

DEATHS

O'SULLIVAN.—At Manutahi, on August 22, 1905, Patrick O'Sullivan, native of County Kerry, Ireland, and brother of Michael O'Sullivan, of Manutahi, Taranaki; aged 69 years.—R.I.P.

McMULLAN.—On Wednesday, August 9, Mary, beloved and only daughter of James and Margaret McMullan, of Arthur's Point; aged 28 years, Deeply regretted.—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, SEPTEMBER 7, 1905.

BIBLE-IN-SCHOOLS TYRANNY



THE Bible-in-schools party are at loggerheads with justice and out of tune with our time. Their inspiration comes from the days of State creeds and religious tests. Nearly eighty years have gone by since the Test Act was abolished and Catholic Emancipation was passed. People in the mass cover with a merciful forgetfulness the evil days of grinding religious inequality that preceded the historic years of liberty, 1827 and 1829. And yet, strangely enough, it is from the Nonconformist side of Reformed Christianity—the side that felt almost as keenly as Catholics the bitter brunt of the Test and Corporation Act—that there comes the chief volume of the loud and discordant cry for the imposition of a peculiarly odious form of religious tests in the administration of the Education Act in New Zealand. These are intended to hit teacher and pupil alike. And the high official approval given by the Bible-in-schools leaders to the intolerable condition of things that prevails in certain States of the American Union furnishes a sufficient indication of the heartless spirit in which such tests would be enforced in this 'God's own country' upon dissidents from the proposed established creed. We have already given detailed evidence of the open, shameless, and wholesale discrimination that is practised against Catholic teachers, no matter how high their qualifications, in those 'model' States where our Bible-in-schools League's programme is in force. And we have before us numerous and recent newspaper protests against 'the annual outrage' that is there inflicted, as a preparation for the school holidays, upon the faith and the religious sentiments of Catholic parents and pupils.

These protests come from States as widely separated as Massachusetts, California, and Louisiana. They refer to the evil and long-established custom of turning what we would call the 'break-up' exercises of the supposedly 'unsectarian' public schools into Protestant prayer-meetings. These are sometimes (as recently at Boverly, Mass.) conducted in the churches or conventicles of the Reformed denominations that happen to be locally dominant. An average sample of the sort of 'non-sectarianism' that prevails in those regions is furnished by a Massachusetts State Normal School, to which reference is made in a recent issue of a Buffalo contemporary. The exercises took place in the school. They consisted of a Protestant hymn, a Scripture reading from a Protestant version of the Bible by a Protestant clergyman and class, a prayer by another Pro-

testant divine, and then more Protestant hymns. Next followed the presentation of diplomas to the budding teachers. The function then closed, on approved Protestant lines, with 'the doxology and the benediction,' 'A very good programme,' says the Buffalo 'Union and Times,' 'for a sectarian school picnic, but for the commencement exercises of a State Normal School unnecessary, not in keeping with the unsectarian spirit that should prevail, and eminently unfair.' If the pupils of, say, the Dunedin Normal School were required to attend High Mass in St. Joseph's Cathedral, or to take part in Vespers and Benediction in their classrooms, as part of their annual 'break-up,' the Bible-in-schools Executive would go off in a collective fit of apoplexy, and a tidal wave of religious passion would sweep New Zealand from the nose of North Cape to the toe of Stewart Island. But the very States where a similar outrage is, by an old and tyrant custom, annually inflicted on Catholics, Jews, etc., are admirably pointed to by the official index-finger of our Bible-in-schools League, as grand exemplars for our country's imitation. The significance of this latest pronouncement of the League should not be lost sight of by parents and teachers throughout New Zealand.

Notes

If?

It matters a good deal, after all, whose ox is gored. In the course of his remarks during last week's debate on the breach of Parliamentary privilege, by the reverend chairman of the Bible-in-schools Executive, the Premier expressed the hope that Dr. Gibb had sent the offending letters inadvertently 'and did not realise what he was doing. If,' continued Mr. Seddon, 'it had been a clergyman of another denomination who had sent these letters, there would have been no hesitation about the matter amongst hon. Members in regarding it as a breach of privilege. They would have brought him before the bar of the House and fined him.' 'And sent him to gaol' added Mr. Hawkins. 'Probably that,' said Mr. Seddon. We do not profess to know what our legislators would do in such a case. They would probably 'tear around considerable' We have our own ideas as to Dr. Gibb's action and the censure passed upon him by the Legislature. We are not, however, called upon to express them here. But we have no manner of doubt as to what the Bible-in-schools clergy and their organs in the religious press would do in the circumstances contemplated by Mr. Seddon. They would order the 'Romish' cleric to pack his portmanteau, step off this planet, and betake himself to Mars—or elsewhere.

Knox

In a recent issue, the 'Edinburgh Evening Dispatch' (a non-Catholic daily) wrote as follows: 'It is much to be regretted that the character of Knox and his work was not presented' (at the late quarter-centenary celebrations) 'to their (the children's) youthful minds without uncharitable reflections being cast on Roman Catholics of to-day.' A similar regret was, in substance, expressed by the Very Rev. P. Power in reference to a panegyric on the Scottish 'Reformer' that was circulated through Hawera and the surrounding district. In one respect, however, the publication of the offending pamphlet was a 'felix culpa'—a blunder that had a happy issue. For it led to the publication of an able and learned discourse, in which the widely-read pastor of Hawera temperately examines, in the light of the most recent Protestant historical research, the character and conduct of the 'Reformer,' and lets off a long series of charges of rackarock under the amazing contention that Knox was a champion of 'liberty of conscience.' Father Power's pamphlet deserves to be widely read.