by the choir, the solos being taken by Misses R. Blaney (soprano), Drummond (contralto), Messrs. Carolu (tenor) and Feil (bass). After the Mass His Lordship the Bishop gave the Papal blessing.

DURING the week we have received packages of stamps for Father Krymborg's mission at Tokaanu from *Enfant de Marie*, Timakori Road, Wellington, and from M. C. Alexandria.

WE publish in another column the list of winning numbers in the Christchurch Record Reign Historical Carnival. We are pleased to learn that the undertaking was an unqualified success in every way.

WE learn from a Blenheim correspondent that Mr. Charles O'Sullivan, who has been chairman of one of the local boards for some years, has been appointed a Justice of the Peace. Our correspondent adds that the appointment is very popular in Blenheim.

AT St. Patrick's church, Masterton, on Sunday, August 8, the Rev. J. McKenna announced that Archbishop Redwood had sanctioned the proposal to establish a convent at Masterton. He (Father McKenna) proposed proceeding to Australia at an early date to procure the

COMPARE SIZE AND WEIGHT OF STICKS.

Smoke T. C. Williams' JUNO. Smoke