

meetings of Synodists. The discussion on religion in schools in the Anglican Assembly, from a certain point of view, was decidedly amusing. We are always tempted to regard the annual discussion on the question of religious instruction in schools as a Synodal farce. Two sentences will express what we feel in this respect. The laity clearly do not want the secular system changed. The clergy vainly hope, by mere annual resolution, to alter the views of congregations who have gone beyond control. To let the reins go and then call on the horses to turn is certainly not characteristic of a good driver. The education coach, for nearly twenty years, laden with Christian passengers, has been directed by a secular driver. Driver and the vast majority of occupants seem to be of the one mind as to the road to be traversed. The non-Catholic clerical driver to succeed must oust his secular, and now powerful rival, size again, if he can, the ribbons, and take off his coat in the attempt to stop the obstinate runaways. Apparently, the Anglican Fathers begin as at dawn to realise the true position of affairs. Dean FITCHETT, in tabling his motion that "in the opinion of the Synod it is desirable that the Education Act should be so amended as to provide for religious instruction in schools on the plan embodied in the Education Act of New South Wales," referred to the feeling of many church people as "one of hopelessness." After stating that "nothing could be done practically but to educate opinion," the Dean declared "it was notorious that intelligent laymen of the Church of England held that this question was outside the field of practical politics." He believed that "they would not succeed until their laity understood that the clergy were in earnest." Canon HOWELL showed his earnestness for religious education by establishing and carrying on a day school. Dean FITCHETT shows his earnestness by annual motion! Christian ministers, whether they call themselves Anglican or Presbyterian, must figuratively take off their coats by self-sacrifice before the "laity understand that the clergy are in earnest." The Very Rev Dean this year advocates the New South Wales system, in which he says "there was no friction and no educational difficulty." The two things to be commended in the system of the sister colony were, "the Irish text book in the hands of the teacher and an hour a day during which a religious teacher might present himself in the school and give the religious teaching authorised by the Church. We are quite sure that Mr A. M. BARNETT, a State school teacher present, voiced more than the feeling of the body of teachers when he declared he "would rather stand to a secular system than have clerical interference." We are not surprised that clergymen have occasionally to listen to some straight, if rough, talk. What really have they done for the religious education of the youthhood of the Colony? Their efforts seem mainly directed to trimming the social tree, or rather to crying from the housetops that humanity has gone far astray and vice is rampant. Their efforts for drastic legislation for drunkenness, gambling, and the social evil, will not remedy the effects of a noxious system of education where the sanctions of virtue are ignored and the God of virtue practically regarded as an interfering, or at most a tolerated, stranger. Non-Catholic denominations have indeed their Sunday-schools, but if Mr HAWTHORNE be correct in saying that "the clergy had very little opportunity of going into the Sunday-schools and giving religious instruction," what is to become of the children? *Fin de siècle* pagans? The Bible-schools party in the Presbyterian Synod must have been edified by what Mr State-school BARNETT said. Three Dunedin schools—the Arthur street, Union street, and High street are opened every morning "by an extempore prayer, and by the Bible being read by the individual scholars in the classes and explained by the masters." Mr BARNETT gravely informed his audience that "Sir ROBERT STOUT was his first Biblical instructor." No wonder the members of the Synod laughed. No wonder Secularists laugh at the efforts of their Synodal antagonists. The only fruit the annual attempt at a few hours' earnestness bears is to give opportunity to say that if aid be given to Catholic schools, Anglicans and Presbyterians will demand it. Is there real earnestness in the demand for a change in the existing Godless system? Judging by the fruit, or more correctly the absence of serious work, one is inclined to think that the Synodal fathers imitate the politicians whom they so often unmercifully condemn, and do their own share of what may be called "Synodal hansardising."

OUR VISITOR.

MICHAEL DAVITT has won golden opinions and wonderfully impressed all who have met and heard him since his arrival in New Zealand. Many went to his lectures with the idea that their curiosity would be gratified by the sight of a half-converted political firebrand and an irrational labour advocate. All came away from his addresses with the conviction that they had listened to a highly-cultured, well-informed, eminently moderate gentleman. We have had the great pleasure of listening to the distinguished Irishman in ordinary conversation and have heartily joined in the applause which greeted his public utterances. One cannot help feeling, at all times, that truth and principle are ever before his mind. Whether he pleads the cause of Ireland or proposes his remedies for social troubles, intense earnestness, begotten of love of truth and principle, characterise his manner and speech. We can, as we write, speak of Dunedin and the southern towns. All who have heard him are, we believe without exception, of opinion that an unselfish patriot, an intellectually and morally strong man has visited our Colony. His advent will dispel prejudice and intensify the desire that justice should be done to a long-suffering people. Possibly a tinge of self might make his tour a greater financial success. The evident absence of self has, however, without doubt advanced the first object of his mission. We are, unfortunately, too much accustomed in the history of nations to those who "occupy public places with private spirits," "who set kingdoms in the fire that they may roast their own venison in the flames." Hence when an earnest man with the hall mark of unselfishness clearly stamped on his honest face comes the way, people stifle misconception, listen with interest, and are readily convinced when sound reason calls upon them to lay down preconceived notions. If MICHAEL DAVITT returns, as we have reason to think he will, in three or four years, he will meet with even a heartier reception than is now being accorded to him. He has made many friends. It is an evidence of keen appreciation, of sterling honesty, as well as a sign of the times that not a single newspaper has attacked MICHAEL DAVITT since he landed in Australia. In common with many of our fellow-citizens, we noted and admired the earnestness of the sincere Irish patriot and the sincere lover of humanity. We had also reason to note with pleasure the earnestness of Mr DAVITT in the matter of Catholic education. He confesses and does not deny that he is enthusiastic in the cause of Catholic education. The boys of the Christian Brothers' school, Dunedin, will long remember a visit, all too short, of the distinguished Irishman to their halls. Addressing the lads, he complimented them on their appearance and power of entertaining, thanked them for their welcome, and warmly eulogised their teachers. They were, he said, in excellent hands, and should avail themselves to the utmost of the great advantages which the well-tried and high class system of the Christian Brothers always carried with it. He exhorted them to persevering industry. Over-indulgence in football and cricket to the neglect of school duty was seen to bring remorse in after life. Mr DAVITT spoke of the Old Land as being under a deep debt of gratitude to the Christian Brothers, who were in the forefront of the educational battle. He called them "the most successful educators in English speaking countries." At Home they taught their pupils the true history of their native land; at the Antipodes they filled their pupils with a great love for the land of their forefathers. Lovers of the Old Land, then, were under great obligations to the devoted Christian Brothers. Mr DAVITT also warmly congratulated the Dunedin Catholic people in having their girls taught by the Dominican Nuns, who, as educators, were held at Home in highest appreciation. The greatest educational needs should be satisfied by the intelligent work of these most successful teachers. Mr DAVITT will everywhere in the Colony behold the same good work bearing the same glorious fruit. Mr DAVITT will find throughout this fair land flourishing Catholic schools, erected by struggling people, alongside the pampered palaces of godlessness. He will describe at Home the education struggle at the Antipodes. A cause of great regret is that he has not met the late patriot Bishop of Dunedin, and fearless champion of the sacred cause of Christian schools. He will meet numbers of devoted men and women who carry on the great work, and he will be able to disabuse those at Home who, otherwise well informed, seem to know so little of our country, of the idea that "the New Zealand system is fairly satisfactory." The keen mind of our visitor will take

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