

# The New Zealand Tablet.

FIAT JUSTITIA.

FRIDAY, APRIL 22, 1892.

## PROGRESS AND JUSTICE IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.

THE Catholics of New Zealand provide, at their own sole expense, an excellent education for their own children. Yet such is the sense of justice and policy in the New Zealand Legislature that it compels these Catholics, after having manfully provided for their own children, to contribute largely towards the free and godless education of other people's children!!! This is tyranny, oppression, and plunder.

### A N O T H E R V I E W.



THE invention of printing was certainly a great advantage, and the man must indeed be possessed of no small stock of temerity who should question the merits of a free Press. We should not think of making such a venture, and if we did, we know we should be assigned a place in enlightened minds by the side of Torquemada and other worthies who occupy there the niche vacated by the defunct Beelzebub. Still it really would appear as if the invention of printing and the freedom of the Press were not altogether without another aspect. A demoralising literature, for example, carrying out the principles of a godless education, we are told, is showing its effects in the marked deterioration notable at present in the rising generation of Paris. A special instance is mentioned in which the perusal of a tale written by M. GABORIAU so inspired one susceptible youth with the desire of out-witting the police that he immediately entered on a criminal career—but not with the happy results he had promised himself. All the passions, in short, are thus excited and the consequence is a grave increase in the evil reputation of a city, that, as things were, neither had nor deserved to have a very good name.

But take that preface to M. Renan's new work to which we have also alluded elsewhere. What must necessarily be the effect produced by it on people who look upon the author as all that is *spirituel*, learned, and philosophical? In the middle ages, he tells his readers, men were consistent. They regarded their sufferings here below as a necessary condition of their full recompense—the reward to be attained in heaven. With the brute creation, he says, it was different. They received their recompense here. "The lion whose services St ANTHONY retained to bury St PAUL worked with astonishing vigour to dig the grave. As a reward St ANTHONY gave him his blessing, the result of which was that the lion immediately encountered a sheep, of which he made a meal. This was very fair to the lion, but was justice done to the sheep? Clearly not." "We fear," adds the writer, "that in the organisation of the world there is no trace of justice for the sheep."—We are now all a brute creation—none of us one whit better in the end than the beasts that perish. But possibly it may depend upon ourselves whether we shall figure among the lions or the sheep.

Does any one really suppose—we do not say any one in his senses, because it appears to us that the necessary degree of lunacy is quite out of the reach of even the most raging maniac. No one is half mad enough to suppose that that enjoyment of which M. RENAN speaks of the happiness to come æons after they themselves have been annihilated can be, as things now are, a powerful motive or restraining force among the masses. We cannot, of course, tell what the state of affairs may be after scores or hundreds of years. By that time the masses may be altogether differently disposed, but meantime they will act on the feelings that now prevail among them. Will not *carpe diem* be their necessary, possibly their wisest, motto, and that in the most sinister sense of the words? If the world, then, be divided between the lions and the sheep, and there be nothing besides, or beyond, who would not choose to be a lion? He would thus certainly have a

better chance, even although he must want the blessing of a saint. And why, by the way, should not the blessing of a saint appropriately bring a lion his dinner? Let him answer with a scoff to whom a leg of roast mutton, for example, is a forbidden delicacy. Justice, of course, was done to the sheep. He fulfilled an end for which nature had intended him. M. RENAN's implied sneer is, in fact, a shallow one. Possibly, however, though your lion, too, must meet his fate, all else being removed, most people would think his was the better chance.

"We fear that in the organisation of the world there is no trace of justice for the sheep." The choice M. RENAN places before the people seems easy. To suffer in quietness and self-restraint the chances and changes of this mortal life, with the assurance that, even in annihilation, they may rejoice in the elevation of a world not yet dawning upon the most distant horizon of the future. The other alternative is to assume the lion's part, and, bad as it seems, it may be questioned as to whether it is not the better one. It is in fact, the more natural, and, therefore, probably the more wholesome. It may seem paradoxical, but if there be nothing at all, as M. RENAN in effect declares there is, why should we not try to get as much of it as we can?

M. GABORIAU may paint in such glowing colours the merits of criminal trickery that he inspires susceptible youths with the desire to go and do likewise. Other writers, each in turn, may gild and glorify a particular vice. But M. RENAN gives the rein to all the passions together. A ludicrous, false, impossible, sentiment is all he sets up as a barrier against his lesson of despair. Let us look upon the lions of the period in a fair light. If they attack priests and processions, and scatter bombs in crowded churches, they are but asserting the place that an advanced philosophy has assigned to them. They are but attempting to play the lion so as to avoid playing the sheep. And if there be no justice for the sheep, who shall venture to condemn them as criminal? The stronger lion, indeed, may crush or attempt to crush them for his own ends and his own interests—hardly nobler ones, perhaps, than theirs.

There is, then, another aspect in which we may view the invention of printing and the freedom of the Press, whatever the temerity of expressing such an opinion may be.

THE Hon Dr Grace's suggestions as to improvements desirable in the Dunedin School of Medicine have given rise to a good deal of discussion. At the recent opening of the session of the Otago University, reference was made to the matter by some of the speakers, who seemed to admit the justice of Dr Grace's comments. On this occasion, Dr Brown alluded also to the cramming system of the day as exercising a deleterious influence on the training of pupils. But this is a universal difficulty which it will be hard to overcome. It seems invidious to reflect adversely on any proposal made for an extension of charity, but still there are two sides to the question mooted by the Chancellor as to whether it would not be desirable to throw the Dunedin Hospital open to the country in general at the expense of the citizens—the funds to be principally supplied by the appointment of an Hospital Sunday. Charity is a sentiment to be encouraged by all legitimate means, but even in this, there are certain limits to be observed which it would not be beneficial to transgress. So far, again, as improving the medical school by such means is concerned, the matter touches on an increase of a system of which we have already too much, that is the system of paying by public taxation for the education of young people whose parents are very well able themselves to bear the expense. None but the sons of comparatively wealthy people are entered here as medical students. Every remark made, however, with respect to Dr Grace's criticism has not been favourable, but the Doctor, we doubt not, is well able to sustain his position.

THE 80th birthday of Sir George Grey, which occurred on Thursday, the 24th inst, has been throughout the Colony an occasion of rejoicing and felicitation. Sir George's career certainly contains many records on which he may look back with a pardonable pride, and on which his friends and admirers, of whom there are so many, may well congratulate him. We hope there are still birthdays to come for him on which such honourable and kindly sympathies may be renewed.

HERE is a paragraph aptly illustrating what we have said elsewhere about the writings of M. Renan and other mischief makers of the period:—"Youthful criminals in France are decidedly *fin de siècle*. There is at this moment, says the *Standard*, a lad not yet 20 years of age awaiting, in the prison of St Nazaire, the day on which, at dawn, he will be led out to the place of execution to expiate a double murder, two helpless old women having been his victims. It is difficult

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