

TOUCHING THE EDUCATION QUESTION.

We clip the following letter written by the Rev Father Coleman from the Oamaru Evening Mail of the 15th inst. It will be seen from it that the Catholics of Oamaru are setting a noble example to their co-religionists throughout the colony:—

In Monday night's Mail a letter appeared signed "A Roman Catholic." In reference to it permit me to say a few words.

I admit that the statements made in that letter are true. It is true that the Government is treating us unjustly, cruelly, by forcing us to pay money for schools of which conscience forbids us to avail ourselves, and then to refuse any share of that money for our own schools. It is true that we look on those Catholics who use the secular schools where Catholics schools are established as low, unprincipled people who sacrifice conscience and the souls of their children for base lucre; or, as "A Roman Catholic" put it, we look upon such persons as sowers of the lowest type. "A Roman Catholic" drew a comparison between the Irish sowers and those nominal Catholics who use the secular schools, and to my view, the conclusion is correct; but he omitted to add that the Irish sowers were fed with soup and meat given them in exchange for their religious convictions, but purchased by the money of Protestant Bible Societies; whereas here, in this country, the money is forced out of the pockets of Catholics, and is then made use of to help the unprincipled and slavish portion of the Catholic people to abandon their faith and to expose their children to the imminent danger of never having that faith, and, as we believe, bringing eternal ruin on themselves and their unfortunate children.

It is also true that Mr. Shrimski has expressed himself as an advocate of the secular education system, and has declared his hope to see Catholics availing themselves of that system. The reply seems to me to be harsh, though true and forcible. If Mr. Shrimski was aware of the fact that it is religious conviction and conscience which make us reject the secular system and cling to education under the guidance of our religion—if he knew that every honest and conscientious Catholic would sacrifice his own life and that of his offspring rather than give up his faith and obedience to the Catholic Church, I am of opinion our respected fellow-citizen would never have made any light allusions to us, or expressed his hope that we would abandon principles that are dearer to us than life.

Of course, as he proclaims himself an advocate of a system that oppresses us, no honest Catholic can vote for him. Nevertheless, he will not cease to have the esteem of the Catholic body, for men of worth and goodness deserve well of their fellow-beings; and I must bear testimony to the fact that Mr. Shrimski is ever among the first to share in any work for the public good. He had a large, even the principal, share in establishing our Hospital, Mechanic's Institute, and our excellent harbor, both by his influence and by his large contributions; and even when the Catholics require help for church or schools or any charity, Mr. Shrimski is ever ready with his contribution. And, moreover, now, when he is advocating secular education he gave me five or six weeks since, £5 s. to establish Christian Brothers in this town. In due time, I intend thanking him and our fellow-colonists who help us in the same way. But if Mr. Shrimski gave us all he possesses, it would not make us abandon principles: and on principle every Catholic will refuse him, and everyone like him, all aid when seeking to represent us again.

Now, as I am on this subject, allow me to add that I deprecate letter-writing and speeches tending to arouse bitter feelings between class and class, therefore it would have been well if Mr. Shrimski had not spoken of us as he did; but as he did so, I can scarcely blame "A Roman Catholic" for replying to him. But at the same time I think it would have been better he did not reply, for the reply, or any reply in words, is of very little use. The reply that we Catholics must give to all such statements and speeches is an unceasing practical effort to maintain our schools, and a determined resolution, proved by real work, to establish first-class Catholic, and, therefore, Christian schools. If we prove by a persevering consistent course that we are honest and conscientious in what we are doing, I am persuaded we will get, even from those who differ from us, a large support and generous help to establish our own schools. In fact, I now state publicly for the first time that we Catholics here in Oamaru district are pursuing a course that is winning for us the sympathy and pecuniary aid of many generous persons who differ from us in our views even on education, but who help us because they see the earnestness with which their Catholic fellow-citizens are working. We have already secured a sum of over £800, collected in this district from all classes within the last two years, for the purpose of establishing Christian Brothers in this town. We will require at least as much more to enable us to carry out the intended work, but we have not the slightest fear but that we shall have the required amount in time; in fact, within four months from this day we would have everything ready for the Christian Brothers if they were prepared to come. Unfortunately it is not money or means that are wanting, but the men. The calls are so many on this noble and devoted Christian Society that it is utterly impossible for them to meet every demand; but, according to agreement already entered into, we shall get them when our turn comes, and we shall be prepared when they are ready. Thus, Mr. Editor, I think we are by our work proving that Mr. Shrimski's hopes of seeing Catholics making use of the Government secular schools are groundless, and that he will soon learn that what we are doing is no solitary instance of the determination of all honest Catholics not to use the "souper" schools. Whether the Government makes any change in the laws or not, Catholic schools will be established and maintained, and I think if I asked members of the Government for help I would get it. I got it from their advocate, Mr. Shrimski, and I know he will give again when asked. Finally, would it not be well for the Government to give the Catholics a share of the money forced from them, so that the Government may have control over these schools, and the Catholics may be content that a spirit of emulation may be encouraged between the several schools, that thus education may be promoted without bitterness or party spirit, but all of us may co-operate in promoting the general welfare of the inhabitants of these islands, where everything except this education difficulty promises the brightest future.—I am, &c.,

WAR. COLEMAN.

CONVENT SCHOOLS, ONEHUNGA.

(N.Z. Herald, May 9th.)

