

NOTICE.

All communications connected with the Commercial Department of the N.Z. TABLET Newspaper are to be addressed to John Murray, Secretary, to whom also Post Office Orders and Cheques are in all instances to be made payable.

All communications connected with the literary department, reports, correspondence, newspaper cuttings, etc., should be addressed to the Editor.

Correspondents are particularly requested to bear in mind that to insure publication in any particular issue of the paper communications must reach this Office not later than Tuesday morning.

Correspondents forwarding obituary and marriage notices are particularly requested to be as concise as possible.

Annual Subscription, 25s booked; 22s 6d if paid in advance; shorter periods at *pr* portionate rates.

MARRIAGES.

GRAVE—MCQUIN.—On the 11th May, 1898, at St. Joseph's Cathedral, Dunedin, by the Rev. Dean Mackay, James Burton Eustace Grave to Katherina McQuin.

ROWE—BAKER-GABB.—On May 9th, 1898, at the Pro-Cathedral, Christchurch, by the Very Rev. Father Le Menant des Chesnais, S.M., Vicar-General, John Henry Rowe, Bank of New South Wales, Inglewood, to Mary Alice Baker-Gabb, of Wellington.

The New Zealand Tablet.

FIAT JUSTITIA.

FRIDAY, JUNE 17, 1898.

SOME FRIENDS OF 'RELIGIOUS LIBERTY.'



THE last hundred years have witnessed many a momentous change in the fortunes of Ireland. The Union, the famine, Disestablishment, the land laws, will ever count among the big landmarks of the century's history. These were the upheavals. They stand like hills above the plain. But through all the century's shifting change there has been the steady grind of minor forces that have also gone to shape the national history and character. One of the most curious of these is that which has transformed public life and the relations of the creeds in Belfast. The change, though slowly wrought, has all the violent character of a volcanic upheaval. In 1798, Belfast Protestants—men of education and high position—were the leaders in a movement to free their native land. The rank and file of their followers were mainly Protestants, too, and there existed between them and the Catholic body a spirit of generous friendliness which was not surpassed, if it was equaled, by any city in Ireland. Nowadays the Catholic minority receive the barest toleration in Belfast. Liberal-minded Protestants are hounded down. Year after year—in each recurring July—an actual or potential state of civil war exists in the capital of Ulster. Only a few days ago the descendants of the men who stood in friendship side by side in 1798, assembled for a legal and peaceful celebration of the centenary which has been held by Protestant and Catholic alike all over the world. They and the forces of the Crown were furiously attacked by the Orangemen. Houses were wrecked and looted by the 'sons of William,' and there was a renewal of all the crime and bloodshed which—with other unpleasant features—have made the history of Belfast the shame of Ulster and the grief of Ireland.

The woful change which poisons every relation of social and public life in Belfast has been wrought by the strangest association of modern times—the Orange Society. It was founded in blood in 1795. Two years later it sought to cover over its early crimes with a cloak of religion; but, as the Irish Presbyterian writer Dr. KILLEN says, it was 'a disgrace to Protestantism,' and its principles and practices are alike detested by every fair-minded non-Catholic that knows them. The Society is a secret, oath-bound one, with no fewer than nine rings within rings in its dark con-

venticles. Before the sunlit world its members pose as champions of religious liberty. Yet they fiercely opposed the repeal of the Corporation and the Test Act (1828), precisely because such repeal would admit Protestant Dissenters to a few of the natural rights of Freemen. The fundamental principle of the society—the perpetual ascendancy of one creed—demanded that the worst features of the penal laws should be kept in force against both Catholics and Protestant Dissenters till the end of time. The constitutional agitation in favour of Catholic Emancipation kept the armed lodges for years in such a state of uproar, lawlessness, and rebellion, that they were suppressed by Act of Parliament in 1825. The passing of the Emancipation Bill, says the Presbyterian historian Dr. KILLEN, drove the resuscitated lodges 'almost to madness'; an English Protestant historian, Rev. Mr. MOLESWORTH, says it made them 'absolutely furious.' The same spirit exists to this hour. One of the accredited organs of the Society, the *Victorian Standard* (May, 1893), editorially termed the Emancipation Act a 'fatal error.' Every Orangeman, on his initiation, swears that he will never, in any circumstances, vote for a Catholic either at Parliamentary or Municipal elections. In Victoria and elsewhere the Society's programme openly and notoriously includes the banishing of Catholics from the Public service. In Belfast, Catholics—who form 26.3 per cent of the population—were excluded from every office of honour and emolument in the gift of public bodies. This public and notorious scandal was—in the face of violent opposition from the lodges—to some small extent forcibly remedied at last by the Belfast Corporation Act of 1896. In plain set terms: Belfast Catholics were, until a year and a half ago—and are to some extent even still—systematically and deliberately deprived of some of the chief benefits of the Emancipation Act of 1829.

This is the strange Society which has altered the relations between Protestant and Catholic in Belfast—and not in Belfast alone, but in every part of Ulster that is ridden by the lodges. Those portions of that distracted province are the only parts of Ireland where sectarian riots are chronic; where violence, bloodshed, and pillage are visited upon the members of a religious denomination that are in the minority; where great forces of military and police are annually drafted to keep the peace—at enormous cost to the ratepayers—and where Royal Commissions have sat to inquire into sectarian strife. Belfast—the capital of Orangism—holds the unenviable notoriety of being the chiefest and the worst seat of such disorders in Ireland. A perusal of the Reports of Royal Commissions, of the Irish Executive, of the Parliamentary Reports (1835-6), and of debates in the House of Commons, will lay the blame at the right door. The Parliamentary Committee's Report of 1835 states that 'the obvious tendency and effect of the Orange Society is: to excite one portion of the people against the other, to increase the rancour and animosity too often, unfortunately, existing between different religious persuasions . . . to excite to breaches of the peace and to bloodshed.' The Royal Commissioners of 1857 stated that the Society leads to 'violence, outrage, religious animosities, hatred between classes, and too often bloodshed and loss of life.' No one who knows the history of Belfast and of the Orange Society needs to be told this. It is a bitter misfortune that such an association has taken root upon our shores: worse still, that it is petted by vice-royalty. It is not as yet strong enough to stand up, as in Ulster and Canada, in bold defiance of right and law and order. Those who love Christian peace will hope that it never may be. We have before us not alone the melancholy story of North-East Ulster. There also stand close to our door the warning spectacle of lodge-ridden Melbourne, and, across the Pacific, the blood-orgies that stained the history of Canada from 1871 to 1878. We may well pray, with the Church, for 'peace in our days.'

DUNEDIN AND DISTRICT.

ON Friday, June 17, the annual concert in aid of St. Vincent de Paul Society will be held in the City Hall. It is entirely needless for us to say anything in favour of this Society. It has now been in existence for many years, and although the funds at its disposal have been exceedingly limited, it has carried on a noble work in relieving the necessities of the poor. Apart altogether, however, from the laudable object for which the entertainment has been pro-