

FEATURES OF THIS WEEK'S ISSUE

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MESSAGE OF POPE LEO XIII. TO THE N.Z. TABLET.

Pergant Directores et Scriptores New Zealand Tablet, Apostolica Benedictione confortati, Religionis et Justitiae causam promovere per vias Veritatis et Pacis.

Die 4 Aprilis, 1900.

LEO XIII., P.M.



THURSDAY, AUGUST 7, 1919.

EDUCATIONAL IDEALS



On Wednesday evening, July 30, the Chief Inspector of Schools, Mr. Fleming, delivered an admirable address on the important subject of "Some Educational Aims." It was to be expected that a reasoned criticism by a man of Mr. Fleming's experience and ability would be worth studying, and it is a matter of congratulation that a very good report of the address was

published in the *Otago Daily Times* on Thursday morning. The thinking people of a community are supposed to be in a minority, but the war has driven so many to think about the problems of reconstruction, fundamental among which is the problem of education, that it is certain that the subject of the Chief Inspector's address is one to which the majority of our fellow-citizens are turning their attention nowadays. Mr. Fleming dealt clearly and logically with educational issues arising out of the war, and seen in a clearer light in the dawn of peace, and there can be no doubt as to the value and helpfulness of the views and suggestions which he set before his hearers on Wednesday evening. Briefly, too briefly in our opinion, he dealt with the most essential of all the considerations that came within the scope of his lecture. And it is with that brief reference of his to the crying need for sound ethical training that we propose to concern ourselves here.

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"Intelligence alone," said Mr. Fleming, "would not make a democracy stable. There would be need of that service and sacrifice which would enable it to carry on its work without friction. In a word, it would require character. Character and intelligence were the two marks of a stable democracy. Ethical considerations must be our first consideration. Personally he could not conceive of a training in conduct without some form of religion; but our State had definitely decided that it would not undertake the religious training of the young, for owing to the differences of belief that existed in the community, it preferred to leave that training to the home and the Church." This statement amounts to saying that: (1) the formation of

character is the most important part of education; (2) that without religion the right formation of character is inconceivable; (3) that the New Zealand Government for one reason or other does not imitate Governments that ensure the right formation of character *in the only way it can be done*. And the logical conclusion is that the New Zealand Government is not doing its duty to the people. It is idle to say that prevailing differences of belief excuse it: there are differences of belief in Ireland and in Germany and in Canada, where nevertheless religion is recognised as the essential matter and the indispensable foundation of the training of the young. And if the New Zealand Government were composed of men to whom Christian truths were a reality, the problem could be solved to-morrow. To fall back on the Church and the home is nothing more than a shirker's argument. The Church does her best, but her time is limited and insignificant as compared with the time given to the schools for the training of the children; the same may be said of homes, and in addition there is no need to point out that in this Dominion there are far too many homes and parents incapable of imparting religion to children in any shape or form. The fact remains that religion is essential; that without it educational reform is a sham; and that the Government is guilty before God and humanity of maintaining a system of schools directly calculated to foster religious indifference and, indirectly, to destroy instead of building up character. In the last week of May, Cardinal Bourne delivered an address in Liverpool, on the invitation of the Council of Education. The subject was kin to Mr. Fleming's, but the Cardinal did not make the mistake of passing hurriedly over the radical reform which must be carried out if there is to be real reconstruction and true progress for the British democracy. He said:—

"The Liverpool Education Committee had pursued a tolerant policy with regard to religion in educational matters. Nevertheless, continued his Eminence, although improvements in the condition of the people and the development of education removed many obstacles, they did not necessarily give true principles of life. (Applause.) It was precisely in that fact that he saw a terrible danger lying ahead of the country. If English men and women were to carry aright the responsibility of Empire conferred on them by the magnificent, unexpected, and complete victory they had gained, they must be given true principles of life while they were still boys and girls. Sending forth a child on the perilous path of life, exposed to so many dangers, without giving him or her real and definite principles of life, placed the child in the position of a man who put out to sea without a compass, charts, or sailing directions. The startling feature of to-day was the absence of clear and definite principles in political and social questions. Formerly there were three things which were universally admitted by every Englishman. He admitted the binding force of conscience; he accepted in a general way the obligation imposed on mankind by what were called the Ten Commandments; and he admitted that the traditional Christian interpretation was a valid guide to the meaning of conscience and of the Decalogue. To a large extent those three principles were no longer admitted among us. Instead of the definite principles of which he had spoken, they had to-day a shifting public opinion, changing almost from day to day, based very largely on sentiment and on the idea of righting some individual suffering at the cost of the public good. If there was one lesson that the war ought to have taught us it was that there was nothing more dangerous than to think individually at the cost of the public good. (Hear, hear.) Unless they got that principle well into their minds in righting the sufferings of the individual, they were apt to introduce remedies that might undoubtedly make life easier for a handful of men, but would one day, and very soon, work irreparable harm for the whole community. (Applause.)"

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In that passage we have the true diagnosis of the social and national troubles of humanity to-day. Men