

throughout New Zealand. Some two months after the copy of the alleged 'Catholic' address to the anonymous 'Rev. and dear Father' had reached us, an individual in Wellington (who wrote and signed his letter with the most faultless legibility) sent us a letter demanding instant publication of the mysterious document referred to. A brief and courteous reply declining publication elicited a furiously intemperate and abusive communication. The address was subsequently published in full—including the slanderous paragraph quoted above—in the 'Prohibitionist,' with a bald statement that it had been refused insertion in the 'N.Z. Tablet.' In the meantime searching inquiries were being conducted on our behalf by a committee of clergy and laity all over Wellington. The furibund individual referred to above stated to us that the address to Father Hays had been worked by a 'Committee.' Well, the most persistent inquiries in the most likely quarters quite failed to find so much as a trace even of the existence of the alleged 'Committee,' much less any information as to the date and mode of its election and its personnel.

The '200 Catholics' that are alleged to have 'signed' that mysterious document have not even yet been discovered. We rubbed our eyes when we read the following statements which are attributed to the Rev. Mr. Isitt:—

'It has been said that only eight Catholics signed that appeal, but the speaker has been told by some Catholic informants that there were 200 signatures on the appeal when it was received by the Rev. Father Hays.'

Now, we have had more than one conversation with the Rev. Mr. Isitt about that curious address (or 'appeal,' as he calls it) to Father Hays. We, moreover, sent to his paper (the 'Prohibitionist'), and, quite recently, furnished to himself, at his own request, copies of the 'N.Z. Tablet' dealing with that Wellington mystery. But neither verbally nor in the columns of the 'N.Z. Tablet' did we, at least, ever state that 'only eight Catholics signed that appeal.' What we did write was this: 'So far as careful inquiries went, they elicited that eight practical Catholics appended their signatures to the address' which is obviously quite a different statement from that which is attributed to the Rev. Mr. Isitt. There may, perhaps, have been nine, there may possibly have been a dozen—even a baker's dozen, if you will. But the most diligent inquiries, extending over several weeks, and conducted on our behalf by a number of discreet, energetic, and responsible persons, clerical and lay, failed to make any more than eight 'practical Catholic' signatories 'materialise.' The finding of our committee of investigation is, obviously, in no wise affected, nor are the mystery and suspicion surrounding the affair one whit diminished by the statement—so 'child-like and bland' in its way—that there were two hundred names on the 'appeal' when it reached Father Hays. Very possibly. But were they (as alleged) 'signed by 200 Catholics' of Wellington? That's the rub. And who were the elusive two hundred, anyway?—for they seem as difficult to discover as the North Pole. In one way and another we have been pressing for this interesting information—not necessarily for publication—for a year and a half. But the pertinent and ticklish question still remains unanswered. And why so much mystery and reticence and hanky-panky about an address which, if genuine, ought to have been public and above-board? And will those concerned explain how it is that—as we were in a position to state authoritatively in our issue of October 1, 1903—no practising Catholic had anything whatever to do with drawing up or procuring signatures for that alleged 'Catholic' address, which (as Father Hays himself subsequently declared in our columns) contained such a calumnious reflection on the Catholics of New Zealand?

The sequel of the story only serves to intensify the mystery and suspicion that still enwrap the alleged 'Catholic address' to Father Hays. After its publication in the 'Prohibitionist,' the eight Catholic signatories referred to above saw (as they declare) for the first time the outrageous paragraph quoted by us. They met, drew up a fresh address, and sent it to Father Hays, stating that they had given their signatures to the previous document 'thinking that it was a complimentary address' to him; that they 'emphatically repudiate and reprobate' the 'gratuitous slander' and the 'calumnious reflection' flung at their New Zealand coreligionists; and that, so far as they knew, they represented 'all the practical Catholics who signed the address dated December 10, 1902.' This document was published in full in our issue of October 1, 1903, together with a reply from Father Hays, in which he expressed his 'gratitude' to the signatories. The 'Tablet's' exposures of the alleged 'Catholic' address from Wellington were duly forwarded (marked) to Father Hays. Having perused them, the noted temperance crusader sent us, for publication, a letter which appeared in our issue of February 11, 1904, and in the course of which the Rev. Father said (through his secretary):—

'Father Hays desires me to convey to you, and through you to the Catholics of N. Zealand, his sincere regret that a calumnious statement reflecting on the Catholics of the Colony should have appeared in that address (from Wellington). Furthermore, he is prepared to accept the statement of facts as put forth by the "Tablet."'

Apart from newspaper rumor, we do not know whether Father Hays is coming to New Zealand; nor have we any information as to the nature of the campaign which it is said he is about to conduct in this country, or as to his arrangements in connection therewith. For, up to the present time the Rev. Father has not communicated on the subject with any Catholic ecclesiastic, nor (so far as we are aware) with any Catholic layman, in New Zealand. We cannot for a moment assume that he is unacquainted with certain canons and rules of courtesy of his Church. In the circumstances, therefore—and especially in view of the facts set forth above, which were duly placed before the Rev. Mr. Isitt—it requires a rather strong act of faith to accept the statement attributed to him, that Father Hays is visiting New Zealand 'in consequence of an appeal from Wellington Catholics.' That 'appeal' (Mr. Isitt says) is the address to Father Hays which is alleged to have been 'signed by 200 Catholics.' Well, that address is now before us. From beginning to end it CONTAINS NO WORD OF 'APPEAL' OR INVITATION to the good Father. But even if it did, we do not—in view of all the circumstances mentioned above—see how we could accept the Rev. Mr. Isitt's alleged assertion, unless backed by the positive statement of Father Hays. To do so would, in the circumstances already detailed, be casting an unfair and unmerited reflection upon that noted temperance orator.

Marked copies of the three issues of the 'Tablet' having reference to the Wellington address were sent by us not alone to Father Hays, but to the 'Prohibitionist' and to the prime mover and probable author of that ungrammatical, mis-spelled, and slanderous document. Further copies were (as stated above) supplied at a recent date to the Rev. Mr. Isitt, as editor of the 'Prohibitionist.' But we regret to find that up to the present time that organ has failed to take any notice of our refutation of the calumny against New Zealand Catholics to which it gave publicity. It is needless to refer here to the unenviable position in which our articles have placed the author and prime mover of the alleged 'Catholic' address to Father Hays. But he, like Bre'r Rabbit, elected to 'lay low an' say nuffin'.' His mouth was sewed up—and that, too, in circumstances in which the average man would regard silence as not golden, nor even silver. But the individual referred to presumably had what he