

## OUR MELBOURNE LETTER.

(From Our Own Correspondent.)

Melbourne, 14th October, 1879.

There has been a lull in the education-cum-religious question. Major Smith has sent Bishop Moorhouse an official letter in reply to his communications on the subject of religious instruction in State schools. "The Minister of Education points out that the adoption of the proposals submitted by the Bishop would necessitate an amendment of the Education Act. This is a course which the Minister is not prepared to recommend. So far, however, as the Minister is able within the provisions of the Act to offer facilities for imparting religious instruction he is anxious to do so." This of course is all moonshine, and leaves the question exactly where it was.

It has been officially announced that the Minister of Education has decided that Mr. J. H. Derrick, the State school teacher of whose suspension I wrote to you lately, shall be cautioned and reinstated. The Minister held his hand for a time at the instance of the friends of Mr. Derrick, who were desirous that a public meeting should first be held in the district. At this meeting a resolution was unanimously carried in favour of the teacher, and the following resolution was carried condemnatory of the clergyman:—"That this meeting views with unfeigned regret the conduct of the Rev. C. T. Perks in making charges against the reputation of Mr. Derrick, alleged to be based upon current rumours and children's statements."

In a letter in this morning's *Argus* headed "The Clergy v. the Schoolmasters," Dean Macartney writes:—"It is certainly not on account of his indifference to the training of the children in his parish that the vials of wrath have been poured on the head of Mr. Perks, and he seems to stand as a beacon to warn the too zealous clergymen, perhaps to warn a too zealous bishop, that there are breakers ahead."

The tariff has been passed, and the estimates are being slowly pushed through. The third reading of the Reform Bill will be on for discussion next week, when we shall no doubt have plenty of excitement. Mr. Berry, who is much better, will be able to resume his parliamentary duties to-morrow.

A deputation of miners on strike, from Sandhurst, waited on Mr. George Lansell, one of the largest mine owners here, on the subject of the reduction of their wages. In the course of Mr. Lansell's reply he gave some hard knocks to the Government. He said: "The next thing can be easily remedied, and I hope it will soon be done, and that is for the miners to insist that the miserable so-called government in regard to mining be at once seen to. I avoid politics as a rule, as I think by working the large ventures I do I sufficiently fulfil my duties as an average colonist. What is wanted is for the miners to demand some sort of economy in the governing of the small handful of people in Victoria. Just fancy our Bourke street 'firm' taxing our engines, tools, and appliances, to fool away in such things as cutting down the Nelson, building an exhibition that will be a dead loss to the colony, and spending £5,000 more on that absurd journey to England. If these expenses were paid out of surplus it would, in my opinion, be very bad, but to be done with money extracted mostly from the working classes by making them pay extra for their boots, shoes, and other necessaries, seems to me ridiculous in the highest degree. Equally absurd is it to pay our three members of Parliament £18 per week."

I have heard some good yarns about one of our State school teachers which may interest your readers. The children and a number of their parents were assembled to take part in the distribution of prizes. The teacher commanded silence; this order not being immediately complied with, he held up a pin and said he would not commence until they could hear it drop. This produced the desired effect, and amidst breathless silence he asked, "Now have you heard the pin drop?" "Please I did," said a ready little urchin. "That's a lie, Tommy," says Mr. Schoolmaster; and with that he shows to the astonished audience the pin which he still held in his hand. But it was not long after when Tommy had his revenge and it happened in this wise. The Inspector was expected on a certain day and the teacher, wishing to have a large attendance promised the boys if they mustered in great force he would show them something that they never saw before and would never see again. The boys having fulfilled their part of the engagement reminded Mr. Schoolmaster of his promise when he produced a nut from his pocket, cracked it, and showed them the kernel. "Now boys you never saw that before, and" (putting it in his mouth) "you will never see it again." But, alas for human resolution! the nut proved more than he could swallow. Being un-sound and unsavoury he spat it out, when Tommy spying it cries out, "That's a lie, sir, for I see it on the floor."

Another story told me of this schoolmaster I hardly like to repeat it is so profane. I will, however, tell it as a specimen of secular teaching. He, one day, asked his pupils why he was like Jesus Christ. On their giving up the riddle he said, because "I like little children to come unto me."

As an illustration of the Government by mob rule the reprieve of the murderer Lawrence, is an excellent example. Some months ago this man shot his superior officer, Mr. Finlayson, the Secretary for Railways. For this offence he was tried, convicted, and sentenced to be hanged. The jury, however, having recommended him to mercy, on the extraordinary plea that he was in a state of irritability when he committed the offence, the matter was duly referred to the Executive, which after serious consideration upheld the decision of the court. An agitation sprung up at once in the press, at public meetings, and even in parliament. The object of all this agitation was to insist that the sentence should not be carried out on the plea of Lawrence's supposed insanity; that plea had been the groundwork of his defence at the trial and had signally failed. The medical evidence as usual was pretty evenly divided; some doctors declaring he was mad and others that he was not mad. There seems no doubt on the point that there was insanity in his family and still less doubt that by drinking he had increased whatever tendency he had that way. However, the Executive in order to please the mob, or let us say the majority, had another sitting and (I suppose after grave consideration), commuted the sentence to imprisonment for life.

