

Correspondence.

[We are not responsible for the opinions expressed by our Correspondents.]

PARNELL DEFENCE FUND.

TO THE EDITOR N.Z. TABLET.

SIR,—Enclosed you will find cheque for £2 9s, in aid of the Parnell Defence Fund, collected by Mr. P. Deegan, of Lime Hills. The lists are now closed in the Winton district. Mr. Deegan and I return our sincere thanks to those gentlemen who so liberally subscribed for the cause, and especially so to those Protestants and Orangemen who did so as a protest against the howlings of some fanatics who try to make people believe that none but Catholics take up the cause.—I am, etc.

T. HORAN.

Diary of the Week.

WEDNESDAY, 31st.

CAPE FOULWIND labour difficulty settled; all employees to be union men, receiving standard rate of wages.—Earthquake shocks at Westport, Reefton, and Greymouth.—German Emperor sails for Spithead

THURSDAY, 1st.

Proposed to commence systematic cultivation of sugar beet in Waikato district.—Salisbury, speaking at London Mansion House, pronounces evacuation of Egypt impossible.

FRIDAY, 2nd.

Public meeting at Greymouth urges on Government completion of Grey-Hokitika railway.—German Emperor arrives at Cowes, Isle of Wight.

SATURDAY, 3rd.

Canada excited by seizure of fishing schooner in Behring Sea by American cruiser.—Colonel Grenfell wins decisive victory over derwishes.—Boehm, B.A., commissioned to execute memorial tablet of late W. B. Dalley.—Intense heat causing many deaths at Bkhara.

MONDAY, 5th.

Cordial reception of Emperor William in England taken by German Press as proof of support given to Triple Alliance.

TUESDAY, 6th.

Meeting of Tailoress's Union in Dunedin adopts rules prepared by committee.—Captain Haasby, late U.S.S. Hawea, killed by tram at Sydney.—Fighting at Crete between Turkish troops and political factions.—Bill providing for younger members of Royal Family passes Commons by 95 majority.

PASTORAL LETTER OF THE BISHOP OF AUCKLAND.

JOHN EDMUND, OF THE ORDER OF ST. BENEDICT, BY THE GRACE OF GOD, AND THE FAVOUR OF THE HOLY APOSTOLIC SEE, BISHOP OF AUCKLAND, TO THE CLERGY SECULAR AND REGULAR, AND TO THE LAITY OF THE SAID DIOCESE, HEALTH AND BENEDICTION IN THE LORD.

We were prevented this year from addressing you, dearly beloved children in Jesus Christ, in our usual Lenten Pastoral, by our absence from the Diocese. We, therefore, gladly avail ourselves of the present occasion at this season of the year, when it is our wont to appeal to you on behalf of the orphans and destitute children of our diocese, to allow our thoughts to expand, and to invite your careful attention to a few reflections on the all important topic of the religious education of childhood. It is a subject, this, which is allied to, though distinct from, the other great question of the day, and which forms one of the great contentions between the Catholic Church and infidelity—as to the duty, the necessity, and the advantages of school training and education being guided by and accompanied with the imparting of religious principles, and practice, and belief. We propose on this occasion to confine our reflections to that fundamental, and therefore most important element of religious education, which dates from the cradle, overlaps the influences of the school, and continues more or less actively through manhood and womanhood, so long as the associations contained in that sacred word *home* have any place in the realities of life or the recollections of memory.

A striking feature in what we may call the human character of Him who came to save and redeem mankind is displayed in the pages of the Gospels. It is the tenderness and affection he manifested towards children. In His journeyings throughout the country districts of Judea, in His sojourns in its towns and villages, it was His wont to call the little ones around Him, and as they crowded and pressed to get near Him, He would caress and bless them, and take their part against His friends and disciples who would have sent them away as presumptuous and importunate, declaring His wish that they should not be hindered, because their simplicity and docility made them apt subjects for the Kingdom of His grace in this world and of His Glory in the next. This solicitude and love for the little ones of the flock of Jesus Christ has been inherited and perpetuated by the pastors of the Church, and ourselves, both from the love we bear towards children, and from a sense of the duty that is incumbent on us, have constantly inculcated to the priests and people the importance of that great question of our times—the Christian education of youth, and have frequently insisted on the duty of Catholic parents to send their children to our own Catholic schools. During our episcopal visitation of the diocese we have dwelt on the necessity of Sunday Schools, and reproved the apathy of certain parents—especially those whose children do not

frequent the Catholic schools—in seeing that their children, both boys and girls, go to the Sunday School with their catechism already prepared and learned by heart.

