

Now the office-boy could have told 'Civis' that these are questions which the *Otago Daily Times* could not put editorially. The second question is really the vital one. It involves an impertinent prying into the private concerns of persons who are vaguely termed the 'ecclesiastical authorities'—presumably the Catholic bishops. Herein appears the usefulness, in a political newspaper office, of the modern counterpart of the rude medieval wearer of the cap and bells. The questions, however, suggest certain very evident counter-questions by way of retort, which we have no intention of asking, but which—with their corresponding 'putting two and two together' and forming 'a pretty accurate judgment' of our own—will readily occur to the minds of 'Civis' and his political friends and paymasters. But we should like to 'confess' 'Civis' just a little as to the drift and purpose of his questions. Now, 'Civis,' cannot any person who knows a hawk from a hand-saw see that your questions are purely rhetorical; that they convey a charge or insinuation that the Catholic 'ecclesiastical authorities' in New Zealand have secretly struck a bargain which in the minds of you and your party would be a rank-smelling crime to be avenged by a no-Popery shriek from one end of the Colony to the other; that you have already put your two and two together and found they make twenty-two; and that—to travesty the old anti-Jacobin song—Seddon's (to you) a dog and the Catholic episcopate an ass: the one to be kicked with hob-nailed boots, the other to be beaten with a crowbar and tortured with the unmusical 'passing notes' of your cracked bassoon—and all in the sacred interests of party? Come, now, 'Civis'! We 'would like to know,' you know. But, of course we don't expect (nor particularly want) a reply. And failing such reply, can we not also 'put two and two together to form for ourselves a pretty accurate judgment'? You see, good 'Civis,' that two at least can play at this little game. Trial by jury has often been a 'mockery, a delusion, and a snare.' But what shall we say of the new-fangled trial by interrogation which you have attempted to introduce into the howling wilderness of New Zealand politics? In the hands of any political party it would be a calamity. In the hands of political campaigners who are ready to raise and profit by the sectarian cry it would be the abomination of desolation. That is about the only difference.

We have a few more queries to put before we have done 'confessing' 'Civis.' (1) You, 'Civis,' write as if you had judicial authority to interrogate the editor of the N. Z. TABLET, to demand a satisfactory reply as by sheer right, and failing such reply, to pass sentence in form. Pray, who set you astride of this high rocking-horse and constituted you the witness-jury-and-judge-Jeffreys of the Catholic 'ecclesiastical authorities' of New Zealand? You put on more airs than a British Lord Chief Justice. But where's your high and mighty commission? Or are you merely a tin-pot melodrama creature in paper 'ermine' sitting upon a prosaic barrel-end? (2) Did you really want an answer to your impertinent questions or—honestly—did you not prefer to get no reply, so that you could 'form your judgment' and pass sentence without the distressing burden of hearing the other side? If you wanted an answer, why did you not send us a marked copy of your queries? Or have you so guid a conceit o' yerself as to fancy that the editor of the N. Z. TABLET habitually impairs his mental digestion by swallowing weekly doses of your flat and watery home-made gooseberry beer? As a matter of fact we learned of your remarks through meeting—what we seldom meet nowadays—one who reads 'Passing Notes.' And he reads them just as he reads the funeral notices, not for 'divarshun,' but merely to kill time: 'and labour dire it is and heavy woe.' Again (3) did it not occur to your slow fancy that we might even see your questions and decline to answer them on the plea of their general impertinence and meddlesomeness, or on any other plea, or on no plea at all? Or (4) did you not reflect that some angel or imp might suggest to us that we might elect to act on the old motto and 'answer a fool according to his folly'? Yet again (5) supposing we gave a perfectly satisfactory reply: would that reply be satisfactory to your Royal Highness? And would you place it honestly and squarely and without hostile note or comment before the readers that are still left to you? Or would you not rather pass it over and thereby leave your dwindling *clientèle* to fancy that no answer was or could be made, and that, therefore, Mr. Seddon and the 'ecclesiastical authorities' were up to their eye-brows in a conspiracy to keep your political friends for another few years hungering and thirsting for the sweets of power and the gains of office? Or supposing that our answer to your over-cunning—yet in one sense under-cunning—queries were, *per impossibile*, such as to defy the ingenuity of the quibbler and the double-microscope of the hypocrite, would you not affect to disbelieve us and regard our 'straightness' as proof conclusive of our 'crookedness' and insincerity? All this is part of the political game, you know. And as you're in the game you're probably of it and not an angel floating in resplendent innocence in the ether above it. Pray, be patient, good 'Civis,' and don't take up your hat and 'move,' for we have a further question to put to you, just to make the round half-dozen. (6) Now—honour bright!

