

Correspondence.

We are not responsible for the opinions of our correspondents.

THE BIBLE IN SCHOOLS AND THE COMING ELECTION.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE N. Z. TABLET.

Jasper was poor, and vice and want
Had made his heart like stone;
And Jasper looked with envious eyes
On riches not his own.

—SOUTHBY.

SIB.—I learn that a number of the able gentlemen who firmly believe they would not disgrace the stainless name of the New Zealand Parliament, if they were to be elected to it by any of our progressive electorates, mean to become standard-bearers of the glorious flag of Bible in schools in the forthcoming political campaign, and sincerely hope that the forces that are between the calfskin walls will be strong enough to drive all enemies off the battlefield and to bring a laurel crown to the victorious general who will be able to defeat the combined armies of secularism and Roman Catholicism by training the virtuous volunteers who fancy that serving under leaders who fight for the "Word of God" will gain for them the thanks of the ten next generations, and cause the powers that rule the sea and clouds to receive them into His beauteous kingdom without inspection. No doubt the Bible flag will be followed by thousands of our richest and most godly ratepayers, who believe the Scriptural knowledge which is inoculated into the brain pan of the good children of Zealandia in "our well-conducted" Sabbath schools is not sufficient to enable the rising generation to walk along the life pathway which runs along the edge of the precipice which keeps the waters of darkness from overwhelming us, in as steady a manner as their progenitors did. These gentlemen never take the difficulty of finding teachers who would be able to expound the disputed passages of Scripture into consideration, nor do they pretend to know that the explanation of a disputed verse which a teacher would give would, very likely, offend the parents of all the children attending his or her school, except those who adored the Creator of all magnificent things in the same manner as he or she did. As our educational institutions are supported by people of every religion, our lovers of the Divine Book ought to know that it would be unjust to introduce "a series of lessons into them that would offend a great number of their supporters, and perhaps cause a few of the children to become renegades to the faith of their ancestors. I do not for a moment wish it to be understood that I deem the Holy Bible a "shoddy book," it is the manner in which our able teachers, who represent nearly every religion that has been introduced into this fertile land in their august persons, would explain such passages as, "Verily I say unto thee, thou shalt by no means come out thence till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing" (Matt. v., 26); and, "Their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city which spiritually is called Sodom, and Egypt where also our Lord was crucified" (Revelations, xi., 8) I object to. In some districts, I daresay, the teachers (if Bible-reading is made law) will have to explain the Scriptures in a manner that will please the majority of the school committeemen; but as a rule, although they may do their best to please Mr. Religious Tiger, they will give an explanation of the religious riddle that would lead a stranger from Jupiter to believe they were expounding the Scriptures to children, all of whom believed in the doctrine promulgated by one branch of the Christian Church.

I also learn that a number of gentlemen who hope to get into the stronghold of lawmakers by using Bible in schools as a password are greatly opposed to doing justice to the Roman Catholic schools of the colony, and still are audacious enough to say they will do all that lies in their power to get the Bible introduced into our public schools. If the advocates of Bible in schools are lovers of education, why do they not start independent schools (as their Roman Catholic fellow-colonists have done) and teach what they like in them? I answer it is because they believe their children's religious education is a thing which no man or woman ought to neglect if he or she could force Freethinkers, Jews, Roman Catholics, &c., to pay for it; but when they find out that they cannot force people, who would gain nothing by it, to put their children on the nearest road that leads into the land of peace, the "goodly dreamers" immediately discover that their pretty lasses and good boys can do "very well" without getting religious instruction during school hours.

I sincerely hope that gentlemen who will remodel the Education Act in such a manner that all first-class private schools could be brought under it, and still leave the public schools purely secular, will be elected from two-thirds of our electorates.—I am, &c.,

FITZGERALD BARRY.

Another young American woman has married a title. Miss Ainta G. Corsini, a pretty New York lady, of Italian descent, was espoused last week by Prince Kano, late of Zululand, but at present the guest of Bunnell's Museum. Like most foreign noblemen, Prince Kano is in this country in search of Republican dollars, being on exhibition at the Museum as one of the living curiosities of the institution.—*Pilot*.

London, Sept. 3.—The Welsh have been holding their national Elsteddof at Merthyr during the week. The Druid performances are reported by the English papers to be rather flat. Mr. Charles H. James, member for Merthyr Tydfil, replies caustically that he thinks Welshmen ought to feel proud that they could come together on occasions like this instead of looking at some poor cockfight or something of the sort, and at people who kicked each other to death as they did in the North of England.

THE MICHIGAN FIRES.

