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 Telephone ... 1807.

DEATH

HEFFERNAN.—On July 22, at his residence, Kai-koral Valley, David, beloved husband of Honora Heffernan, native of Belmullet, County Mayo; aged 63 years.—R.I.P.



To promote the cause of Religion and Justice by the ways of Truth and Peace.

LEO. XIII. to the N.Z. TABLET

THURSDAY, AUGUST 3, 1905.

BIBLE-IN-SCHOOLS TYRANNY



FRESH manifesto was published last week by the executive of the Bible-in-schools 'Referendum' League. It deals directly with a recent pronouncement of the State Schools Defence League. But, in the triangular duel between us and these two organisations, some thrusts and slashes, however aimed by our antagonists, will occasionally point or sweep our way. And thus it happens that sundry contentions of the leaders of the sectarianising party, both in matters of fact and of argument, affect the Catholic position, although more immediately directed against the heads of the Secularists. And in dealing with matters of fact the recent pronouncement of the standard-bearers of the sectarianising movement is marked by even a severer economy of truth than any of its predecessors. It reminds us—by an easy association of ideas for which the Bible-in-schools executive are responsible—of certain remarks of David Harum. 'A hoss-trado,' said David, 'ain't like anythin' else. A feller may be straighter 'n a string in ev'rythin' else, an' never tell the truth—that is, the hull truth—about a hoss.' And then he told the story of old Deacon Perkins. 'He's a terrible feller fer church bus'ness,' said David by way of preface; 'c'n pray an' psalm-sing to beat the Jews, an' in spiritual matters c'n read his title clear the hull time, but when it comes to hoss-tradin' you got to git up very early in the mornin' or he'll skin the eye-teeth out of ye.'

The Bible-in-schools leaders seem to have imported into their movement something of the principles that guided David Harum and Deacon Perkins in making a 'hoss-trade.' They 'may be straighter 'n a string in ev'rythin' else,' but they have certainly failed to tell 'the hull truth' in their recent manifesto. Worse still, they have, in a large class of matters of fact, contrived to convey an impression that is worlds away from simple truth. It is difficult for a man with the ordinary sense of fair dealing to speak or write temperately of such contentions and statements of 'fact' as the following: (1) There was, up to 1877, no religious difficulty in New Zealand, although 'the Bible was read in the schools in every province in the Colony'; therefore the peace of Nirvana would again settle on the country if the League's scheme of 'Bible lessons'

were introduced—and subsidies to denominational schools for the secular instruction imparted in them made for ever 'impossible'! (2) Again, we are told, in the face of notorious facts, that 'there are no sectarian difficulties' under the public school system in New South Wales, where the manual used is the discredited textbook drawn up by Archbishop Whately and the proselytiser Carlile for the express and predetermined purpose of 'weaning Irish Roman Catholics from the abuses of Popery.' (3) The same suppression of truth and suggestion of untruth mark the references made in the manifesto regarding the (denominational) school systems of England, Scotland, and Canada.

'The same lesson' (of educational peace) 'is taught us by the experience of the United States of America.' So the League's story runneth. And this (we are told) is particularly true of 'the old Eastern States.' In these States the Bible has been read in the schools for the last 250 years, and not a single State report indicates that there is any dissension caused by the Bible lessons.' We are, unhappily, in a position to state some facts which, though they may or may not have appeared in the 'State reports,' are so notorious that even the Bible-in-schools executive ought to be cognisant of them. For brevity's sake, we shall only, for the present, touch upon one—and that one was by no means the most intolerant of 'the old Eastern States,' namely, Massachusetts. In the early and middle Colonial days the public schools of Massachusetts, as of all the New England States, taught Puritanism in all its olden rigidity, with serene disregard of the claims and sentiments, not alone of Catholics, but of the members of other religious faiths, who were, nevertheless, compelled to share the burden of sectarian public instruction. Later on, when the old-time Puritanism was riven into many fragments, 'the religious teachings of the schools became,' says a recent authority on the subject, "'broader," less doctrinal, more vague. It was still Protestant, still heavily freighted with condemnation and calumny of the Church of Rome; but it aimed to be "non-sectarian," neither advocating nor denying the pet doctrines of any particular Protestant sect.' In 1837, when Horace Mann was Secretary of the Education Board, the Unitarian type of religious instruction and devotion—now advocated by our Bible-in-schools League—was definitely forced upon the public schools of Massachusetts. It inculcated a sort of 'Christianity' but with a strongly Protestant bias. Catholics, Jews, and many of the Protestant clergy raised their voices against it. But the feelings of dissidents received as little consideration then in the Mayflower State as the Bible-in-schools party propose to extend to their opponents in New Zealand. Objectors were simply 'snowed under.' The 'State reports' ignored them. And so there was 'educational peace.'

After the agony of famine and famine-fever of 'Black Forty-seven' there rolled into Puritan Massachusetts a flowing tide of Irish Catholics. In that day peace was made between Mann and his Puritan clerical opponents, and they went hand in hand in the congenial work of robbing the little Irish 'Papishes' of their precious heirloom of the faith. Catholics objected, pleaded, prayed. It was of no avail. Their children were forced to recite Protestant prayers in the public schools, to sing Protestant hymns; and the reading of the Protestant Authorised Version of the Bible—which had previously been voluntary and subject to a sort of 'conscience clause'—was made compulsory on every child. The 'Researches' for April, 1903, showed how rigidly this State-organised system of wholesale proselytism was administered. In the Eliot public school, Boston, a ten-year-old Catholic boy, Thomas J. Whall, politely but firmly refused to read the Protestant Version of the Scriptures. This was on Thursday, March 10, 1859. The little rebel for conscience was brutally flogged for thirty-five minutes, and then expelled. Some four hundred of his companions pluckily followed his example and shared his corporal punishment, though in