

During the absence of the Very Rev. Dr. Egan the Sacred Heart parish, Ponsonby, will be attended to by one of the Maori missionaries, probably the Very Rev. Dean Lighthearth.

A valuable piece of property adjoining St. Patrick's Presbytery, upon which stands a two-storey dwelling, has been purchased, and will soon become parochial property.

The construction of the new fence around St. Benedict's Church has been delayed owing to the architect, Mr. T. Mahoney, refusing to pass the iron portion of it, which will have to be re-cast.

St. Benedict's parish has now been finally handed over by the Benedictine Order to his Lordship the Bishop of the Diocese and shall henceforth be reckoned a secular parish.

His Lordship the Bishop intends during the Right Rev. Mgr O'Reilly's absence at the Catholic Congress to assist the Rev. Fathers Corcoran and O'Carroll in their work at the Cathedral.

The Right Rev. Mgr. O'Reilly and the Very Rev. Dr. Egan, O.S.B., left in the Elingamite last Monday to attend the Australasian Catholic Congress, at which they are to represent the Auckland Diocese, in the absence of the Right Rev. Dr. Lenihan who was unable to go in consequence of pressure of business.

Rev. Father Purton, O.S.B., has been transferred from St. Patrick's to the spiritual charge of the Little Sisters of the Poor, and St. Mary's Convent, Ponsonby. Father Purton has taken up his residence in the western suburb to be near his duties.

Railway communication between Auckland and Wellington agitates the public mind very much just now. Not satisfied with the Premier's proposals concerning the North Island Trunk Railway, it has been decided to hold an indignation meeting for the purpose of backing up our members.

At a meeting held last evening of the local branch of the H.A.C.B. Society it was unanimously decided to instruct the trustees of the branch to come to terms with the mortgagee, and, if possible, to secure the Catholic Institute for the branch. The branch has invested in the property a sum of £600 which by way of interest has nearly been repaid, besides which it meets there fortnightly free of cost, saving in rental nearly £180.

A CORRECTION.

TO THE EDITOR.

SIR,—Would you kindly permit me to correct an error which appeared in your issue of the 6th inst. In the report of the half-yearly meeting of the N.Z. District of the H.A.C.B. Society at Auckland, it was stated that a notice of motion had been received from the Dunedin branch to the effect that the next annual movable meeting be held in Dunedin. Now as far as the Dunedin branch is concerned no such notice of motion was sent, as it had already been given at the February meeting and carried. But the Dunedin branch instructed its delegate to give in the following notice of motion:—'That, in order to facilitate direct representation and other important conveniences, and to equalise the distances as near as possible of the northern and southern branches from the D.E., the District Board office be removed from Auckland to Wellington.'—I am, etc.,

J. O'CONNOR,
Secretary Dunedin Branch.

Dunedin, September 10.

SCRIPTURE IN THE VICTORIAN STATE SCHOOLS.

A REPRESENTATIVE of the *Argus* interviewed the Archbishop of Melbourne recently, and suggested that he should define his position with regard to the proposed introduction into the State school curriculum of the scheme of Scripture lessons formulated by the Royal Commission.

In reply to a question as to whether he had noticed the criticisms upon a discourse which he delivered recently, and also whether he had seen the summary of the report of the Royal Commission on religious instruction, Archbishop Carr said:—'I have noticed both the criticisms and the summary of the report of the Royal Commission which was published in the *Argus*. With regard to the first, exception has been taken to a statement made by me to the effect that the introduction of the proposed Scripture lessons, prayers, and hymns would, if carried out, Protestantise the State schools. In the first place, I wish to say that all the critics have missed the main point of my objection to this proposed scheme. I certainly did not, as they supposed, speak disparagingly of any Protestant version of the Scriptures, or of Protestant hymns or prayers, but I said two things—first, that the introduction of this system of religious instruction would have the effect of Protestantising the State schools; and, secondly, that the whole scheme would be calculated to poison the minds of Catholic children

'With regard to the first, it is obvious that the introduction of a Protestant version of Scripture, with prayers taken from that version, and hymns borrowed in the vast majority of cases from Protestant sources, would indelibly stamp the State schools as a Protestant institution. It matters little whether these Scripture lessons and prayers are taken from the Protestant Authorised Version, which the late Anglican Bishop of Ballarat treated with such scant courtesy, or from another Protestant version, the Revised, which, though it does not differ so much, still differs in every page and in the structure of phrases and verses from the Catholic version, to which Catholic children are accustomed. The consequence would be in every case that these Catholic children would have set before them two versions of the same text, with the result of lessening their confidence in and their reverence for each.

THE PRINCIPAL OBJECTION.

