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Current Topics

AT HOME AND ABROAD.

TO ALL OUR FRIENDS.

WE beg to direct the attention of all our friends to that portion of the Lenten Pastoral of the Bishop of Dunedin, which refers to the claims of the N.Z. TABLET on the support of the Catholic body. The

TABLET was started in order "to supply good reading matter to all the Catholics of the Colony, and to defend Catholic principles and Catholic interests generally." While disclaiming either any merit or special ability, we shall labour to make this paper worthy of its high purpose. It is our intention to introduce into our columns from time to time, and as far as circumstances will permit, features of interest which will not fail to make the N.Z. TABLET more acceptable to our readers. Some of the improvements which we contemplate involve the engagement of fresh literary talent, and, therefore, an increased and steadily maintained outlay. This, however, we could not venture upon without a considerable increase in our list of subscribers. We therefore turn with confidence to our friends in every part of the Colony for that practical aid—in the shape of fresh subscribers—which will enable us to make the N.Z. TABLET more and more worthy of the progress which the Church has made in our midst, and more and more welcome in every Catholic home in the land.

THE IRISH UNIVERSITY.

DR. O'DWYER, Bishop of Limerick, may be looked upon as an expert in all that relates to the now burning question of providing a proper university for the sons of Irish Catholics. In one of his recent

utterances he showed that the worst sufferers by the present grievance were not the clergy, but the laity, whose sons were practically excluded from the higher education. "Catholics," said Dr. O'Dwyer, "have practically no university to which to send their sons, unless they are prepared to risk their faith in exchange for knowledge." He pointed out that even Mr. Balfour, Mr. Morley, and the Members of Parliament for Trinity College are in favour of the Catholic demand, and called upon the Government to formulate a scheme without delay. That influential organ, the London *Spectator*, says thereon:—

"We are for once entirely at one with Dr. O'Dwyer. We hold most strongly that the Irish Roman Catholics should be given, not what Protestants consider an ideal, or even a fair, university, but the kind of university which the Catholics themselves want, and what they quite sincerely say is the university they can make use of. We also agree most heartily with Dr. O'Dwyer that to postpone the settlement of this subject any longer will be a scandal and an injustice."

MORE WOMAN'S RIGHTS.

WOMAN'S rights have broken out in a fresh place. The question of her right to vote at parish meetings was thrashed out with considerable earnestness at the Anglican Synod in Christchurch. Sir John Hall's measure to give lovely woman the parochial franchise was defeated by the narrow majority of three in a total of 47 votes. Some people may find a significance in the fact that a strong majority of the bishops and clergy voted against the motion, and a big majority of the lay representatives in its favour. The matter is sure to come to the surface again. In the meantime, it brings up the anomalous position of women with regard to Church work among Anglicans and Dissenters. The Catholic Church, with its multitude of Orders and Sisterhoods, affords scope for utilising woman's aid in works of charity and general usefulness, to an extent unknown outside her pale. Till quite recently, our pious Anglican lady friends and their female cousins and their sisters and their aunts had little or no scope for religious effort beyond the limited field offered them by house-to-house visiting and Sunday school teaching. Woman's work in continuing the Anglican Church as by

law established, is by no means proportioned to the share she had in originating it. Anna Boleyn took a leading, though indirect, part in laying its foundations. Yet another—Queen Elizabeth—decided its theological form and shaped its destiny. Three women—to wit, Queen Elizabeth aforesaid, Queen Anne, and Queen Victoria—have been its governors and heads on earth, its final courts of appeal, the centre and fount of all its authority both in spirituals and in temporals. And in the days to come, yet other queens of England may hold the like relation towards the Established Church.

There is, perhaps, in the matter under consideration somewhat more of consistency among the expiring Shakers. The unlettered daughter of an illiterate blacksmith, Lee—(address: Toad Lane, Manchester)—was the prophetess and foundress of this strangest of strange Christian sects. She was also very appropriately its first visible head—a sort of Protestant counterpart of the fabled Pope Joan. And ever since the days of "Mother Anne" the succession has been a female one. There is no Salic law among the celibate and communistic Shaker communities in New England. It seems eminently fair that woman should rule what woman has made.

Outside the Shaker creed, the undivided skirt shows as marked an inclination to invade the Protestant pulpit as it does to trench upon other hitherto exclusively male occupations of merely human growth. St. Paul—writing of public preaching—said: "Let woman keep silence in the churches" (I. Cor. xiv, 34); his disciple, St. Timothy, echoed his words (I. Tim. ii, 8); and their instruction has—ever since the days of Pope St. Soter (A.D. 175-182)—entered into the flesh and bone of the ecclesiastical discipline of all the ages. Some crusty old cynic has said that "all women are good—good for something or good for nothing." The minor Protestant sects appear to be firm believers in their capacity for preaching—despite the apostolical discipline. The practice of the Salvation Army is well known. But even the "Army" has ventured on a new departure. According to the *Westminster Budget*, Mrs. Ballington Booth was recently "ordained" in the United States. If a female "chairman" and "vestryman," why not also a lady "clergyman?" According to the *Westminster Budget*, the interesting ceremony was performed by a small Parliament of Religions, consisting of Rev. Dr. MacArthur (Baptist), Rev. Dr. Bradford (Congregationalist), Rev. Dr. Gregg (Presbyterian), Rev. Dr. Josiah Strong (Evangelical). The reverend functionaries appointed Rev. Mrs. Booth "minister of the Church of God in general," and imparted to her "the power of performing ministerial functions," including the administration of the sacraments and the marriage ceremony.

The same authority tells us that there is quite a little army of "women regularly ordained as ministers" in that "fruitful mother of sects," the United States. Thus, the Church of the Disciples has 46; the Universalists 40; the Free Will Baptists 38; the Unitarians 24; the Congregationalists 23; the United Brethren 21; and other minor sects in proportion. A Mrs. Solomons is said to have recently officiated as Rabbi at the Sinai Temple, Chicago. "If England were America," says the *Budget*, "we should be looking forward in the near future to hearing a woman from the pulpit of St. Paul's." After all, the idea of women ministers is not a very novel one. The nominally Christian sect of the Collyridians, long centuries ago, had their "women regularly ordained as ministers." Is there not in them, and in their later imitators, and in the whole horde of spirit-mediums and fortune-tellers of our day, a strong *souçon* of the pagan priestesses of the olden time?

ONLY BONE-DUST.

ANOTHER historic doubt has been cleared away. Rousseau and Voltaire are buried in the vaults of the Pantheon, Paris, after all. The dust-grimed coffins of Ingersoll's patron saints were neither empty, nor filled with tailors' dummies, nor yet with sand or lead. They were officially opened just before Christmas, in the presence of