But, dearly beloved children in Jesus Christ, besides the instructions of the school and the teaching of the priest, there is another kind of education to which we would call your special attention in this pastoral letter. It is the education of the home—the instruction the child has a right to receive from its parents; the surroundings that from morning to night make such deep and lasting impression in the child's mind and the child's heart. How full of meaning is that saying of St. John Chrysostom's, "The parents' lips are the child's primer." The words that fall from a parent's lips are necessarily the first educators of the infant's mind; they constitute an ever present source of intellectual development, an all powerful factor in the formation of the child's affections and aspirations. It is in the parent's words that the child's intelligence begins to discern the first glimmerings of that holy faith and religion, the germs of which were infused at the baptismal font; it is the parents' whisperings that engender the first beginnings of a sacred awe for the mysteries of religion; the first realisation of dependence on the invisible Creator; the first tender yearnings of love towards Jesus and Mary; the first aspirations of a holy ambition in the growth of virtue, and the attainment of eternal reward. Finally, the parents' lips ought to be that daily source of instruction from which the innocent and pliable soul of the child learns its duties, its dangers, its enemies, its temptations. How often the self-restrained and generous devotedness of the man or woman dates back to the first idea of virtue and Christian charity implanted in childhood by God-fearing parents; or, on the other hand, how often the hideous crimes and moral obliquity of the criminal classes can be traced to the blasphemy, the irreligion, and the immorality of the homes of their childhood.

It is you, therefore, Christian parents, who are necessarily the first educators of your family, and its first apostles also. Your mission begins with the first meaningless prattle of the playful infant and the virtue or the vice of the future man or woman depends in great measure on the manner in which you fulfil this mission. Yes, Catholic mother, your babe may be still in its cradle—it cannot understand or realise what you are saying, but in imitation of the early Christians, frequently sign its little forehead and breast with the holy sign of the cross. Let one of the first uses of its tiny hands, under the guidance of the mother's hand, be to bless itself. Let its first book be one that is capable of teaching it to know and to love its Creator. Let the first story it hears from its father's lips be one that hinges on the great truths of religion; and let it never come to pass that its first idea of religion and of God should come to it only when it begins to go to the Sisters' school, or is taken by its parents to the Church and there hears the priest at the altar address the people. To you, therefore, Catholic parents, belongs the privilege, on you devolves the responsibility of laying the foundations of the religious instruction and education of your children. Yes, it is whilst they are as yet in the tender age of infancy, when, as St. Basil expresses himself, they are like soft wax, which will take any and every impression; then is the time to imprint on their hearts and lips the sacred and holy names of Jesus and Mary. Tell them how the divine child Jesus grew in grace and wisdom before God and man; tell them of His obedience towards Mary and Joseph. Teach them to join their little hands and raise them reverently to their Maker, the Creator of heaven and earth, to the Blessed Virgin, the protectress of childhood; and when, a little later on, their mind has somewhat developed, and their infantile ideas have taken a little more form, lead them on to the beginnings of faith, teach them the first chapters of the short catechism, inspire them with respect and love for their little practices of religion, and get them to relish the sweet and ennobling sentiments of Christian piety.

Oh, if all fathers and mothers would only understand and accept their parental responsibilities in this light, how their efforts would be blessed by God, what consoling results would follow if parents would recognise amongst their first obligations and most sacred duties that of satisfying the intellectual and moral training of their children; that natural craving for religious knowledge that is inborn in every human soul that comes into this world, for it must be remembered that "not one bread alone doth man live," but his soul ever cries out for that milk of Christian teaching which nourishes, which strengthens, which protects it against the weaknesses and shortcomings of a fallen nature. Happy the child who, like Samu'l of old, grows up under the watchful care of truly Godly parents! The powers of his soul will expand under the genial warmth of the love and piety of a good mother. The atmosphere of innocence that he breathes and in which he lives, that purity of morals which surrounds him, that daily practice of religious duties held in reverent veneration; all these form a real and sound course of instruction to the youthful mind which he imperceptibly imbibes daily and hourly; it constitutes a system of teaching that enlightens his understanding, finds its way to his heart, and deposits there the germs of every Christian virtue, whilst it predisposes him to receive as he ought the lessons he will receive later on from the priest, in the pulpit and the confessional. But I ask you is this ideal of the Christian family—this on the face of a truly Christian home education—a living reality? do you find a practical embodiment in the population of New Zealand? To do such homes are to be found we gladly admit. But they are the exception rather than the rule. Let us ask ourselves how it comes to pass that the duties of father and mother, and their sacred mission as the first educators of their children are, as a matter of fact, so neglected and overlooked. What is the reason that in this promising land of their adoption so many parents show so little love and veneration for the time-honoured traditions of the faith of their fathers—so little anxiety to hand down to their own children the harboim of faith and piety that they brought with them from the land of their birth? How comes it that so many parents allow their children to grow up under their own eyes, under the baneful influence of a fatal and culpable indifference, devoid of all practical training in the fear and love of God; without ever speaking to them of their Lord and God, or teaching them to raise their hearts to Him in prayer, or to serve Him by obedience to His sovereign will? Alas, the reply to these momentous questions is