

for a time Nelson was the busy centre of a propaganda of rapid articles, letters, etc., which were streamed out to every part of the colonies, and many of which it was a disgrace for any man to write or for any respectable editor to publish.

The Press-gang.

From the first it was likewise evident that no effort would be spared to make political capital out of the Stoke affair. 'The wave of public feeling,' says the *N.Z. Times*, 'was industriously worked up for political and other reasons.' The *Tairi Advocate* and other papers also refer to 'the political significance' of the Stoke cases. The *Nelson Evening Mail*—an Opposition paper—made itself throughout the sounding-board of the local fanatics. The chorus was taken up as if at the stroke of a conductor's baton by many other papers throughout the Colony. It was one of the most disgraceful prostitutions of the functions of the newspaper Press that has ever come under our notice. As the *N.Z. Times* points out, the Press, 'led away entirely by vain imaginings,' raised a 'hue and cry,' made 'improper and indecent' attempts, by 'comments' and 'fussy insinuations concerning pending cases,' to prejudice them before the Court, and to interfere with 'fairplay and decent legal administration.' RABELAIS' witches concealed their eyes in their slippers when at home. They clapped them into their sockets when abroad, the better to spy out the faults and foibles of their neighbors. A large section of our Press played a part similar to that of RABELAIS' withered and venomous hags. Only a little time ago they raged and raved and tore their hair and clawed like dancing dervishes because of a suspicion that ex-captain DREYFUS was not getting a fair trial in far-off France. At home in New Zealand their eyes were in their boot-heels. They did everything in their power to cloud the judicial issues of the Stoke affair with political passion and to substitute trial by popular clamor for what is deemed to be the palladium of British liberty, trial by jury.

Broomstick Politicians.

A similar course of action was adopted by broomstick politicians in Parliament. A disgraceful wrangle over the Stoke Orphanage nagged and jarred in the House at intervals for several months. A nondescript party, cemented by the feeling of the hour, sedulously fomented the public passion. Intrigue was rampant. They set the public the bad example of commenting, under cover of privilege of the House, on cases still *sub judice*. A project of panic legislation was tabled. 'A section of Parliament,' says the *N.Z. Times*, wanted '(1) to have the blackness [of the Brothers] declared without waiting for the verdict of the law courts, and (2) to have the color extended to every institute of a kindred nature, and that indiscriminately, so that every sheep of all these flocks should be punished as black.' In plain terms, an attempt was pushed to its farthest verge to place upon the Statute Book a form of legislation the obvious effect and evident chief purpose of which would be the closing of Catholic orphanages or the serious impairment of their usefulness throughout the Colony.

The ring-leaders of the wild pursuit of the Marist Brothers in the House of Representatives were Messrs. Atkinson, Hutcheson, Pirani, Meredith, T. Mackenzie, Millar, and G. W. Russell. They were supported in their happily unsuccessful attempts at panic legislation by Messrs. Arnold, Barclay, Buddo, Collins, Ell, Fowlds, W. Fraser, Graham, Guinness, Hardy, Herries, Hogg, Hornsby, Lang, Laurenson, M'Nab, Rhodes, Tanner, R. Thompson, and J. W. Thomson. One of the Members on this Black List went so far as to have alleged *fasciniles* made of chains which were falsely stated to have been used for confining boys in the Stoke institute. 'These gentlemen'—to give a fresh application to a now well-known expression of Judge Edwards'—may count on hearing from us again.

The Crown.

No comment on the Stoke Orphanage persecution would be complete without a special word of reprobation for the manner in which the case for the Crown was worked up and conducted from start to close. We refer (1) to the agents

selected for the preliminary investigations; (2) to the methods pursued by them; and (3) to the conduct of the cases when before the court. In one of the charges to the jury, Judge EDWARDS remarked that the Stoke Orphanage cases were not regarded as matters between the public and the individuals charged, but between the public and the denomination to which the Marist Brothers belonged. This latter was plainly the view accepted and acted upon by the Crown. For our part we have no objection to investigation, in these or any other cases, conducted by capable and respectable police or detectives of any creed or of no creed. On this account we have no special complaint to make regarding the apparently studied exclusion of Catholic police officials from the preliminary inquiries in connection with the Stoke Orphanage cases. But the Marist Brothers and the Catholic body, and men of every creed and party are fairly entitled to demand answers to the following pertinent queries: (1) Is notorious membership of the Orange Society with the rampant bias which is ordinarily associated with it, a qualification for conducting a delicate inquiry affecting the members of a Catholic monastic community? (2) Was it a mere coincidence that the police—like the amateur detectives of Nelson and its neighborhood—selected the great mass of the Crown accusers and witnesses from the criminal or 'committed' inmates and ex-inmates of the Orphanage; and that the charges of indecent assault rested in nearly every case on the evidence of boys of illegitimate birth, or who were brought up in houses of ill-fame, or amidst other surroundings that were favorable in a high degree to the early acquisition of a knowledge of immoral practices?

Again: (3) We want to know why five of the Crown witnesses were spirited away—one of them from employment with a respectable Catholic—and sent to the Burnham State Industrial School? And how, after a few weeks' stay there, they displayed under examination in the Supreme Court a knowledge of sexual anatomy (and even of its Latin technical terms) which amazed the hearers from whom our information was received at first hand? We confess to an aching curiosity to know by whom 'these young gentlemen' were 'coached.' Yet again: (4) One of the most striking facts elicited from the Crown witnesses—a fact, too, which is capable of still further proof—is this: that previous to this inquiry accusing ex-inmates of the Stoke Orphanage had spoken in laudatory terms to employers and others of the kindness of the Brothers; had written letters filled with grateful recognition of the services rendered to them; had frequently returned thither to renew old associations; and, strangest of all, had never breathed to human ear a hint of cruelty or neglect or of immoral behavior on the part of those charged with the management of the institute. In addition to this, at least *prima facie* positive evidence of collusion or conspiracy, and of intimidation or attempted intimidation and corruption of witnesses for the defence, was given by some of those who were called in support of the prosecution. Now we are entitled to ask: Is it true that the suspiciously sudden *volte-face* of certain ex-inmates of the Stoke Orphanage from open friendliness to open hostility towards the Brothers coincided with their interviews with the police who were working up the case on behalf of the Crown?

The explanation may, perhaps, be not wholly unconnected with the fact that the Crown witnesses—who in their normal employment were earning only from four shillings to twelve shillings a week—suddenly found themselves passing rich on ten shillings a day, with the (to them) joyful whirl of city life, and a prolonged holiday from work. It is scarcely necessary to point out that such terms constitute, by themselves alone, a bribe to accommodating perjury which would form a temptation of almost irresistible force to boys of the class from which the Crown witnesses in the Stoke cases were chiefly drawn. There are certain other matters in connection with the management of Crown witnesses which will take a great deal of strenuous explanation. (5) Why, for instance, were the boys—when being 'herded' by a police official at Nelson and Wellington—prevented Sunday after Sunday from going to Mass? (6) Has the Police Commissioner any explanation to offer for the fact—vouched for by the *Nelson Evening Mail*—that a crowd of the boys, (that had been kept away from the Catholic church on