DETROIT, Mich., Sept. 8.—Every hour brings more horrible stories from the fire regions of Sanilac, Huron and Tuscola counties. Money, medicines and surgical aid are being sent from Port Huron and Detroit. There are no particulars, but it is known that over 200 men, women and children were burned to death in Sanilac county alone, and as many as 160 more in Huron. Thousands of families are homeless and almost naked. The village of Forest Bay and Huron City, both in Huron County, are gone. The *Evening News* special from Sandusky, Sanilac County, reports the entire central portion of that county was burned over and scarcely anything left. Twenty-three dead bodies were found along the roadside in Moore, Argyle, Custer, and Waterton townships; within fifteen miles of Minden over 200 persons are known to have been burned to death. The latest reports increase the horror of the disaster. The fire came with a hurricane of wind on Monday at noon, and the whole heavens seemed on fire. The inhabitants thought of nothing but to escape with their lives. Relief trains and boats are being sent from here to-day. Provisions, clothing, bedding, and all the necessaries of life are needed. Thousands of people who are destitute must be supported for months. In parts of Sanilac County it is feared that a pestilence will breed from the dead cattle, horses and sheep. Detroit to-day is emptying the stores of provisions, loading them on boats and sending them forward, the merchants having met and decided to help all they could.

A special from reputable citizens of Leamington says dead bodies are being brought in from all directions. It is now known that 500 were killed in Sanilac County.

Detroit, Sept. 9.—Thus far it has been impossible to secure a complete list of the dead. Rev. Z. Grenelle, pastor of the First Baptist Church in this city, who was in Sanilac County at the time of the fire, saw fourteen dead bodies brought into Sand Beach, blackened and shapeless masses in most cases. Even the sex could not be determined. In places he saw whole groups of dead, apparently families, reduced to an indistinguishable mass of roasted and blackened blocks of flesh. Near Deckerville, Rev. W. F. Allington found sixteen dead bodies. Around Lexington those known to have perished are Humphrey Hegdriver, Mrs. Frank Dennison, sister and child, Paul Wetzel, wife and five children, Mrs. Strong and two children, George Kratch, Michael Welsh, wife and two children, Paul Whitelese, wife and five children, James Gibson and two sisters. In Paris township John Flyte Wager and wife and seven children and fifteen unknown persons perished, as also did Morris Clifford, wife and child, and the entire Day family of eight persons.

The fire crisis in Huron and Sanilac counties has passed, but sickening details continue to come. Two hundred and fifteen families have been burned out in the towns of Marlett, Flynn, Argyle, Evergreen, Moore, Lamatte and Eliner, and thirty-two deaths are reported. The fires in the burning district are mostly out now, and the disconsolate, many with their eyes burned out, scarred, disfigured, and not a few demented, lie around the piles of ashes where only a few days ago they dwelt in comfort. Many persons are missing, and the exact loss of life cannot be known for some days yet. It is said that no less than twenty-seven dead bodies have already been found between Badane and Port Huron.

TALL TALK.

THE correspondent of the *Freeman*, writing from Nenagh, says:— To-day (Sept. 4) a meeting was held at Silvermines, about five miles from Nenagh, at two o'clock. There was a large attendance. On the motion of Mr. William Gleeson, seconded by Mr. Michael Kennedy, the chair was taken by the Rev. Mr. Lynch.

The chairman advised the people not to rest content with the Land Bill, but to adhere to the Land League. If they accepted the Bill as a full measure of justice, they would very soon learn that they had made a very great mistake—they would lose the sympathy and assistance of their friends all over the world. Therefore they should stand together and give strenuous opposition to the shoneen landlords. As an evidence of the spirit of landlordism he called on them to listen to the letter of a landlord written to a most respectable tenant whose rent was increased four or five years ago, and who, a few months ago, applied to his landlord for a reduction.

Mr. Peter Gill read the letter. It was addressed to Mr. Dagg, a resolute Land Leaguer of that parish, and was as follows:—

"23 Gloucester-place, Portman-square,
December 30, 1880.

"Mr. Dagg,—I hear from Mr. Bayley that you will not pay any more than what you call Griffith's valuation, which you well know is no value at all. Of course I cannot make you honest, but I can punish you for being dishonest. This I intend to do. If, therefore, you do not pay to Mr. Bayley a full year's rent by the 1st of February (mind, a full year's rent) I shall file a petition against you in the Bankruptcy Court. If you do not pay as you will be ordered to do, you will be declared a bankrupt, and your property will be given over to be disposed of for the benefit of your creditors, of whom I shall be one. You need not flatter yourself that there will be no sale and no bidders, for I shall have people there to bid for me, and shall get, if there are no bidders in these times, all the property you have, the lease included, sold to me for a few shillings. The cattle and goods I shall give to the mob, whom you will find just as ready to plunder you as you are to plunder me. The buildings I shall burn down, and let the land run to waste to recover the fertility of which, no doubt, owing to your style of farming, you have pretty well deprived it. As I have few wants, no debts, no family, and a good English income, the loss would be a mere nothing to me, and I shall have the satisfaction of punishing you—I trust rendering you for life an inmate of the Nenagh Union.

"COL. W. MABERLEY."

The chairman said that letter spoke for itself, and proved the necessity for agitation.