

fiftieth year of its national life, and which is engaged in building up the traditions and ideals upon which so much of its future moral greatness must depend. The story that reached its final chapter in the Supreme Court last week is briefly the story of a dual alliance between sectarian passion and political self-seeking—a 'Flaming Flanagan'-cum-Sadleir combination for mutual benefit at the expense of the Marist Brothers of Stoke. Certain charges were laid against the management of the institute: imprisonment, excessive punishment and overworking of certain of the boys; burial of some dead many years ago on the school grounds; scantiness of winter underwear; and insufficiency of food. It is unfortunate that when hysterical charges are levelled against Catholic institutes a noisy section of the populace follow the motto of the King in LEWIS CARROLL'S *Wonderland*: verdict first, trial afterwards. This was the case with the officially exploded charges against the Good Shepherd nuns in France. It was the case with the Stoke affair. The popular verdict was passed *instanter*. A howl went up from the North Cape to Stewart Island. The flood of sectarian passion burst its dam and ran a frothy 'banker.' In this tossed state of public feeling a Royal Commission of Inquiry was appointed.

'At first,' as the Right Hon. the Premier said in the House on July 27, 'it was represented that people were prepared to prove that something had happened within the last few weeks.' Then the Commission was empowered to extend its investigation over two years. But those who engineered the case against the Brothers soon raised a hideous outcry to have the scope of inquiry extended to five years. The reason was, in view of their first demands, admitted with somewhat brutal frankness. It was, in effect, that they had failed to rake up within bounds of the shorter period any fact that came up to the level of their expectations—anything to justify the loud whoop-halloa and uproar which they had raised. Mr. SEDDON characterised the clamor for extension of the inquiry as 'persecution,' 'a fishing commission,' an 'attempt to set up an inquisition.' But the portion of the dual alliance within the House raged with rare vehemence. The extension was granted. The 'fishing commission' thrashed the water so long as there was a nibble. 'From that ordeal,' says the *Timaru Herald*, 'the management of the Stoke Orphanage emerged, if not completely absolved from blame, at least with no dark stains on its reputation.' In the course of their report the Commissioners state that a great deal of the evidence was tainted by exaggeration, 'the result of strong personal antagonism to certain of the Brothers.' 'Yet,' as our *Timaru* contemporary points out, 'it was chiefly on that tainted evidence that the Commissioners found that in some instances there had been undue severity in the administration of corporal punishment.' The accusations on which this judgment was based were of ancient date and were subsequently proved to have been trumped up. 'But it is certain,' says the *N.Z. Times*, 'that, apart from the matter of the solitary confinement, there was nothing in the punishment inflicted at Stoke that could for a moment be considered worse than prevails in many of the English public schools.'

For the rest, flogging was abolished five years ago at Stoke, and the corporal punishment inflicted since then in the institute has been admittedly milder than in Government institutions of the same kind in the Colony. The Brothers were exonerated by the Commission of the charges of having buried any dead within the school grounds, and of having overworked the boys. (In this latter connection nothing has ever been even hinted or alleged against the Stoke Orphanage comparable to the long hours and grinding toil to which even little children are, according to the published official report of Inspector Hill, subjected from New Year's day to St. Silvester's in their own homes on the dairy farms of the Forty Mile Bush—and this without a word of protest in Parliament or the Press). The clothing of the Stoke inmates was reported by the Commission to be sufficient, though of rough material, the food abundant and wholesome. And they drew special attention to the singular fact—so rare in such institutions and so creditable to the Brothers—that 'there had been no death at the school for over six years, and no case of pulmonary disease or other illness for more than two years, and that at the

date of the report there was not a cough or cold amongst the 120 boys.' Certain reforms recommended by the Commissioners were promptly carried out. They could have been readily brought about without a public uproar: sane people do not crush their cockroaches with Nasmyth steam hammers. After the publication of the Report some of the Brothers were removed from the institution. Later on, in consequence of the Government insisting on their acceptance of resident female help, all the Brothers withdrew from Stoke and returned to the house of their Order in Sydney.

The little menagerie of Nelson intolerants who (in the words of the *Timaru Herald*) 'attacked the Marist Brothers in such savage fashion,' 'looked to the Commission to curse the Stoke Orphanage, yet their finding was more in the nature of a blessing.' Thereupon, says the same judicious and cool-headed organ, 'the malcontents raised a frightful howl, attacked the Report, and pressed the Government to stop all financial aid to the institution.' The outcry vibrated through the pores of the Colony. A prosecution was demanded. Hot-headed demagogues represented the Brothers who had gone to Sydney as fugitives from justice. Mr. T. MACKENZIE—one of the sounding-boards of the Nelson clique—hotly asked the Premier in the House of Representatives: 'Were the police taking any action to arrest the *villains* and *scoundrels* who had cruelly ill-treated the children at the school?' The Premier yielded before the hysterical outcry raised against the Brothers both inside and outside Parliament. The evidence taken by the Commission was laid before the Commissioner of Police. A criminal prosecution ensued. The two Brothers incriminated promptly returned of their own free will to face their accusers. A fair trial was impossible in Nelson owing to the strength of feeling artificially created there. The venue was therefore changed to Wellington. Almost on the eve of the trials a scandalous attempt—which was reported in the daily papers throughout the Colony—was made by a large section of the people of Nelson to influence public opinion: a public meeting was called, crowds assembled, hot speeches were made, and watches were presented to the men who had taken a leading part in bringing about the prosecution! Six charges of common assault were laid against Brother KILIAN. Two only were tried. The prosecution collapsed completely. Verdicts of 'not guilty' were returned. In one, two necessary Crown witnesses deposed that they were present at the punishment of another inmate, which took place fifteen months after they had permanently left the institute! In another, Mr. Justice EDWARDS declared that he 'would not punish a cat' on the evidence adduced by the Crown. The four remaining cases against Brother KILIAN were withdrawn. Brother WYBERTUS was acquitted on trumped-up charges of indecent and common assault. Other charges against him were withdrawn. And this, in brief, is the story of the man-hunt in Nelson and of the ending thereof.

Rabid Enemies.

The story, as told in this summary way, is, in all reason, a sufficiently melancholy one. But it conveys an altogether inadequate idea of the devil's dance of fanaticism and political chicanery that for six months whirled in a mad eddy around the Stoke Orphanage. Some of the ^{most} noisy, active, and prominent agitators against the Brothers from the first were reputed or notorious members of a secret association of fanatics—the Orange Society, to wit—who, amidst the solemn absurdities of the 'first degree' and the blasphemous and semi-indecent tomfooleries of the 'two and a half,' swear illegal oaths on bared and bended knees to do all that lies in their power to injure Catholics in their civil and social rights. These and their noisy and organised local following constitute what a respected daily contemporary styles 'the Nelson clique' and 'the rabid enemies of the Orphanage.' The head and front of the offending of the Marist Brothers was their profession of the Catholic faith. From the very first it was evident that the campaign against the Brothers was to be conducted by this knot of intolerants on strictly sectarian lines and for purely sectarian ends. Through the medium of a number of newspapers they got a grip on the lobe of the public ear. And