

THE NORTH CANTERBURY EDUCATION BOARD AGAIN.

ANOTHER REFUSAL TO INSPECT CATHOLIC SCHOOLS.

THE North Canterbury Education Board has once more given a refusal—by five votes to four—to the request made by the Very Rev. T. Le Menant des Chesnais, S.M., V.G., for the inspection of the Catholic primary schools in their district. This was at their meeting of Wednesday, April 12. Mr. Hardy moved 'that the request be acceded to.' The motion was seconded by Mr. Munnings. Mr. Adams moved and Mr. Rennie seconded an amendment that the Board hold by their old resolution to decline such inspection. There voted for the amendment Mr. Saunders (chairman), and Messrs. Weston, Rennie, Adams, and Perryman; against it, and in favour of the Catholic demand, Messrs. Hardy, Munnings, Buddo, and Dalziel.

The reason alleged was the flimsy one with which we dealt pretty exhaustively some time ago. It was put thus by the chairman: 'The Board had no right to spend a shilling for denominational schools, or to find inspectors for them. Was it right that the inspectors should work for those who did not pay them?' Mr. Saunders knew full well the worthlessness of his contention at the very moment that he was giving utterance to it. He is perfectly aware that the Act has made provision for such inspection, and for all that is involved in and entailed by it. Moreover, he knows, at least from the columns of the local secular papers, that the Catholic body of the Colony are annually not merely contributing their fair quota to the cost of the State school system, but, by means of their own primary schools, are saving the Colony the tidy sum of some £60,000 a year. The real reason of the Board's churlish refusal lies deeper. It is set forth in plain, set terms by the Christchurch Press of April 13, and by the Dunedin Evening Star of the following day.

PRESS OPINIONS: CHRISTCHURCH.

The Press says: 'The North Canterbury Education Board, by refusing the request for the inspection of the Roman Catholic schools, have again shown that they are swayed more by feelings of religious bigotry than by a regard for sound education in the district over which they preside.' It declares that the action of the Board is 'an infringement of the Education Act, because the inspection of private as well as public schools was contemplated in the Act itself.' The Press then quotes Section 98, which runs as follows:—

'When the teachers or managers of any private school desire to have their school inspected by an inspector, such teachers or managers may apply to the Board to authorise such inspection, and the same, when authorised, shall be conducted in like manner as the inspection of public schools.'

'The Roman Catholics of New Zealand,' says the Press, 'have, at considerable expense, built schools and made provision for the education of their children. It is to their credit that they now desire to have the secular portion of that education tested by the Board's inspectors. Presbyterian Otago has granted the request, Canterbury, which used to pride itself on its enlightenment and liberality of view, is too narrow-minded, at any rate so far as [a majority of] its Education Board are concerned, that the request is refused. The Board, to our mind, have strangely misconceived their duty. . . . We regret very much that party religious prejudice should have been allowed to stand in the way of the performance of an obvious public duty.'

The Lyttelton Times—which has never been conspicuous for fairness to Catholics—gives a half-hearted support to the action of the majority of the Board, but maintains that it is high time that the matter of inspection should be taken out of the hands of the Boards and placed directly under Government control.

A DUNEDIN VIEW.

The Dunedin Evening Star 'sizes up' Mr. Saunders, and gives its views on the situation in terms which are well worth quoting:—

'The opposition appears to have been marshalled and led by Mr. Alfred Saunders, who, as an ex-parliamentarian and past chairman of the Board, was responsible for uttering the veriest flapdoodle—hardly creditable on the part of one who has been so long and intimately concerned in the administration of our education system. He "held that the Board had no right to employ inspectors for denominational purposes; the proper way for the inspection to be carried out was for the Government to do it." No one knows better than Mr. Saunders that the work of school inspection has been entrusted to the Boards by the Legislature, and the Government, in the absence of legislation, are quite powerless to interpose in the direction suggested. There is a very strong feeling among educationists that the inspectors should be brought under the direct control of the Minister, but Mr. Saunders opposes that desirable reform, and were he again a member of the House would exhaust all the forms of parliamentary procedure to ensure its defeat, so thorough-going is his antipathy to it. The Hon. Mr. Bowen may be presumed to know the mind of the Ministry who introduced and carried the "Education Act of 1877," and he has repeatedly declared that the express intention of clause 98 was that the scholars in all private schools should be inspected in like manner as State school children, and by the same agency. Mr. Hardy, one of the minority, correctly interpreted the Act when he asserted that the North Canterbury Board must see to it that all school children in their district were receiving proper education, and we hope that he will persevere in his demand that this Board shall perform their statutory duty. We are quite as stalwart as Mr. Saunders professes to be in defence of the national system, but we have no patience with narrow-mindedness, which only intensifies sectarian feeling. We shall never cease to contend that the State must satisfy itself that every child of school age in every private as well as public school is being properly educated, and if some stubborn Boards will not accept their statutory responsibility, then the Minister must seek

legislative authority to relieve them of a duty they are incapable of discharging.'