'But my main objection to these Scripture lessons is not primarily founded on the particular version used, but on the principle of having the Holy Scriptures either interpreted or explained to Catholic children by non-Catholic teachers, or of having the Bible put into the hands of children and interpreted by them according to the Protestant system without note or comment. The whole difference between the Catholic and Protestant systems is involved in this one question. How important that question is may be seen from Mallock's recently published work, *Doctrine and Disruption of Doctrine*. Needless to say, Mallock is not a Catholic, and yet he attributes the true consistency of Catholic doctrine to the recognition and use of the principle of authority in the interpretation of the Bible. On the other hand, he is not less explicit in tracing the variety of Protestant doctrine to the exercise of private judgment in the interpretation of Scripture, whether aided by the interior witness of the Holy Spirit or by reference to the teaching of the primitive church or of the universal church. I am justified therefore in saying that the introduction of the proposed Scripture lessons would Protestantise the state schools.

'It would also, I contend, be calculated to poison the minds of Catholic children, first, by substituting the Protestant for the Catholic system of interpretation, and, secondly, by subjecting the children to the influence of the peculiar religious faith—or disbelief—of their teacher. Suppose the case—and the supposition is warranted—of a teacher who disbelieves in the inspiration of Scripture, or of a considerable part of Scripture, who does not admit the historical accuracy of the Bible, who is known in private life to be an unbeliever or an agnostic, but who nevertheless undertakes to read, or teach, these Scripture lessons. How easy, or rather how unavoidable, it would be for such a one by a smile, a sneer, or a shrug of the shoulders, to convey to the children that he did not believe a word of what was contained in the lesson? What would be more calculated to undermine the faith, and therefore in a spiritual sense to poison the minds of the children submitted to such influence.

'In defence of the scheme it is said that the proposed prayers, as well as the proposed lessons, are taken from Scripture, but apart from the consideration that the identical words of Scripture do not lend themselves to prayers suitable for children, and that these prayers as well as the extracts, are taken from the Protestant version, differing from the Catholic version in the case of the most familiar prayers, as in the "Our Father," there is this further serious consideration, that the Scripture extracts may be so manipulated as to make them appear to express the doctrines of any denomination.

THE SYSTEM IN IRELAND.

'What occurred in Ireland, where a similar scheme was adopted, might possibly occur here. It was the boast of the patrons of the Irish Scripture lessons that their selections expressed Protestant doctrine, and imprinted it on the minds of Catholic children. I will not trouble you with a number of extracts. One may speak for many. The Rev. F. F. Trench, a prominent Protestant patron of many national schools, speaks thus of the practical effect of the Scripture extracts on the minds of Catholic children: "Where we fail in inducing Roman Catholics to read the whole Bible, can it be doubted that the Scripture extracts may do some good. . . . The extracts teach the doctrine of grace; they teach, by Hebrews ix., 21 to 28, that Christ is made one only sacrifice for our sins; they preach, by Romans iii., justification by faith without works; by Luke vii. and xv. they show that the sinner is forgiven freely, etc." He winds up by saying: "I suspect that the generality of persons do not know that these precious passages of Scripture are in the Scripture extracts, and may be explained in the schools."

But it is not proposed to allow the teachers in the State schools of Victoria to give any doctrinal explanation of the Scripture extracts.

'No, it is not; but it is proposed to allow them to deduce moral conclusions from the extracts, and the line separating doctrinal from moral conclusions is to be fixed by the teacher himself. While Dr. Whately was signing the reports of the National Board, of which he was a prominent member, declaring that there was no fear of proselytism, he was telling his friends in private that the effect of the religious teaching in the national schools was to make the Catholic children doubt their religion "and to undermine the vast fabric of the Catholic Church in Ireland." (*Life of Archbishop Whately*, by his daughter, first edition, p. 244). He also tells them that "mixed education is gradually enlightening the mass of the people, and if we give it up we give up the only hope of weaning the Irish from the abuses of Popery." He adds that he could not afford to openly use the National Board as an instrument of conversion, but that he was doing so secretly, fighting the battle with one hand, and that his best, tied behind him (*Ibid*, page 246).

'The Irish system of mixed education was practically the same as is now proposed to be introduced into our State schools, but that system in Ireland has long since been abandoned and the Scripture lessons withdrawn from the schools, on account of the very consequences which I fear will follow from their introduction into the state schools in Victoria. Was I not then justified in saying that the whole scheme was calculated, if adopted here, to poison the minds of Catholic children?

'There is another principle which appears to have been entirely overlooked by the advocates of the Scripture lessons. They are abdicated their position as members of a Christian church; they are admitting that it is not to the church or to the parent, but to the state, that it belongs to give religious instruction in the schools. They are handing over, as far as in them lies, to the lay representatives of the State education department the work which essentially belongs to the Christian church.

What course, then, would you suggest as a remedy for the existing condition of things?