

DEATHS

QUALTER.—On August 27, at 21 Grove street, Musselburgh, Dunedin, Archibald, beloved son of M. and M. A. Qualter, Westport; aged 26 years.—R.I.P.

HENNESSEY.—On September 7, at Napier Hospital, Rhody Hennessey; aged 69 years.—R.I.P.

CUNNEEN.—On September 1, 1907, at Frankton, Waikato, after a short illness, John Cunneen; aged 36. Beloved husband of Mary Cunneen and third son of Mrs. M. Cunneen, of Broadfield, near Christchurch, Canterbury.—R.I.P.

DUNGAN.—At Christchurch; on September 8, 1907, Mary, the beloved wife of the late Mr. John Dungan.—R.I.P.

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MESSAGE OF POPE LEO XIII. TO THE N.Z. TABLET.

Pergant Directores et Scriptores New Zealand Tablet, Apostolica Benedictione confortati, Religionis et Justitiæ causam promovere per vias Veritatis et Pacis.

Die 4 Aprilis, 1900.

LEO XIII., P.M.

TRANSLATION.—Fortified by the Apostolic Blessing, let the Directors and Writers of the New Zealand Tablet continue to promote the cause of Religion and Justice by the ways of Truth and Peace.

April 4, 1900.

LEO XIII., Pope.



THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 19, 1907.

INSANITY

SEVERAL of our secular contemporaries have lately—some within the past few days—reverted to the curious and melancholy returns of insanity that have been for some weeks before the country. What the skilled statistician would say to these figures, we are not prepared just now to say. But so far as we are aware, not one of our contemporaries has, in dealing with the relatively large percentage of cases of insanity attributed to people of Irish birth, realised the extent to which the historical element pervades the life of a people, and influences not merely their political and social ideals but even their bodily health and stamina. In his 'National Progress in the Queen's Reign, 1837-1897', the king of statisticians, Mulhall, gives abundant reasons for concluding (p. 82) that 'there is nothing in the constitution of the Irish race which disposes it to a higher ratio of infirmities than the British'. The late Dr. Graily Hewitt, says he (p. 78), 'one of the most distinguished physicians in London, was of opinion

that an insufficiency of food was the ultimate cause of every trouble in Ireland'. To the gaunt apothecary, Romeo said in Shakespeare's play:—

'Famine is on thy cheeks,
Need and oppression stareth in thine eyes,
Upon thy back hangs-ragged misery'.

During practically all the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries famine was in the cheeks, need and oppression in the eyes, and ragged misery upon the back of a great mass of the Irish people. The famines came at short and frequent intervals. These famines were one and all artificially produced. The land system made the potato the sole food, or the staple food, of the great bulk of the population. When blight or rot or failure seized 'the dirty root' (as Cobbett called that poor and fickle form of sustenance), the people were at once plunged into the agonies of starvation. And this in a fertile and well-watered land, whose fields were stocked with fat sheep and sleek kine and yellow with abundant harvests. But the stern decree ran—'Sic vos non vobis'. The black and putrid pulp that represented the potato was the perquisite of the peasant; the sheep and the kine and the golden grain, and the rest of the fulness of the earth belonged to the lord of the soil. They were seized, sold to pay the rent, and, in every Irish famine of the past two hundred years, exported beyond seas in sight of the starving people. The carnage from starvation and its attendant maladies was at times appalling—as, for instance, in the long-drawn agonies of 1725-30, 1816-17, 1822, and 1846-51. In the first fifty years of the reign of the late Queen Victoria, no fewer than 1,225,000 souls were (according to Mulhall) racked apart from their bodies by famine. The estimated losses from this cause during the nineteenth century alone overpassed two millions. And what with famine, evictions, wholesale clearances, 'no country in Europe or elsewhere', says the great statistician already quoted, in his 'Fifty Years of National Progress', 'has suffered such wholesale extermination.

The reader is now to some small extent in a position to understand the opinion of Dr. Graily Hewitt, that 'an insufficiency of food was the ultimate cause of every trouble in Ireland'. The high morality of the mass of even the pinched and hungry Irish poor has, indeed, saved them to a considerable extent from the physical and mental degeneracy that (as recent investigations seem to show) has overtaken the ill-fed denizens of the slums of Great Britain. But the long and terrible ordeal through which they have passed has been calculated in the highest degree to react disastrously not alone on fleshly tissue, but likewise upon the reason—

'When nature, being oppress'd, commands the mind
To suffer with the body.'

To this day Ireland is one of the most ill-fed nations of Europe. The country presents the unique spectacle of exporting the excellent food which it raises (Irish bacon, wheat, oats, etc.) and importing in their places vast quantities of two cheaper foods—namely, the coarse, oily, and repulsive American bacon, which their poverty makes acceptable, and Indian corn, which is the staple food of great numbers of the people for about six months in each year. Dr. Graily Hewitt already referred to above) laid it down as his conviction that insufficiency of food has so weakened the Irish people that they are more liable to insanity, blindness, and deaf-mutism than if they were properly nourished (Mulhall, 'National Progress,' p. 82). Behold the record which a Legislative Union with Great Britain has to show after one hundred and seven years—unexampled depopulation; chronic misery; long agonies of bitter distress; a series of appalling famines, artificially created, in the midst of rank abundance; and the dire procession of evils that follow starvation and want! When evils of another kind far less deplorable