

of all there probably lay a not unnatural unwillingness on the part of the great mass of the electors to discard in a period of high prosperity the leaders who, they were convinced, had a considerable share in bringing the Colony through a period of waiting, if not of anxiety, to its present flourishing condition. These are, however, matters that little concern our present purpose. We wish to point out and mark our strong condemnation of the wholesale use of the element of personal abuse by one of the parties to the contest. If followed up, such a campaigning method would undoubtedly soon impair the decency of public life in our Colony, turn election contests into squalid personal squabbles of party leaders, restore the era of fierce lampoons, and lower the dignity and diminish the usefulness of our legislative institution.

Invective—even personal invective—has its legitimate place and use. But it is rather a rotten stick to depend upon almost exclusively in an election campaign. It is, perhaps, the misfortune of the Opposition that some of its chief standard-bearers have proved themselves adepts rather in hard and biting invective and destructive criticism than in the higher art of constructive ability which distinguishes the statesman from the mere politician. As a result, their party committed the grave error of coming before the country without even a decent pretence of a policy. The situation found apt expression a few days ago in a conundrum given at an entertainment down south: 'Why cannot Mr. SCOBIE MACKENZIE get his life insured?' The answer came prompt and pat: 'Because nobody can make out his policy.' Instead, the Opposition and its organs fell back upon personal abuse of the Premier, who, whatever his shortcomings—and we are not concerned to defend them—had at least a broad and definite and far-reaching policy to place full square before the public eye. Now, a good, bulky administrative scandal is acknowledged to be a valuable electioneering asset, when it is a scandal, and when it is fresh and timely, and when the party who have the usufruct of it have something else—a policy, for instance—with which to woo the affections of the free and independent voter. But when an administrative 'scandal' 'ain't no sich a thing'—as Mrs. GAMP might say—or when, even if genuine, it is of ancient date—and events move swiftly nowadays—or when it is such as is usual with all parties in power, that portion of the voters whose political feelings are more or less in a state of flux, and who decide the fate of elections, resent harping upon it, just as the hale good sense and propriety of our day abhors a resort of the old electioneering argument of cats that are 'high' and eggs that are addled. We are not so squeamish as to believe in the principle of doffing our hats to real abuses or treating them with kid gloves and honeyed words. On the contrary, we hold by describing them with what KIPLING terms 'adequate adjectives.' But it is quite another thing to run an election contest not on a set political programme, but chiefly or altogether on personal abuse of opponents. People get very sick even of the ill-used termagant whose tongue volleys abuse as a Maxim gun does bullets. Sir PAUL NEAL fancied he had discovered an elephant in the moon. It turned out to be only a dead mouse in his telescope. And the public of New Zealand are not likely to soon forget that the only two serious personal charges against the Premier—one of them the disgraceful 'Bun Tuck' affair—were 'discoveries' of a similar kind. They were pushed with singular persistence and acrimony, but in the end recoiled upon the accusers. Like the *Times* charges against the late Mr. PARNELL, such things only result in placing the intended victim upon a higher pedestal of public esteem. As to the charges of maladministration of marine affairs and of the police force, Mr. TAYLOR himself has said in the course of an interview at Christchurch that 'the official Opposition could not lodge any complaint [on these matters] without laying themselves open to have committed similar offences.' We hold no brief for Mr. SEDDON. But we have a firm conviction, strengthened by an exchange of views with many people of various political parties, that the tornado of personal abuse which was intended to sweep the Ministry out of power has acted as one of the most efficient forces in establishing them more firmly than ever. A measure of decent and dignified personal reference is an unhappy necessity of every electoral campaign. But this wholesale resort to mere abuse is as

objectionable in its way as vitriol throwing. Our dislike to it lies not merely on the score of political expediency. We object to it on the higher ground of political morality. It embitters feeling at election times; it exasperates temper; it strains the personal relations of both the leaders and rank and file of parties in and out of the House, and thus directly or indirectly interferes with the course of legislation; and it makes possible those undignified and disorderly scenes for which some of the colonial parliaments have acquired an unpleasantly conspicuous notoriety.

The return of three Government candidates at Dunedin formed, perhaps, the biggest surprise furnished by the ballot-boxes. It also supplied a signal proof that political abuse is, like the boomerang, a dangerous weapon that may come whirling back and wound its thrower. No attempt was made by their clerical, nor, so far as we know, by their lay, leaders, to organise or direct the numerically strong Catholic vote that exists in the Dunedin and Caversham electorates. The Catholic electors were left to follow in peace their individual preferences. The Opposition organ, the *Otago Daily Times*, was not satisfied with this. In his onslaught on the anonymous scurrilities of the *Globe* in 1836, DISRAELI said: 'An anonymous writer should at least display power; but we can only view with contemptuous levity the mischievous varlet who pelts us with mud as we are riding along, and then hides behind a dust-bin.' The *Otago Daily Times* opened its columns day after day to anonymous varlets of this kind. They penned venomous and malicious attacks on the Catholic body in its relations with the Public Service. 'Civis'—a member of the staff—was another of the effete literary varlets who pelted us and our bishops with political mud from behind the dust-bin of anonymity. Catholic and Protestant alike promptly recognised the intended purpose of this new departure in mud-slinging. Its plain intent was to benefit a party by arousing the demon of sectarian distrust and hate. The *Otago Daily Times* mistook its public. The attempt signally failed—and it is just such failures that add to the happiness of human existence. The exasperation produced upon the minds of Catholics by the cowardly attacks of 'Civis' and of 'JENNY GEDDES' (ominous pen-name!), and the rest did more to solidify the Catholic vote and bring it to the poll than could have been effected by six months of unwearied and searching organisation. Political causes which we need not specify here, would, in all probability, have led to the loss of one seat by the Opposition in Dunedin. But the Opposition representation was completely annihilated. And its annihilation is due to the *Otago Daily Times*. In the TABLET of November 23, we wrote: 'Whatever the final issue of the elections, some of the tactics of the *Otago Daily Times* will result in casting many a vote in favour of Mr. SEDDON; and 'Civis,' with his clumsy innuendos, could do no worse service to any cause than to be its advocate.' We thought so then. We know it now.

NOTICE TO CORRESPONDENTS.

In consequence of the Christmas holidays (December 25 and 26) all letters for insertion in our issue of December 28 should reach this office not later than Saturday morning, December 23. Only the briefest items coming to hand on Wednesday morning can be inserted.

Since the death of the late Mr. T. M. Wilkinson, the old-established chemists' business, Princes, street, Dunedin, has been carried on by his son, Mr. R. Wilkinson. All prescriptions and recipes are dispensed with care from the purest drugs and chemicals, orders by post receiving special attention. Messrs. Wilkinson and Son have a very fine stock of goods suitable for Christmas presents, comprising perfumery, hair brushes, toilet soaps, sachets, etc.—*.*

Now that the season of Christmas is at hand many of our readers are thinking of purchasing cards to send to friends, and the question naturally arises where to get the best assorted and most up-to-date selection, and that too at a moderate cost. Mr. E. W. Dunne, the well-known Catholic bookseller, of George street, Dunedin, informs the public that he can satisfy their requirements in this direction. Not alone is his establishment replete with the choicest collection of Christmas and New Year cards, but he has a very fine stock of prize books, albums, purses, gifts suitable for the season, and novelties of all kinds. His new supplies of Catholic prayer books, and Catholic requisites are unsurpassed in the Colony, and are well worth inspection. Persons about to purchase Christmas gifts would be consulting their own interests by visiting Mr. Dunne's establishment before buying elsewhere.—*.*

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