We (N.Z. TABLET) congratulate Messrs. Hardy, Munnings, Buddo, and Dalziel on the determined stand which they have taken in the interests of education and on behalf of the rights of their Catholic fellow-citizens. We need scarcely express our confidence in the ultimate success of their efforts. The ecclesiastical authorities of the Catholic Church in Christchurch may or may not again approach the Board as it is at present constituted. We only trust that, in the interests both of the Catholic schools and of the fair name of North Canterbury, that the personnel of the majority of the Board may be specially altered in the direction of greater liberality of thought and feeling. In any case the way of petition to Parliament is ever open to the Catholic authorities. The action of the North Canterbury Board only serves to emphasise the need either for making inspection compulsory on the Education Boards, or for once and for ever taking the matter out of their hands altogether.

DIocese OF AUCKLAND.

(From our own correspondent.)

April 13.

THE Auckland Catholic Literary and Debating Society held its annual meeting, in St. Patrick's Hall, on Tuesday evening, April 11. Rev. Father Croke, spiritual director, was present. The president (Mr. W. Tole) presided. Mr. Maurice Foley (hon. treasurer) submitted the balance sheet, which showed the funds to be in a prosperous condition. Nearly every member of the society put in an appearance. Mr. P. Foley (hon. secretary) read a concise report of last year's session, after which the president referred in feeling terms to the departure from the society of their respected spiritual director, who, in consequence of removal to a country parish, had resigned with regret. The president eulogised the great services rendered to them all by Father Croke. In the name of the society the president bade good-bye to Father Croke, wishing him health and happiness, and success in his new sphere. In a most touching manner the Rev. Father replied, wishing the society every prosperity. The election of officers for the ensuing term then took place and resulted as follows:—President, Mr. W. Tole; vice-presidents, Messrs. Hickson and Hoare; hon. secretary, Mr. McCoy; hon. treasurer, Mr. Thomas Guscott; editor, Mr. H. Gray; librarian, Mr. H. Herbert; auditors, Messrs. Mahoney and Williams. A good committee was formed to work up a syllabus for the session.

Rev. Father Gillan and his assistant priests, Fathers O'Gallagher and Darby, are performing good work at St. Benedict's. A house to house visit is being made in this extensive parish. Sending children to the Catholic schools is engaging the attention of St. Benedict's priests.

The Hibernian Society, during last year, disbursed in sick pay £1084 12s 10d. This speaks volumes for this organisation.

The Registrar of Friendly Societies some time ago severely commented upon the failure of numbers of branches of the Hibernian Society to send in their returns. This neglect caused much adverse comment at the time. In spite of all previous reminders several branches in the N.Z. district have again forgotten the duty they owe to themselves and to the Society as a whole, and have failed to forward returns to Mr. Mason. District President Bro. P. J. Nerheny, before retiring from office, very properly imposed a fine upon these erring branches.

Father Brodie was in town this week making preparations to assume charge forthwith of his new parish of Puhoi. The Rev. Father looks much improved in health. Father Croke left also for Kihikihiki. Both of these excellent young priests will be much missed in the City.

The Maggie Moore dramatic company has given an afternoon entertainment in aid of the Catholic Orphanages.

Rev. Father Mahony, upon leaving Puhoi parish to take charge of the important Thames parish, was the recipient of an address and a purse of sovereigns. Father Mahony was a general favourite in the Puhoi parish.

His Lordship Dr. Lenihan has written from Samoa by the inward 'Frisco' mail steamer Alameda. So far the Bishop has had a most enjoyable trip.

The following address was presented to his Lordship Bishop Lenihan, prior to his departure for Rome:—

My Lord—It is with mingled sentiments of regret and satisfaction that we (the inmates of the Home of the Little Sisters of the Poor) hear of your Lordship's contemplated visit to Europe. We shall, during your Lordship's absence, miss your genial, social, kind, and thoughtful consideration, and your constant and punctual ministrations. At the same time it is with satisfaction we hear your Lordship will have audience with his Holiness the Pope, which we trust will result in the great honour and glory of God, and be of benefit to your Lordship's diocese. We take this opportunity of thanking your Lordship most sincerely for your many kindnesses and generous consideration, particularly your untiring zeal in ministering to our spiritual necessities. We shall esteem it a great favour if your Lordship will convey to the Most Holy Father the Pope our loyalty and devotion and assure him of our constant prayers for all his good intentions, and also obtain from him for us his benediction. We beg your Lordship's acceptance of this little purse containing our very humble offering. Your Lordship is aware of our poverty, but we feel sure you will not measure our hearts by the shallowness of our pockets. We wish your Lordship a safe and agreeable journey, and that you may realise all your most sanguine anticipations, and a speedy return.—We are, my Lord, your Lordship's most obedient servants.

JOHN AUSTIN SMITH,

For and on behalf of all the inmates of the Home of the Little Sisters of the Poor.

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