

Bishops—come to an 'understanding' with the Government to influence all the votes they could in its favour? (b) What inducement 'had been offered by the Government 'in return' for this?

3. 'The TABLET editor' is supposed by 'Civis' to have a guilty knowledge of this little conspiracy between the Government and the Catholic Bishops. And to 'the TABLET editor' therefore 'Civis' goes, not for the purpose of getting information to which he was not entitled, but just to point out to his scanty readers that we dare not reply to his questions. His questions were, in fact, not queries, but impudent challenges which, despite a worthless verbal disclaimer, were plainly flung down with hostile intent with a view to benefit his party by arousing sectarian feeling.

4. 'Civis' twice distinctly states that he expected no reply from us. And he was entitled to none. But 'Civis's' mind was quite made up and his verdict given on the matter beforehand. For he says: 'Failing authoritative information [and he quite expected it to fail] we shall be able, putting two and two together, to form for ourselves a pretty accurate judgment.' Let it be borne in mind that even when our categorical reply was given to his questions, he, as we expressly anticipated, affects to regard our statement as untruthful. And this, too, when we are repelling a charge against our Bishops which, on the face of it, looks remarkably like a charge of political corruption.

5. The whole purpose of his queries is clearly manifested in his closing lines: 'These are questions upon which electors of all parties may with advantage chew the cud of reflection.' Just so. The questions are the main thing. They are sent out, with their replies predetermined, to soak into the minds of voters, and to create and spread the impression which 'Civis' conveys not merely by bold insinuation, but, in effect, by open and direct accusation. And the impression which his 'Note' has left is just this: that, in return for certain 'inducements,' the Catholic episcopate of New Zealand have entered into an arrangement or secret conspiracy to influence all the votes they can in favour of the Government. Nobody who is acquainted with the temper of New Zealand politics needs to be reminded that the merest hint of such a compact is highly calculated to arouse serious distrust and suspicion of the Catholic body throughout the Colony, and that the bold statement of it as conveyed by 'Civis,' is nothing more or less than the attempted introduction of sectarian strife and bitterness into the coming election contests. 'To touch politics is to touch pitch,' says Cardinal Newman. But an electioneering campaign becomes worse than a famine or a war when partisans on any side raise directly or indirectly a sectarian cry against 100,000 people for the benefit of a handful of politicians. And this is precisely what 'Civis's' 'Note' is, on the face of it, calculated to do. To call this 'innocent' and 'civil' is to do greater violence to the plain meaning of words than even Humpty Dumpty ever attempted. We venture to express the hope that there is not another journalist in New Zealand who would have written and sent for publication a 'Note' couched in the terms of that of 'Civis.' There is only one Church in the Colony that is a 'safe' and likely subject for electioneering tactics of this kind. But, even with the knowledge of this fact full before our minds, we would see our right hand lopped off joint by joint rather than address to the editors of the *Outlook* and the *New Zealand Guardian* the perky and vulgar and offensive challenge issued by 'Civis' to us. And we venture to say that even 'Civis' would not have dared to address them as he did us. And nevertheless he dares to lecture us on the matter of journalistic propriety.

The N.Z. TABLET and its staff, the Catholic bishops, and the Catholic voters are as fair subjects for fair comment as anybody else. Had 'Civis' limited himself to this we should have gone on quietly ignoring his existence, or have received his remarks, as we have done twice before, in perfect friendliness and good humour. If we had differed with him we would have differed inoffensively—as we have also done before. Thus we have smiles for his smiles and fair feeling for fair comment. But when he comes against us and ours with set face and naked steel, by naked steel we will meet him and cleave him down. In the case of tactics such as those of his 'Note' of Saturday week we neither give nor ask quarter. It is war to the knife. If our words cut him deep, we meant it. Our language was strong, designedly strong, but its necessity made it wholesome—just as the lash is often both necessary and wholesome. He fully deserved the chastisement he received, and we can never regret inflicting it. He has put himself in the unenviable position of unprovoked aggressor, and must abide by the consequences of his folly. Is he to issue his swaggering challenges to us and raise a popular clamour against the heads of our Church and the people whose feeble voice we are, in order to further the cause of a knot of politicians; and must we drug ourselves into unmanly feebleness and meet his bold attacks with whimperings and whisperings and apologetic lisps, lest, forsooth, he deem us lacking in politeness and sweetness to him? And this, too, in the face of his expressed determination to make use of our anticipated silence as a fresh argument to condemn