It would appear that now-a-days, no matter how diabolical and cruel an offence may be, the perpetrator gets a great deal of sympathy. During the afternoon the papers say that Lawrence was visited by several friends and the Sheriff (Colonel Rede), all of whom congratulated him on the commutation of his sentence. You would fancy that instead of shooting poor Finlayson he had shot down Ned Kelly, the notorious bushranger, and deserved the thanks of the community. In Sydney, the other day, three young scoundrels convicted of a heinous crime were justly sentenced to be hanged, and the mob absolutely marched to Government House and succeeded in upsetting the sentence by intimidation.

The first grand cricket match of the season, between the Inter-colonial team and sixteen of the Colts, was to have been played on Saturday, but the rain interfered. There is some talk of another Australian eleven being formed next month. The following are the names of the team:—Bannerman (2), Evans, Murdoch, Spofforth, Massie, Garrett, N.S.W.; and Boyle, Alexander, Blackham, Palmer, J., Percy, Macdonnell, or Slight, Victoria.

## EDUCATION BY THE STATE.

(From the *Manawatu Times*.)

WE know of no single subject so difficult either to write or legislate upon as education; requiring as it does the watchful care to prevent private feelings influencing utterances which are supposed to be alone for the public good. A few weeks ago we published in our correspondence column a letter from Mr. Bruce upon the same subject, and to those to whom the gentleman is personally known, any utterance or expression of opinion—but particularly on such a grave subject—would be sure to carry great weight. He is so highly and universally esteemed, and his thorough conscientiousness so well-known, that no one who read his letter would think otherwise than that his only reason in appearing in print was the earnest desire to see a most momentous question immediately and permanently dealt with. We agree with him that education without religious teaching is worse than useless—it is positively dangerous—and we lately came across a most unexpected witness in the person of the patriarchal Victor Hugo, who says in one of his works—"Those parents should be brought before the tribunals who sent their children to schools over which is written—'no religion taught here.'" But while we so readily agree with Mr. Bruce as to what is required, the manner in which it is to be achieved is not so easily agreed upon. There are several clauses in the Education Act of such a nature as to preclude any conscientious Catholic from taking employment under the Education Board. The advocates of Bible reading in the schools, we have no doubt, are actuated with the most laudable intentions in urging its introduction, and gentlemen with liberal views like Mr. Bruce, would do so with a conscience clause—that is, if we understand aright, a certain time would be set apart for Biblical instruction, during which, however, the children of parents so objecting would not be asked to attend. This certainly would be a way out of the difficulty as far as one section of the community was concerned; but how about the other? We have now State schools with compulsory education, which makes it incumbent upon persons of all denominations to send their children, under pain of the compulsory clause being put into execution. Well, religious instruction would be provided for one section, and those children belonging to the other would be allowed to grow up without any religious training. Certainly the course proposed under the conscience clause would be a mitigation of the evil; but the State should have no half measures, and where all are taxed equally alike, the benefits to be bestowed should be the same. The difficulty is a weighty one, and it is intensified in the country districts, for we think that in large centres, such as Dunedin, Wellington, Christchurch, Auckland, &c., where the Catholic body is sufficiently numerous to fill large schools with their own denomination, they could fairly command assistance from the State. We know the really heavy sacrifices which they have been making in all those cities for conscience sake, and while we see no reason, why they should not receive a proportion, of the rates equal per head to the population, we confess that in districts such as this we fail to see how the difficulty can be obviated. Without the conscience clause, reading the Bible in a State school should have our most uncompromising opposition, for as parents are compelled by law to send their children, such a step would be nothing more nor less than an attempt to proselytise by Act of Parliament. All who have the real worth of the rising generation at heart agree with Mr. Gladstone, "that every system that puts religious education in the back-ground is a pernicious system," but unfortunately the solving of the problem is a matter yet to come.

The Very Rev. Canon Quinn, V.G., and lately P.P. of Athy, Co. Kildare, has succeeded the Most Rev. Dr. McCabe, Archbishop of Dublin, in the parish of Kingstown, Co. Dublin.

I remember Cardinal Manning once saying that he kept his eye on the reports of police cases, morning by morning, and that every Irish name which figured there gave him a pang of pain. Of course that pain is alleviated when his Eminence can make the presence of any of his wandering flock in the prisoner's dock the occasion of their restoration to Christian virtue, as was probably the case at the Middlesex assizes the other day. A more touching and a more apostolic sight has not been witnessed for many a day than that which presented itself when the Cardinal drove down to the Court to claim as one of his spiritual children a poor woman whom the jury had found guilty of a trivial theft, but whom Sergeant Cox was unwilling, in face of the excellent testimonies given to her in the past by various employers, to send back to prison. In his difficulty he sent Cardinal Manning a letter, which the Prelate surprised him by replying to in person. His Eminence arranged for the woman's removal to the Home at Finchley, and possibly thus rescued a soul that might otherwise have been lost. This is a shepherd, indeed, who knows his sheep and is known by them.—*Catholic Times* (Liverpool).