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A REPLY TO

"PROTESTANTISM VERSUS ROMANISM"

(No. 3).

By the REV. J. DICKSON, M.A.,
Presbyterian Minister, Temuka.

—By the—

VERY REV. THEOPHILUS LE MENANT DES CHESNAIS, S.M.

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NOTICE.

All communications connected with the Commercial Department of the N.Z. TABLET Newspaper are to be addressed to John Murray, Secretary, to whom also Post Office Orders and Cheques are in all instances to be made payable.

All communications connected with the literary department, reports, correspondence, newspaper cuttings, etc., should be addressed to the Editor.

Correspondents are particularly requested to bear in mind that to insure publication in any particular issue of the paper communications must reach this Office not later than Tuesday morning.

C I T Y H A L L.

FRIDAY EVENING, DECEMBER 3, 1897.

G R A N D E N T E R T A I N M E N T
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By the Pupils of the

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In loving memory of John Griffin, who died 22nd November.
—R.I.P.

The New Zealand Tablet.

FIAT JUSTITIA.

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 26, 1897.

THE COLONIES AND THE REFERENDUM.



HERE is every indication that before many years are past the provision for a poll of the people on political questions, which is known as the Referendum, will be adopted as part of their legislative machinery by almost the whole of the Australasian colonies. During the last parliamentary year no less than five of the colonial Parliaments were occupied in discussing Referendum Bills, and in four of them these Bills were Government measures. In New Zealand the Bill was at first fathered by a private member (Mr. O'REGAN), but it has now been taken under the patronage of the Government. Though, owing to the lateness of the session and the amount of absolutely necessary work which yet remains to be got through, the measure may be shelved for this year, it is bound sooner or later to be adopted by the Legislature. The Bill, as introduced in previous sessions, was entitled "An Act to refer to the Electors of the Colony certain Motions or Bills for their decision," and provided not only for a referendum when the two Houses should disagree, but also that both Houses might by a resolution submit any motion or Bill to the vote of the electors. If a measure should have twice passed the Lower House and should have been twice rejected by the Upper House, or should have been amended in such a way as to amount to a virtual rejection, or if the other House should fail to pass or reject the Bill within a certain time, then it was open to the Lower House to pass a resolution submitting the measure to the referendum. It was also provided that, if a Bill be negatived at the polls, the question shall not be brought up again for three years, "unless 10,000 citizens should demand it." It was further provided that both Houses might decide to refer a question to the people, in which case the people were only to be consulted on a general motion or resolution, not on an Act of Parliament. Should the answer be an affirmative one, the duty of at once preparing a Bill to give effect to such proposal devolves upon the Colonial Secretary, and the Bill must be brought in within ten days of the opening of the next session of Parliament. No new machinery is needed in order to apply the referendum, that already existing being amply sufficient for the purpose. It is the duty of the Governor, on being notified that a measure is to be submitted to the referendum, to publish the law in the *Gazette* and to fix a date for the popular vote to be taken. The vote is taken in precisely the same way as in the case of a general election. There are the same writs, returning officers, polling places and penalties. The ballot papers contain the name of the Bill or the terms of the motion and the words "For" and "Against." If the voter wishes to support the Bill he strikes out the word "Against"; if he wishes to oppose it, the word "For" is struck out. Should a majority vote in favour of the Bill it is to become law on a date to be named by the Governor by proclamation, and in the New Zealand Bill there is no provision requiring the Governor's assent to the measure.

The Referendum is essentially, and in the best sense of the expression, a democratic measure, and as both parties in the country now profess to "trust the people," the measure should receive hearty support from both sides of the House. The advantages attaching to this poll of the people are sufficiently obvious. In the first place it is a valuable check on hasty and class legislation. As we know by painful experience the representatives of the people may be deceived or corrupted, and may thus entirely misrepresent or betray their constituents. Moreover, they may be really mistaken as to the wishes of their constituents, or