

CERTAIN CORRESPONDENTS ON THE  
ELECTION.(From the *Otago Daily Times*.)  
TO THE EDITOR.

SIR,—The contest for the representation of the Peninsula having opened up a wider question than one of mere local politics—namely, the all-important subject of national education, it would seem a favourable opportunity to review this subject, and I would therefore crave your permission to do so from one or two of its many aspects—viz.: First, as regards its bearing on the Roman Catholic portion of the community, that being the aspect immediately at issue; and secondly, as regards the probable effect of the present system upon the community generally. As regards the Roman Catholics, then, their platform, as I understand it, is as follows:—They say: "Having undertaken a system of national education under careful and painstaking administration by the State, you find that, exclusive of all cost of school buildings and of the value of the lands upon which they stand, the cost of educating each child attending your schools is so many pounds, let us say £4, per annum, and towards that cost we are contributing our quota, while at the same time bearing the cost of educating all our own children, inclusive of the cost of school sites and buildings. Now, then, is that just? Is it right, if we relieve the State of a large portion of the task it has undertaken, that we should get nothing for doing so? Supposing that the bare cost of education, exclusive of buildings, is £4 per child per annum, and supposing that the State educated say 100,000 children, would it not practically cost the State an additional £4 per child per annum to educate say an additional 20,000 children, over and above the cost of necessary additions to school buildings, which are already in many instances too small for the present attendance? If then, we undertake to educate our own children, not merely according to our own fancy as to how it should be done, but up to the State standard of excellence, and subject to State examination and inspection on all secular subjects, is it too much to ask that we should be recouped to the amount which it would have cost the State to do the work which we are doing on its behalf? In asking this, however, we do not ask anything for lands or buildings. We admit that two buildings to accommodate each 100 scholars may possibly be more costly than one building to accommodate 200 scholars; so we only ask for a capitation allowance for each child for whom we provide education up to the national standard, at the rate per head at which it has been found, after considerable experience, that it costs the State to do the same class of work."

I am not a Catholic, sir,—I have been brought up as a strict Protestant, and my people before me were even rabid Protestants, endeavouring to convert all with whom they came in contact—but I confess I can see no flaw in the above argument; nor can I realise how any just man can see a flaw in it. As against it, I am aware that it is contended, amongst other things—first, that it is calculated to let in the thin end of the wedge, and so open the door to further demands; and second, that the Roman Catholics having at one time been in the ascendancy, to the detriment of the world in general, it would be injudicious to give them the smallest opening towards becoming so again. To me, however, such arguments as these seem to savour of timidity—not to say cowardice. Have we so little self-reliance that we cannot afford to be just, lest we might be forced to be generous? and have we such a dread of the dying lion that, having beaten the Catholics when they occupied all the highest places in the earth, we fear a hand-to-hand contest with them now, when they are comparatively powerless? To no Briton, surely, would such a position as that be palatable. It was hinted once that Wellington acted so in the case of Ney, and Britons have blushed ever since, and will blush to the end of time, whenever that allegation is made. But I would rather refer, for a precedent to follow, to Cetewayo. We beat him, at a great cost of blood and treasure; but having beaten him, we are not afraid to allow him his freedom when it is just that he should have it; for we feel satisfied that, if necessary, we can beat him again.

Thus far I have regarded the subject in its relation to the Catholics, and to justice, only. I would wish now to say a few words as to its national aspects. Looking at it from that point of view, then, is it desirable that we should have a stereotyped system of education rather than a diverse one? With all due respect to the Hon. Mr. Rolleston (and I have a very great admiration and respect for him), I think not. As regards the existing system, he is reported to have said: "This system we look to as breaking down class distinctions, and tending to produce a people with common aspirations and common hopes." To this I would reply: "Exactly so. A people so uniform in their ideas that there would be no friction, and consequently no enthusiasm, thus undoing, by a most laborious and painstaking routine, all the grand factors of progress which Providence has given us. Is there, I would ask, no great principle of progress involved in the admixture of races, with their diverse forms and processes of thought? Has not colonisation in America and Australasia illustrated abundantly that such diversity, within reasonable limits, does create progress? And shall we, in the face of these facts, relegate the whole of the inherently vital principles of improvement which we now possess into a barren, stolid uniformity by teaching everyone out of the same book, and culturing in everyone a plagiarism of ideas? I would hope not; and, as one of the first steps towards preventing such an undesirable result, I would say by all means let the Catholics have their own schools, and thus secure at least a little enthusiasm arising out of the *esprit de corps* of two establishments. As against this it will of course be contended that if the Catholics get their own schools, all the other sects will demand the same thing. To this, however, I would fearlessly reply, Let them have them also, provided they undertake the work on the same terms—namely, erecting their own buildings (or paying the State the cost or rental of buildings already erected) and educating their children at the price per head which it is found to cost the State to do the like work.

