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Current Topics

AT HOME AND ABROAD.

MR. CADMAN'S appointment as Native Minister FOR BOTH GOOSE has drawn the attention of some of our contemporaries to the question of the Native lands. It is argued, and, according to the temper of the times, very rationally argued— even, perhaps, by writers who have little sympathy with the democratic spirit of the day, that the vast area of land shut up from settlement forms a serious hindrance to the progress of the Colony. The land lies idle, the Maori owners making little or no use of it, and Europeans who would gladly cultivate it not being permitted to do so. The plea, we say, appears to us to be sound. Why, for example, if a monopoly of land be generally and legitimately condemned, should it be justified by the position of any particular people? The Maoris, it is true, are the original owners. But might not a similar claim be urged in behalf of the landlords of the older countries? They are certainly in great part either the descendants or the representatives of the feudal chiefs, who, in modern days, were the original proprietors. And if a perpetual right could be so acquired, the feudal chiefs, with all their faults, did more towards the promotion of civilisation, and consequently in the service of posterity, than was ever done by the ancestors of the Maori race. Some consideration, nevertheless, the Maoris deserve—and some consideration, also, is admitted to be due to the landowners of the Old World. In neither case can any man, who is not an advocate of wild and impracticable extremes, counsel confiscation. In each instance, on the contrary, compensation must be given. The manner in which land is held by Native owners meantime presents some difficulty. Their proprietorship is, to a great degree, in common, and the consent of each shareholder individually must be obtained before a sale can be made. Several methods of getting rid of this difficulty have been proposed—among the rest that of a Commission to deal with the land in question after the manner in which the waste land of the Colony generally is dealt with, and to hand over the proceeds either of sale or leasing to the Natives compelled to dispose of the land. Another difficulty that has at least presented itself to the minds of people who were unwilling to see the Native race exposed to certain degradation, was that of stripping them of their lands, even by paying them a fair price. The money, it was thought, would inevitably be squandered, and the people left destitute and hopeless. If, however, the land were not absolutely sold, but disposed of by perpetual lease, the owners receiving the annual rents, or having them applied judiciously to their use, this difficulty might be provided against. Meantime it is not easy to see why there should be one law for the Maori and another for the European population. If the Maoris are to bow to the spirit of the day, and to give up a monopoly by which settlement is impeded, why are not European monopolists to do the same? The *King Country*, to which, for instance, our contemporary, the *Dunedin Star*, makes particular reference, blocks the path of settlement; but quite as effectually, though less extensively in any particular quarter, do the vast estates of European monopolists. What, for example, is the state of the country that stretches far and wide around the town of Oamaru?—to which, by the way, Mr. Pinkerton, in his proposals for placing small farmers on the borders of settlements, might usefully turn his attention—though similar cases in other localities will by no means fail him. If the Maori monopolist, we say, be forced to part with his land, his European brother in monopoly cannot claim exemption. That, in the interests of humanity and civilisation, and for the necessary advancement of settlement and progress, as well as in accordance with the spirit of the day, the Maori monopolist may be legitimately called upon to yield, is evident. The thing is to deal with him so as to make fair provision for his future, and to preserve him from degradation. We say again, the European monopolist, in every case in which it is found necessary or advisable, should share the Maori's lot.

THAT was a very suggestive leader published the other evening by our contemporary the *Globe* against the use of Messrs. Whitcombe and Tombs' school-books. The admissions made by our contemporary, as the organ of a party whose majority are fierce secularists, are, to say the least, remarkable. What a picture he gives us, besides, of the state of things produced by this system, for whose maintenance such sacrifices are made, in the miserable teachers whom he describes as holding their tongues in terror lest they should offend the Board. The consequence would be their prompt dismissal. "And hundreds of hungry applicants," says our contemporary, "would soon wolf up their positions." But is there no pity for these wolfish hundreds—the products of our educational system—who, while the miserable teachers hold tremblingly on, wander about unfed? Our contemporary again has a frank word or two to say about the godless schools:—"We are not educating our children," he very truly remarks, as, indeed, we ourselves have constantly remarked, "we are not succeeding in properly developing their faculties or cultivating their thinking powers. We are only preparing stereotyped reprints of a model automaton child charged with certain dates and facts, and guaranteed to discharge them all within a given time. Reforms are needed all along the line." The suggestive passage, *par excellence*, in our contemporary's leader is the following:—"If the Board's inspectors persist in examining children in books to the use of which the parents have conscientious objections, they need not be surprised at finding that they have nearly empty schools to examine, for we are certain parents will not submit to having their strongest convictions set at naught by a handful of Conservative educational faddists." Conscientious objections, then, touching their material interests—involved in the purchase of Messrs. Whitcombe and Tombs' books—justify parents in keeping their children away from school. The majority of the party which the *Globe* represents nevertheless insists on forcing parents who have conscientious objections relating to spiritual interests—which are much higher—to send their children to the schools that on such grounds they object to. The necessary conclusions are not much to the credit of the majority referred to.

WE have before us one of Dr. Barnardo's little books. It is named "Twelve Sheep from Australia," and purports to be the explanation of circumstances connected with a letter in which a former pupil of the Doctor informs him that he has sent him twelve frozen sheep from Sydney. The writer signs himself "Timothy Regan." "Timothy Regan," of course, may be a real entity. We should not, however, be surprised if he were a young man improvised for the occasion, and given an Irish name, to suggest how remarkably well those young Papists turn out whom the good Doctor kidnaps.—Be that as it may, we find the following passage relating to "Timothy Regan" and his brother and sister in the narrative of their antecedents given to the Doctor, on his first discovering them, by an old gentleman of their acquaintance. "No one wants 'em," said the old gentleman, as quoted in this little book, "cos 'im is afear'd they 'ud be interferin'. Ons, I heerd 'em 'ere Sisters o' Mussy, as they ca' themselves, got hold o' Bess, and made a pretty fuss over 'er, and was a-goin' to take her off to one o' them there schools; but Tim, he kem 'ome, and turned 'em out double quick, a-sayin' as he worn't papish 'isself, an' no more wor Bess nor Jack. Now they all leave 'em alone, but I've heerd lately as they've bin werry nigh starvin' since Tim's bin at the 'orspital. If you could only see 'em yerself, sir, you 'ud 'elp Bessie somehow, I'm sure; for anyways you take it, it ain't a good thing for her, poor gal, to be brought up as she is."—"Poor gal," it was better, nevertheless, for her to be brought up in any way than by the Sisters of Mercy. But let us note the virtuous indignation of the good Doctor at the attempt made by the Sisters of Mercy to rescue this girl who "worn't papish"—although a boy named "Timothy Regan" might very naturally be taken for an Irish Catholic or the son of one, while the good Doctor himself is constantly engaged in laying hold of Catholic children—and spends more in trying to maintain his hold on them, in spite of the law, than would suffice for the keep of several Protestant children legitimately in