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Current Topics

AT HOME AND ABROAD.

SIR JULIUS VOGEL also perceives the folly—**A CRYING ABUSE**, even the something worse than folly—of turning the public schools of the Colony into nurseries for babies. We clip the following question put to him at his recent meeting in Christchurch, with Sir Julius' answer, from our contemporary the *Lyttelton Times*:—"I have read in some of our local papers—I think in the *Otago Daily Times*—that Sir Julius Vogel, soon after his arrival in this country the last time, stated that to impound £500,000 out of the Consolidated Revenue for the purposes of education was superlatively absurd. Now, seeing that the Colony is in an unprecedented state of depression, and that hundreds of old, useful colonists are going away in consequence; and seeing, further, that it has now become very doubtful whether a payable market can be found in the Old Country for farm produce sent from here, what does Sir Julius Vogel think now of a dogged persistency on the part of our legislators in a line of policy in the matter of education which he himself has denounced to be 'superlatively absurd?' Sir Julius Vogel: My answer is that I don't remember using the phrase. It doesn't sound such a phrase as I would use, but I may have done so. Then I don't believe that thousands are leaving the Colony, because statistics show that more are coming than are going. Then I am not sure that those persons who are in distress do not find their distress materially alleviated by having their children educated free of cost. There is no greater boon to the working classes than free education. Take a family of five or six children; the father can hardly complain of the taxation to which he is subject, when it is a fact that he receives from £20 to £25 a year in free education. I do not think that the class referred to has any reason to complain; but what I did say then, and what I do say now, is that I think the cost of education is excessive. The State pays more than would have to be paid if the children were sent to private institutions. Children are sent to school who ought to be in their mothers' arms—at least children of four or five years of age—and in my opinion it is nothing short of mischievous to have children sent to school at that age. I think there is not sufficient local supervision, or not sufficient economy on the part of the Government. We are paying £3 15s per head, and by a custom which has arisen—5s additional for every child attending school; and in order that the committees may grab as much as possible they take children from the mothers' arms. I don't suppose that they teach them much, but they are allowed to sit on the floor (laughter). Year by year the number of children increases. I need scarcely tell you that such is the case (laughter). It is a very serious matter, and it is quite true that the House is very jealous of any interference with the expenditure; and though my own view is that we ought to have a less expensive system, yet I cannot avoid seeing that the view of the majority throughout the country is not in accordance with mine." Sir Julius, nevertheless, has not explained the case fully, and when we consider that the £20 or £25 received in free education by the father of five or six children is frequently received by fathers who are able to pay for their children's education, and largely at the expense of those who are not well-to-do, the matter appears much more grave. Free education is a necessity for those who cannot afford to pay for their children's schooling, and it should without question be provided for them, but provided as it is for the whole population inclusively, the cost must continue excessive and become still heavier every year—to the serious injury of many and the general detriment of the children. The case of the little children Sir Julius explains very clearly. There is, however, connected with it another feature not alluded to—nor perhaps as yet generally noticed. It is that the admission of these infants into the schools tells in a marked manner against the training of young girls to become domestic servants—a very necessary portion of the community. The nurse-girl, who was commonly developed into the general servant, is not now employed in many families, whose nursing is done by the school teachers—and thus, as we have heard it complained, many of the poorer households are deprived of a means of increasing their earnings, and of providing occupation for their members. The whole school system, in short, as it now exists,

is full of evils, and the points in which it works mischief are endless. The question put to Sir Julius was a useful one, and his answer should be sufficient to work a change, were it not for the attitude taken up, and not to be departed from, by a pig-headed majority.

ANOTHER SCANDALOUS ATTACK.

ANOTHER illustration of those unprovoked outrages by which certain portions of the English Press distinguish themselves in their treatment of matters connected with Ireland occurs in the *Saturday Review* of August 15. The writer is speaking of the creation of Cardinals which had lately taken place, and he seizes upon the opportunity afforded him to make a scandalous, unjustifiable and libellous attack on His Eminence Cardinal Moran, on the character of the Irish priesthood of New South Wales, and on Irish Catholics generally. An attempt, moreover, made to promote jealousy and ill-feeling between Catholics of the different nationalities is particularly insidious, and deserves the most severe reprehension. "Last year," says the *Review* "he (Archbishop Moran) succeeded, on the death of Archbishop Vaughan, to the Roman Catholic See of Sydney, where, if truth must be spoken, his career has been far from a success. He had difficulties, no doubt, to contend with. He followed a prelate of considerable acquirements and great force of character, who had made himself universally popular and respected as well among Protestants at Sydney as among his own flock, as was shown at the time of his embarking for England on what proved to be his last voyage . . . when half the population of Sydney followed him to the port and cheered as the vessel steamed out to sea." Comparisons, as we know, are "odorous," and not always pleasantly so, and when one is made for the purpose of discrediting the acquirements and character of a prelate by those of his predecessor the unpleasantness, not to say the stench, is very marked. No man more than the late Archbishop Vaughan himself would have been ready to acknowledge the superiority of Cardinal Moran in those points where he is superior, or would have rejoiced more to know that the See left vacant by him had been more ably filled. And brilliant though Archbishop Vaughan was there can be no doubt but that a more solidly able man now fills his place. It will further hold good in the opinion of all Catholics that a Pontiff like Leo XIII., noted for his wisdom and the strength and keenness of his judgment, would be the last among all living beings who could make the mistake of replacing a strong and fully-qualified man by a weaker one in a position growing every day in importance, and year by year needing a nicer and more skilful management, as well as a bolder standing, and a braver front towards a world increasing in enmity against the Church of God. As the colonies grow in importance, those who are appointed to rule in them must of necessity be fitted for the task required of them, and men of a higher, rather than a lower standard must necessarily be appointed. Under no circumstances could the Pope have failed in making such an appointment as the circumstances of the place and times demanded. And the intimate knowledge that he possessed of Cardinal Moran's career, of his great learning as famous among the learned men of Rome as among those of his native country, and known to all who constitute the learned world, of his singular moderation, and of all those qualities owned by him that elevate the man and adorn the prelate, in itself vouches for the soundness of his Holiness's choice. To be little the qualifications of Cardinal Moran is to offer an insult to the wisdom and judgment of the Sovereign Pontiff, and no one would more strongly have condemned such an action than his Eminence's distinguished and admirable predecessor. This writer, however, who pretends to glorify the memory of Archbishop Vaughan at the expense of his successor, in fact, insults that memory, and betrays that he is more actuated by the deadly, disgraceful, hatred of the Irish people than by respect for anything connected with Archbishop Vaughan or the work so well and faithfully done by him during his all too short career. "But moreover" says the *Review*, "Archbishop Vaughan was an Englishman, and had a strong enough wrist to control the somewhat unruly—and almost wholly Irish—priest-hood under his jurisdiction, who would be none the worse, if they are not greatly maligned, could a little of the superfluous energy of our blue ribbon enthusiasts be brought to bear upon them." The picture drawn of Archbishop Vaughan bullying with an iron hand and by virtue of his English blood and prejudices a drunken Irish priesthood is one as dishonouring to his memory, as it is foul and calumnious towards the clergy of New