us? Politeness is good, and cleanliness is good. But a man may push urbanity so far as to cease to be a man, and he may rub the skin off his face in washing it. It disagrees with 'Civis' to have certain truths put forcibly. We knew it would disagree with him. Strong language is foreign to us, both by natural temperament and by acquired habit. But we recognise the fact that circumstances may arise which demand the use of strong, naked words that never knew a scabbard, even though they cut to the marrow or blister like pellets of molten lead. And in proportion as the evil is malignant and aggressive must the warning cry be strong. Writers in the *Otago Daily Times* do not content themselves with saying that the stench from the Dunedin foreshore is 'slightly disagreeable.' They say it is deadly poison, and a standing menace to the public health. If the assassin is coming to take your friend's life, you do not say that he sometimes displays a little temper. No. You cry out that he means murder; and that the hand behind his back grasps a loaded revolver, and you say it loud enough to be heard. In the same way when an unjust and unprovoked attack is made, as by 'Civis,' upon the peaceable and unoffending Catholic community, we will arraign him, we will do justice upon him according to the measure of his offending, and that, too, in fair round words that will hit with the impact of steel-tipped bullets. 'Kind words,' says a great, but little-known author, 'are like sweet draughts in the cup of life, like "a concert of music in a banquet of wine." But the sick man's potion is often bitter, and the trumpet blows a shrill blast when the enemy is at the gate.'

'Civis' flatly denies the statement that any verbal transcript from 'Oriol' ever appeared in his columns. We were at one and the same time readers both of 'Civis' and of 'Oriol.' We do not know whether 'Civis' is in a position to speak with as enthusiastic positiveness of the work of his collaborators or contributors as of his own. At any rate, we have no hesitation in accepting his statement of fact to the fullest extent that his personal knowledge goes. But we must protest against his giving a general statement of ours a purely personal application to the editor of the *Otago Daily Times*, and by this petty trick making it appear that we were guilty of an 'obvious falsehood.' The only remarks we made of the *Times* editor in that connection were that he had opened his columns to certain correspondence. We added that we suspected the *bona fides* of a part of it. The first is an undenied and undeniable statement of fact. The second is an expression of opinion which may be warranted or not, but which in no case can be shown to cast any imputation upon the editor of the *Otago Daily Times*. We have since learned that there is a rule in the office of at least one New Zealand daily prohibiting letters to the editor for publication from any member of the staff. We shall be quite prepared to believe that a similar rule or custom exists in the office of the *Otago Daily Times*. In the meantime we have to acknowledge the fair *amende* which the editor makes in putting a stop to the correspondence to which we referred, and which was simply calculated to arouse sectarian feeling and suspicion and to injure, instead of serving, the cause it was intended to promote. On the other hand, we were entitled to assume that 'Civis's' ill-meant and ill-advised paragraph of November 18 passed under, and met the approval of, the editorial eye. If it did, then the editor's responsibility in allowing its publication is even greater than 'Civis's' in writing it.

Correspondence.

[We are not responsible for the opinions expressed by our correspondents.]

'CIVIS' AND THE N.Z. TABLET.

WE have received several written communications commendatory of our action with regard to 'Civis.' One plea in favour of 'Civis' has likewise come to hand. It is written by a personal friend of his, and is marked by a gentleness of sentiment which at once ensures its insertion, although it manifestly quite fails to grasp, or even touch, the point of view from which we conceived and conceive it to be our duty to deal with 'Civis.' We may add that 'Civis' and his collaborators are quite unknown to us, whether personally or otherwise. The following is the letter referred to:—

TO THE EDITOR.

SIR,—I am grieved at the treatment you have dealt out to our dear and venerable friend 'Civis.' I am afraid you have made the mistake of taking him seriously. When you know him as well as his friends do, you will do so no longer. We all like old 'Civis' immensely. That is why we laugh at his jokes so. And then they are so easy to see: no digging out required. Even a Scotchman can see them—sometimes. It is really too bad to find him mauled about like this, and he doesn't like it. You see, he has, any time during the past ten years, been accustomed to have his little dig at St.