—was not, and is not, your purpose to strike out at the 'ecclesiastical authorities' in any case, whether the editor of the N. Z. TABLET replied to your queries or not—like the drunken husband in Joe Miller's *Fest Book* who vows he'll blacken his wife's eyes when he gets home if he finds her up, and that he'll likewise blacken them if he finds her abed? For, mark you, it looks very like it.

We do not expect that 'Civis' will answer these questions. And in any case we shall not go to the trouble of adding two and two together, for we already know they make just four, and not—as 'Civis' evidently fancies—two-and-twenty. We do not blame 'Civis' for not reading the N. Z. TABLET, but we might reasonably have expected him to have dipped into it if he wanted the editor's views on the elections. Had he done so he would have saved himself the trouble of putting so many minstrel-show conundrums and proclaiming to the public once more what the reasoning portion of it knew long ago: that he quite forgot to learn even the bare elements of logic when he was at school. However, if 'Civis' persists in exposing week after week his poverty of thought and shallowness of reasoning and weakness in matters of fact, that is his own affair—*ipse viderit*. But when he drops his plugged shells into *this* camp, he may expect a naval-gun reply that will promptly dismount his rusty and rickety old smooth-bore. That is all. And a word to the wise ought to be sufficient. For the rest, the Catholic position in New Zealand is no secret, as our readers know. There is no 'inducement' offered to Catholics; no pact, agreement, promise, or understanding of any kind 'between certain high contracting parties that Roman Catholics, as far as their ecclesiastical authorities can influence them, shall be influenced to vote for the Government.' We notice 'Civis's' ready insinuation to the contrary as an evidence of what the hack branch of journalism is prepared to descend to in order to arouse a cry or a suspicion against the Catholic body for the benefit of a political party. We can speak on this matter with all the greater openness because we are not, like 'Civis,' neck-chained to the verandah-post of any political party and fed to bark and bite for them. But we foresee, none the less, that, whatever the final result, some of the tactics of the *Otago Daily Times* will throw many a vote into the balance for Mr. Seddon, and that 'Civis,' with his clumsy innuendos, could do no worse service to any cause than to be its advocate. 'Civis' ought to be happy now. He expected nothing from us, and we have given him much and made no charge. (1) We have categorically answered his questions. This ought to improve his mind, by adding to it a valuable stock of much-needed information. (2) We have read him a little homily on the perversity of certain methods of electioneering. This ought to improve his political conscience—we suppose him to have one. (3) We have pointed out the cool impertinence of his questions and manner of questioning. This ought to improve his manners. (4) We have, moreover, treated him to a perfectly candid, if not particularly refreshing, bit of literary criticism. This ought to improve his 'Passing Notes.' But we have not the slightest hope that it will. His 'notes' are not 'passing' but *passées*: cracked and damaged beyond repair—like those of the ringleady-jingledy old piano in the Wanganui museum. Alas, poor Yorick!

THE following cable message appeared in last Friday's papers:—
THE VATICAN AND THE BOER WAR.

The *Osservatore Romano*, hitherto the official organ of the Vatican, has now declared itself an unofficial journal except in regard to the announcement of matters of fact. The paper adds that the Vatican has decided to remain neutral with reference to the Transvaal.

In this connection we may mention a peculiarly discreditable attempt made by the London *Times* to cast odium upon the Vatican in connection with the Boer campaign. Some lunatic at large wrote a letter to the *Osservatore*, which contained the following foolish calculation as to the results of the Boer campaign:—

Patience and clemency have been carried too far. Catholics must now trust in the God of armies. The Freemasons are terrified at the possibility of war between England and the Transvaal. But England cannot give way without covering herself with ridicule. Can it be that this war is providential? Will Protestantism be exhausted by it? Has the period of the great transformation of the world begun when the Church will accomplish a new conversion of the Gentiles? Let us have courage, determination, and faith in God, who is now and ever the God of armies.

This was in a 'letter to the editor' and published as such. But it was enough for the son of Ananias who represents the *Times* at Rome. He forthwith wired the whole extract to his journal as the editorial opinion of the *Osservatore* and, incidentally, of the Vatican, upon the Transvaal campaign! The *Times* knows how to select its agents. It is keeping alive the traditions which flung so evil a notoriety about its persistent support of the forger Pigott long after the rest of the world had recognised him to be a vulgar criminal of the deepest dye.