

The New Zealand Tablet.

FIAT JUSTITIA.

FRIDAY, JULY 18, 1879.

A REVIEW.

HERE has been during the past week, an election contest in this city; and it is curious to note the attitude of the city daily Press towards the principles of the candidates. We refer chiefly to two of the candidates. It is not important to delay in considering the case of the third. Mr. STEWART, the successful candidate, declared himself an advocate of compulsory Bible reading during school hours in the 'public' schools. Mr. REEVES, the defeated candidate declared himself the opponent of such reading. Mr. STEWART is the advocate of sectarianism of the most odious type, a sectarianism that would compel all teachers even Jews, Catholics, and other non-Protestants, to teach Protestantism to all who are willing to accept such teaching, and to all who can be frightened or cajoled to accept such teaching. Mr. REEVES was opposed to this, but he would not on any account touch the present godless system of education except in the event of some future improbable contingency. To all intents and purposes Mr. STEWART is a Protestant denominationalist, and Mr. REEVES a pure secularist.

This is in reality the state of the case. It will be said we know that we do Mr. STEWART an injustice, and attribute to him what he has not said. But we shall easily show that we do him no injustice whatever. He is the nominee of the Bible in Schools Association, whose demand is that not only shall the Bible be read by all teachers in the public schools, but also explained; and he is the avowed advocate of the re-introduction of the old Otago system under which teachers in all schools were compelled to teach prayers, read the Bible, and explain it, and under which Catholics were frequently compelled or cajoled to read the Bible. What does this prove? Precisely what we stated above. No doubt Mr. STEWART towards the end of the contest and when hard pressed by a troublesome question said that he would not compel teachers who objected to Bible reading to read that sacred volume. But the value of this admission may be estimated from another statement made by him, that he would leave it in the power of the various committees to decide whether the Bible should be read in the schools or not. What, then, is the meaning of saying that teachers who object should not be compelled to read the Bible, and at the same time advocating the right and the power of committees to compel them to read it? Why of course the meaning is that teachers objecting to read the Bible must resign, or be dismissed. And this is the political wisdom and spirit of justice displayed by our new member. The Legislature is not likely to be much the better for the common sense or genius of Mr. STEWART.

What is to be said in reference to Mr. REEVES' policy and principles on the education question. He is simply a secularist opposed to Bible reading in schools, and would not touch the present education system, except in the event of the Bible being introduced into them. In such an event he would, whilst retaining the present system *plus* the Bible, superadd to it a provision for such as are unwilling to send their children to Government schools. Mr. REEVES, then, is a secularist, and an upholder of the present godless system of education. Mr. STEWART is simply a sectarian of the narrowest kind, a sectarian who wishes practically to hand over all public schools and public endowments, in Otago at least, to the Presbyterian body, to the exclusion of all others. This is really the state of the case.

And under such circumstances what has been the course pursued during this contest by the daily press of the city. For a considerable time this press has gone in, head and shoulders, for secularism, would not even listen to any proposal in the direction of denominationalism. Latterly, and for a short time, the *Morning Herald* had somewhat departed from its first tone and advocated sectarianism in the direction of Presbyterianism. But until this contest the other two dailies had kept steadily hammering away at the secularists'

anvil. No sooner, however, does a candidate appear who says that if secularism be abandoned he will be in favour of doing justice to the denominations, that is in reality, to Catholics, than these two papers turn right about face, abandon all their previous professions, desert their principles, and call on the electors of Dunedin to vote against the secularist, and in favour of the odious sectarian.

This is another illustration of what we have always believed and said, that for the most part the loudest and most truculent advocates of secularism have principally in view, not the promotion of education, but the injury of Catholicism. They do not care anything for secularism, except in so far as it supplies them with a ready instrument to gratify their blind hate of anything Catholic. Here we find them abandoning their principles and strenuously supporting an avowed sectarian in opposition to a secularist who said that in the event of sectarians pursuing with effect a certain policy he would be in favour of doing justice to denominationalists, and to Catholics amongst others. So much for consistency, honour, and honesty.

The *Evening Star* is particularly sore because the petition adopted by the late Catholic aggregate meeting complained that the present education system inflicts an injustice on them by compelling them to pay taxes for what is not only of no use to them, but also a positive injury. The new theory of the *Star*, a theory, however, which it only applies in the case of Catholics, is that between the Government and its subjects there can be no place for injustice. According to the *Evening Star*, Catholics suffer no injustice on the score of taxation for a system of education which oppresses their consciences and rifles their pocket because such taxation has been ordered by the majority, or the Government which is supposed to represent the majority. This is certainly a new principle which if carried to its legitimate consequences would forbid the repeal of any law on the score of injustice and legitimise every species of iniquity. Truly bigotry is blind and inconsistent.

TWO ILLUSTRATIONS.

OUR readers need not be reminded of our principles on the Education Question. These have been repeated too often and too recently to be unknown or forgotten. We have also said that the time is not far distant when the managers of our public schools will not only supply free, secular, and compulsory education, but that they will, as a logical consequence, feel themselves called upon to provide their pupils with food and clothing as well. Our contention on this point has been that the Government is as much obliged to supply food and clothing for children as it is to provide free and secular education for the children of well-to-do people. The last mail from England affords some illustrations of the foregoing.

First, in reference to the natural outcome of secular schools. We have never hesitated to designate these as godless. Now for an illustration. The Birmingham School Board is the most secular of school Boards. No mention whatever of religion was or is permitted in its schools. In its view of the question religion was and is, quite superfluous. Children could be brought up to be good citizens without it; and its managers and school teachers have been compelled to act on this assumption. An experience of eight years, however, has partially dispelled this idea. This Board has now got so far as to be convinced that for the rising generation there must be a more systematic teaching of morality than hitherto. It is now convinced that reading, writing, and arithmetic, even science and the ordinary school discipline are not sufficient. At a recent meeting of the Board, its chairman, Mr. Dixon, the most rabid secularist in Great Britain moved the following resolution:—

"THE BIRMINGHAM SCHOOL BOARD.—An important resolution, affecting the character of the instruction given in the schools, was adopted on Thursday by the Birmingham School Board. Mr. George Dixon, who presided, moved, pursuant to notice, "That, in the opinion of this Board it is desirable that systematic moral instruction be given in all the Birmingham Board schools." He said moral instruction was already contained in the reading books which were used in the various Board schools, therefore he was only advocating an extension of what was given at the present time in the various schools. Besides an extension of it, he wished it to be systematic. He thought it desirable that special times should be set apart for the giving of moral instruction. The children, he thought, should be taught that there were moral laws, and that those laws should be enforced, and if, in the course of the instruction, the name of God were mentioned, he saw no harm in it."

In reference to this one of the members remarked as follows. "Dr. Langford said that he regretted that the chairman had