

# New Zealand Herald

NINETEENTH YEAR OF PUBLICATION.

VOL. XIX.—No. 13.

DUNEDIN: FRIDAY, DECEMBER 26, 1891.

PRICE 6D.

## Current Topics

AT HOME AND ABROAD.

WE do not know what may be the full meaning or **IMPORTANT**, the full mind of Mr. J. L. Gillies, Chairman of **THOUGH RATHER** the Union Street School Committee, Dunedin, but, **HAZY**, in presiding at the breaking-up ceremony of the school the other day, he spoke at least a word or two that reads like common sense. Mr. Gillies, for example, condemned the Bible-in-schools folk, though not exactly in so many words, as a lot of humbugs, whose sincerity was doubtful, and who were doing more harm than good by the fuss they made. Mr. Gillies, however, holds very heretical notions as to the education of the period which, according to an authority quoted by him, is not only ineffectual in itself, but calculated also to produce deleterious effects. Its fruits are "Musicians who cannot play, and artists who cannot draw; linguists who are ignorant of their own language, and can read and write no other; a taste for the meretricious in art, the chimerical in science, and the sensational in literature; a constant yearning after luxury and pleasure, and a cowardly shrinking from self-denial and pain; in short, an abandonment of the old paths trodden by the great and good for new ways that only lead into cloud-land and confusion."—Mr. Gillies, in fact, would have education made religious, although he does not adopt the present platform of the Bible-in-schools party. "The mere reading of the Bible in the schools," he says, "will not supply the religious education that is necessary to turn out good men and true, according to my estimation."—Mr. Gillies, nevertheless, though he shows some common sense in dealing with the defects of the system, does not seem to us very clear in his notions as to how they are to be amended. His ideas are certainly hazy as to Christian teachers to whom he would assign the task of maintaining for the children a healthy religious atmosphere where their hearts and souls would receive true Christian teaching, and to whom he would still forbid theological teaching. "The less of that," he says, "perhaps the better, especially the human or man-made side of it."—But to teach religion without the aid of theology might seem a requirement somewhat of the nature of that traditional one of making bricks without straw.—The Christian religion, it will be admitted by all who believe in it, is founded on Divine revelation, and what is theology unless the explanation of what that revelation contains? That the explanation is given by means of men, moreover, seems but consistent since, in fact, the revelation itself was so made. We really do not see how Mr. Gillies is to escape from theology of one kind or another, supposing Christian teaching or influence to be brought in any way to bear. It is, however, the especial penalty of private interpretation, on which Mr. Gillies seems in an extreme measure to rely, that, while it makes us boast of avoiding what Mr. Gillies calls the human or man-made side of theology, it depends upon that side to the full extent possible, bringing it into play in an unauthorised, incapable, and uninstructed form—with the necessary results. So much, however, it is important to note, that Mr. Gillies, the chairman of a school committee, testifies to the inefficiency of the secular system, and pronounces strongly in favour of a religious education.

**AN**  
**ABOMINABLE**  
**LIE.**

OUR heading is a strong one, but it is not stronger than the circumstances warrant. A correspondent has sent us a paragraph containing a story of sensational horror that has been going the rounds of the Press regarding a convent known as that of the Sepolte Vive, or Buried Alive, at Naples. It is alleged in the paragraph that, in consequence of complaints made by the parents of a young girl who had been placed by them in the convent alluded to, on account of a love affair which was objectionable to them, the Minister of Justice ordered the convent to be opened, and that when the order was obeyed sixteen nuns were found in a condition hardly human,—half-starved, more than half-insane, filthy, and, in some instances, having lost the use of their tongues. Now it is quite true

that the convent in question was eaten, by force—as was also another convent known as that of the Trente Cappucine, or Thirty-three Capuchin Nuns. It is, however, false that the motive was complaints made by the parents of a young girl who had been incarcerated there. The motive, as explained by a prominent Neapolitan clergyman, the Rev. P. Clemente M. Piscitelli, a Barnabite Father, and rector of the Church of Santa Maria di Caravaggio, at Naples, in a letter to the *Liverpool Catholic Times*, was that the promoters of irreligion in the city might "show once more their hatred against religion and politically reanimate their party in Naples for the next election." The nuns were subjected to insult and to violence, the veil being torn by the Prefect himself from the head of one of them. Two of them, also, ladies of advanced age, who were confined to bed by illness, were obliged to rise and come forward for examination. The motives and discoveries alleged are false then, but the outrage and violence are true. Nor is it true, as alleged, that the convent is known as that of the Sepolte Vive, or Buried Alive, because the nuns on entering it have the burial service read over them. It is so called because the nuns who enter there are said, in a phrase by no means uncommon, to be dead to the world. They are, besides, for the most part the members of families of high position, who could not be ill-treated with impunity. The Catholic papers have published a full and complete contradiction of the calumnies. But especially the *Liverpool Catholic Times*, in reply to the *London Daily Chronicle* has published the letter from Father Piscitelli to which we have referred, and the *Daily Chronicle* admits that the report was "highly exaggerated." The *Liverpool Times* further publishes the following letter received by it from another Neapolitan correspondent, Professor Ettore de Angelis:—"The report enclosed in your letter is true as to the violent visit to the nunnery of the Buried Alive; is false, thoroughly false, as to the 'shocking discoveries.' What are these discoveries? Every Italian man knew the statutes of that community. Where are these shocking discoveries? All that is said in the report of the sixteen nuns found within a state bordering on insanity is a black, abominable calumny. So is what is added of their clothes, of their demeanour, and what is seriously said, and is yet so unlikely, of their having, many of them, forgotten how to speak. On the contrary, Father Mascia, Ecclesiastical Superior of that hermitage, is witness of the fact that all the authorities present wondered at seeing the robust health of the nuns."—We have, meantime, merely another instance of the virtual alliance existing between Continental atheists and English Protestants.—Hatred against all aspects of Christianity was the motive of the attack on the convent, and hatred of Catholicism obtained for it the support of the English non-Catholic Press. And yet it might have been thought that, of itself alone, the reputation of Cardinal San Felice, the Archbishop of Naples, under whose control the convents in question are, would have been sufficient to ensure more consideration on the part of English editors and journalists generally. A prelate who, when the call comes, as it came to Cardinal San Felice a few years ago during the time the cholera raged in the city, is found ready for deeds of self-sacrifice and devotion amounting to heroism, is not one in cold blood, to sanction such atrocious horrors as those lyingly reported of the Sepolte Vive. Cardinal San Felice, in fact, has publicly protested against the outrage that has been committed, and, in case justice is sought in vain by him from the earthly authorities, he solemnly makes his appeal to Almighty God. On the part of the nuns, however, the case will be brought into court and then the truth will be made undeniable. Is it too much to expect that colonial editors who have reproduced and identified themselves with the abominable lie will have the common honesty to reproduce its refutation?

THIS week, on the day we go to press, terminates **A WORD OR TWO** the 15th year during which the literary department **FOR OURSELVES** of the **NEW ZEALAND TABLET** has undergone no **AND FOR SOME** alteration in its personnel. We do not care to blow **BODY ELSE** our own trumpet too loudly, but still we may venture **BESIDES**, to speak a word or two by way of reminder to our readers. We do not by any means claim to have attained at any time to perfection. We are, in fact, conscious of