

PETER'S PENCE, INVERCARGILL, 1875.		£	s.	d.
Rev. J. Higgins	...	1	0	0
D. A. Cameron	...	1	0	0
Alexander Cameron	...	1	0	0
D. M. Cameron	...	1	0	0
John Fitzgerald	...	1	0	0
Patrick Fitzgerald	...	1	0	0
Michael Fitzgerald	...	1	0	0
James Fitzgerald	...	1	0	0
Garret Fitzgerald	...	1	0	0
Mrs. Hunter	...	1	0	0
James O'Brien	...	1	0	0
John Barry	...	1	0	0
Mrs. Watson	...	0	10	0
John Maber	...	0	10	0
John M'Gerty	...	0	10	0
Michael Rooney	...	0	10	0
Martin Hughes	...	0	10	0
Anthony Fahey	...	0	10	0
Mrs. Crosby	...	0	10	0
Findlay Murchison	...	0	10	0
Charles Quin	...	0	10	0
Sums under 10s.	...	10	10	0
Total	...	27	0	0

New Zealand Tablet.

FIAT JUSTITIA.

SATURDAY, JUNE 5, 1875.

THE ARGUMENT FOR COMPULSORY EDUCATION EXAMINED.

THE advocates of compulsion argue thus:—Ignorance is the principal cause of lawlessness and crimes: the instruction of the people increases the security of civil society. But whatever promotes this security is as much within the competence of the State, as is the police, the administration of justice, and the defence of its territory. Consequently, the State has the right to command, nay, to compel the instruction of the people, just as the law compels the payment of taxes for legitimate purposes. This is a correct statement of the argument. It must, however, be borne in mind that the instruction here spoken of is purely secular, and confined to reading, writing, and arithmetic. There is no claim made to compel children to attend schools of higher education; and all right to teach religion is expressly repudiated.

Let us, in our examination, take the propositions one by one. First—Ignorance, it is said, is the principal cause of lawlessness and crime; secular instruction, it is affirmed, increases the security of society. Our answer is, these statements are by no means certain, either in theory or in practice. It will hardly be denied that the absence of religious principles, immorality in families, bad example in workshops, drunkenness, infidel and immoral books, more even than the absence of instruction in the three R's, have multiplied crimes and offences. An enthusiastic advocate of compulsion, M. Duruy, has said in effect, "To open the school is to close the prison;" but facts are against him—facts, too, which he has himself helped to supply. For example, in a *General Exposé* of the State of primary instruction in France, drawn up by this gentleman, and in which the *Departments* are classed according to the degree of instruction in each, we find that *le Cher* occupies the 81st place. But on referring to the report of the *Keeper of the Seals* on the statistics of crime published in 1869, the same year, we believe, in which the *Exposé* appeared, we perceive *le Cher* to be at the head of the departments in which there had been the least crime. And were it not that it might appear invidious, it would be easy to find a parallel to this in countries with which we are more familiar than France.

And the same phenomenon has been observed in France for fifty years. This is proved from the following works:—*Statistique Morale de la France*, by M. Querry; *Statistique de la population française*, by M. d'Augerville, both members of the Academy of Sciences; and from a discourse delivered by M. Charles Dupin, in 1838, in which he shows that complete ignorance, in a secular sense, has ever been allied with the smallest proportion of crime against the person. About the same time, M. Lauvergne, chief medical officer of the convict hospital, at Toulon, in a work called *The Convicts*, established the fact that amongst all the wretched people under his charge, the class of the educated was the most immoral. And in answer to a

ministerial circular of March, 1834, the governors of the central prisons of France stated that in general the most incorrigible prisoners are those who have received some instruction, adding, "they become professors of a science—that of crime." These authorities invalidate the first proposition, and prove, at least, that it is by no means certain that ignorance is the chief cause of crime.

We beg our readers not to be alarmed, fancying that for the good of civil society, we hold ignorance to be better than instruction. It is not in instruction in general that the root of the evil is to be found; but in a certain kind of instruction—in that from which religion is banished. Education founded and informed by religion is the greatest blessing to the individual, the family, and the State, as all experience, as well as reason, proves; whereas, merely secular instruction is not uncommonly a curse to all three.

Nor is the second proposition more admissible. It is true, indeed, that general and individual security, is the end of civil society. But it by no means follows, that the State is bound, or can rightfully claim, to impose everything from far and near, that can contribute to this end; or that it can go outside its own sphere and intrude into that of others. There can be no more dangerous error than to suppose that the State can, at its own good pleasure, lay hold on everything that it may be useful or convenient for it to possess. The maxim, *salus populi ultima lex*, understood in this sense is revolutionary in the extreme, and leads necessarily to the confounding of all rights and the destruction of all liberties—to the greatest despotism. It will be said, however, that instruction is necessary for the well-being of the State, and that, therefore, the intervention of the State to secure it, even by compulsion, is necessary. Test this principle, carry it out to its logical consequences. Religious belief, the practice of religion, the moral virtues inspired, maintained, and inseparable from these, are a million times more important than primary instruction in secular schools, and more necessary for the well-being and security of society; consequently, on the principle contended for by secularists, the State would be as justified in driving all men to church as in compelling all children to go to school. And it may come to this by and bye, when a sad experience will have disabused men of the folly, though not perhaps of the tyranny, of compulsory secular education! It is always dangerous, as well as criminal, for the State to invade individual liberties, and curtail them, when there is no adequate necessity for doing so. And it should take great care not to step into the domain of the natural and divine law which defines the relations of the members of the family towards each other and to the church established by God.

The advocates of compulsion hold with ROUSSEAU that the State has the right to impose by force whatever it judges the best; and that the people have absolute power to ordain either by themselves or their representatives whatever appears good in their sight. But is not this the theory also of tyranny, and under it what is left to the individual. The rights bestowed on him by nature and nature's God, are taken from him by the State, or may be at any moment. The sacred domain of home, and whatever appertains by right to the family, exist only by permission of civil government, and under its surveillance! Man, then, is nothing, and the State is all in all. Man is no more than an automaton moved by the omnipotent State. This is tyranny indeed—a malignant, degrading, demoralising tyranny.

The State, it is said, in order to promote the public good, has the right to distribute instruction. Where is the security, that many will not hold, that on the same principle the State is bound to distribute riches. One set of men proclaims the State to be the universal and only teacher; another in the political clubs proclaims it to be the universal and only owner of property. Put the State in the place of owners of property to regulate it, and we have material Communism. Put the State in the place of fathers of families, to educate children, and we have intellectual Communism. Further, it is asserted that it belongs to the State to educate the people, and to make the country rich. For these ends the State, according to BAEUF, terribly logical in carrying out these principles to their ultimate consequences, should take children in infancy, place them under the tutelage of Government, give them a national, common, equal education, take care of them from their birth, and abandon them only at death. Behold the dangers and consequences of an unsound principle. A wise