THE annual examination of the Roman Catholic schools at Onehunga has been in progress during the last two days, and the interest manifested by the inhabitants, shown by the large attendances of parents and friends on each occasion, must have been excessively gratifying to the Rev. Father Paul and to those interested in the progress of this branch of education. The grounds surrounding the church and convent are planted with choice trees, and contain flower-plats, &c. The paths are in excellent order. In fact, it is a perfect pleasure ground, evincing cultivated taste and constant attention, and the surroundings, as well as the buildings, reflect credit on Father Paul, the pastor, who has been in charge of the parish for the last twenty years.

The examinations were commenced on Tuesday morning with the boys' school, which is under the charge of Mr. Honau. There are fifty boys attending this school, and in order to meet requirements, an assistant teacher has been appointed. At the examination, the Very Rev. Father Fynes presided; and there were also present the Rev. Fathers Macdonald, O'Hara, and Paul, besides a very large number of friends of the pupils. They were examined on subjects of Christian doctrine, geography, grammar, arithmetic, &c., and specimens of their writing were exhibited. Recitations and readings were given by the scholars, and all present seemed to be pleased with their proficiency. A presentation of prizes followed. Every pupil received a prize in order of merit. The examination of the St. Joseph's Girls' School, which is conducted by the Sisters of Mercy, followed in the exhibition hall, a large building erected in front of the old school-room. (This school has an attendance of 60 pupils.) The examinations of the various classes, which were interspersed by vocal and instrumental music, were very satisfactory, and a distribution of prizes, in which each pupil participated, followed. The pupils were neatly dressed, and the general effect was not only interesting but picturesque. The rev. chairman highly complimented the pupils on the manner in which they had acquitted themselves.

The examination was resumed yesterday in the Select School. The same clergymen were present. The number of pupils attending the school is 35 of all denominations. The exhibition hall was decorated with paintings, needle and crochet-work, and other useful and ornamental materials, the work of the pupils, and the paintings especially were of a high order of merit. At this examination there were numerous visitors from Auckland present, including Mr. J. A. Tole, M.H.R., Mr. D. A. Tole, and others. The pupils exhibited a marked degree of intelligence in the ordinary courses of education—history, arithmetic, geography, grammar, &c.—but in the higher scientific branches they showed a proficiency which was remarkable. One course in which the pupils have paid careful attention to the advice of their instructors is scientific knowledge. The subjects of electricity and telegraphy have received careful attention, the instructor being the Rev. Father Paul. The rev. pastor has, at his own charge, provided a complete electrical machine and a full telegraphic apparatus. The examination yesterday was illustrated by a description of the various parts of those machines, and, at the close, about half-a-dozen of the pupils exhibited their proficiency by reading messages by sound transmitted by an Auckland operator. At the examination a drama was performed by the more advanced scholars.

The care and art evinced in make-up and dress were highly creditable, and the elocution was by no means faulty. The intervals were filled up by musical selections. Some of the six-handed performances—two pianos and a harmonium—were really excellent. So also were the songs and solos. The prizes contributed by Mr. J. A. Tole included two handsome silver crosses and an illustrated edition of Moore's poems. Mr. McIntyre gave prizes to the value of £2 5s. and the Mayor to the value of £1, with the promise of increased prizes for next examination. The rev. chairman gave an encouraging address to the pupils, making special reference to the incessant labours of Father Paul, and distributed the prizes as follows:—

FIRST CLASS.—Miss Dickey, 1st prize, conduct and composition; Miss Donovan, 2nd prize, catechism; Miss McMahon, work; Miss Williams, general improvement; Miss Shaldrick, writing; Miss Broadfoot, geography; Miss Bolen, parsing; Miss Honau, mental arithmetic; Miss White, biography; Miss Daly, history; Miss Moran, mechanics.

SECOND CLASS.—Miss Mulkere, music; Miss A. Mulkere, arithmetic; Miss Worsp, grammar; Miss F. Dickey, tables; Miss J. Worsp, general improvement; Miss Berry, English history; Miss C. Berry, Christian Brothers' geography; Miss Keahan, arithmetic; Miss Cullen, regular attendance; Miss Kenne, reading; Miss Gall, obedience; Miss M. Moran, spelling; Miss Hutchinson, encouragement.

THIRD CLASS.—Miss Hand, general improvement; Miss Piccard, neatness; Miss O'Brien, encouragement; Miss Pittar, neatness; Miss E. Pittar, obedience.

The first prize for telegraphy, a handsomely bound encyclopaedia of science, was presented to Miss Dickey; and the second, Moore's poetical works, to Miss Williams. In regard to the electrical telegraphic instruments used, they are all of New Zealand workmanship, and are very efficient.

In an article on "The Celt of Wales and Ireland," in a recent number of the *Cornhill Magazine*, there occurs the following discrimination between the Celt and the Saxon.—"The whole mental machinery of the Welsh and Irish seems better oiled than that of the Saxon. They catch an idea as a good player catches a shuttlecock; and the speaker is never called upon, in the ineffably tiresome way so common in England, to repeat his remark that his auditor may be enabled to swallow and digest it before he replies. The retort comes sharp and quick as the snap of a revolver. Anger, pleasure, tears, and laughter, follow the flash which gives occasion to them, and do not go on rumbling in English fashion three minutes afterwards. The Celt may describe sometimes to be called indiscreet, wrong-headed, and scatter-brained; but no one could ever dream of applying to him the epithets of dullard, Bœotian, clodpole, numbskull, or dunderhead. He may be silly, but he is never beef-witted."