To adopt this principle would, in fact, be merely to contract with each sect which chose to undertake it for the education of their children, or of a portion of their children, in the chief towns, at what had been found by experience to be a reasonable rate; and being a firm believer in the advantages of a contract system as compared with a day-labour system, it would be difficult to convince me that there would be any detriment in adopting it anywhere, under proper inspection and supervision. Amongst other advantages, it possesses those of finality, continuity, and freedom from fanciful changes of design; and therefore, instead of being likely to interfere with the present scope and intention of national education, it would rather be likely to perpetuate it.

In order to show, moreover, that such a course of procedure is not merely theoretical, but is also practical, I may mention the case of the late Nelson province, under the education regulations of which I believe the Catholics received for many years, as I have herein advocated that they should receive, a capitation allowance *pro rata* on the number of scholars they had in their schools, and I have been frequently told that the system worked most harmoniously.

Finally, as regards now the particular election which has given rise to all this discourse, I have little to say. I have, in fact, no personal interest in it; but if the electors should feel, as I feel, that anent the education question we owe it to ourselves to do justice to everyone, and that great results are hanging upon the manner in which it may be dealt with, I would suggest, without for a moment presuming that my suggestion will in any way influence their decision, that if their views happen to coincide with those I have above expressed, Dr. Moran would apparently, from his utterance on the public platform, be perhaps the most capable of the candidates to give expression to them, while being—also judging from his platform utterances—as sound and capable as any who have offered themselves, to deal with the other subjects of interest to the constituency and to Otago generally.—I am, etc.,

BRITISH FREEDOM.

Dunedin, January 15th.

(From the *Christchurch Press*.)  
TO THE EDITOR.

SIR,—Your article upon the education question and Dr. Moran's address will be read with greater interest than most leading articles by many Anglicans as well as Roman Catholics. You state the case fairly, but it is impossible to agree with the conclusion at which you arrive. If the Church of England could be true to herself for a little while, there would be no education question left. The more large-hearted dissenters would be glad of an opportunity to join a general protest against godlessness, though they cannot at present protest without appearing to follow the lead of the Roman Catholics.

The Church of England may rally yet. She has no discipline certainly, and the majority of her members might as well be oysters for this purpose, in fact far better, for they have up to the present given a sort of lazy party vote against Christianity. But this will not always be the case; it simply could not last. Does any thinking Churchman suppose that we are always going to live in a sort of fool's paradise, decorating churches, importing big organs, and ignoring our obligations to the young, whose most prominent accomplishments at present are smoking tobacco and swearing at their parents?

Upon this question the Church has to face the why and the wherefore of her existence. It will be quite impossible for her to dally with it much longer. Nor is she inclined to do so. Her bishops and clergy at all events are, on the whole, as anxious to do their duty as Bishop Moran is. But, if the truth must be told, they have been tied and bound by the most degrading thralldom. They cannot move without the laity, and the creed of a large proportion of the laity is merely negative—"anti-Roman," nothing more. The Roman Catholics were the first to do battle for Christian education, consequently, we must do battle against it. This is the very contemptible sum total of the whole "question"!

Now this cannot last. I am not minimising the differences between Roman and Anglican teaching. I feel them acutely; but if I am ordered by the beery breath of a mob to take the side of the devil because Roman Catholics happen to have taken the side of God, I must decline. My logic will not be popular, but I cannot help that.

"Dog-in-the-manger" tactics have not paid. Bishop Moran points north, east, south and west to his schools. They are maintained by submitting to "double taxation"; they represent self-denial, but there is only a very grim sort of satisfaction in this. Protestants also claim to represent the religion of self-sacrifice. How have they illustrated it? They have sacrificed everything they are supposed to regard as indispensable, to prevent the establishment of these very schools!!!

I must refuse to regard this in its essence as a Roman Catholic question. It is only political dodgery trying to make capital out of traditional hatreds, which has given that turn to it. I do not undervalue the secular instruction itself imparted at the State schools. The teachers are not only better than the system they administer, but (thanks to the Church) very many of them take a higher interest in the children than the system either desires or deserves. I think it would be a hard thing if the clergy should be dragged into politics; but they will be—they cannot help it much longer. Bishop Moran is fighting for his schools directly, but indirectly for all those who believe in God. The denominational system never broke down here, for it was never tried except on a ridiculous scale. Mr. Mundella does not think that it has broken down in England, nor indeed is it likely to. For myself, I have no time or skill for general politics, but at the next general election, if any candidate comes forward who believes in God, and has the courage to say so, and take the consequences, I will do all that I can for his return. I will promise to stand by him at the hustings, and if necessary put up with as many dead kittens and sodawater bottles as he will.—Yours, &c.,

R. A. MORTIMER,  
Curate, St. Albans.