

asked to speak his mind quite openly and freely, and that a decision will be given wherever it is at all possible. We confess that we hope for great things from this Commission. It promises to be a boon not only to the clergy but to thoughtful laymen in the Church, who, if they are at all given to reading, cannot help having the vexed problems of Old Testament criticism brought more or less prominently before them. The future of the Commission will be watched with intense interest throughout the whole Church.

'Spitting' in the Schools.

Everybody nowadays recognises how greatly the spread of disease—and especially of the dreaded scourge, consumption—is promoted by the foolish practice of indiscriminate expectoration and there is a general and most laudable movement amongst public bodies in the direction of taking definite and vigorous steps towards putting down the evil. Only the other day the Dunedin City Council formally confirmed a by-law prohibiting expectoration in the streets, and it is gratifying to have the Mayor's assurance that the bye-law has already brought about a considerable abatement of the nuisance. The anti-expectoration movement is now being taken up by our education authorities and there is some indication that the Otago public schools at least will have undergone quite a little revolution by the end of the year. The Inspectors of the Otago Board are at present making their annual 'surprise' visits to the various schools, and they are, we understand, putting down with a very firm hand the time-honored but undoubtedly dirty method of cleaning the children's slates by spitting on them. On no account, so the teachers are given to understand, will the practice be tolerated for the future, and no matter what amount of trouble or inconvenience it may involve the children are at all costs to be provided with water with which to clean their slates. The change, salutary though it is, certainly does occasion some little inconvenience and one result is that in many country districts when the school tank has run dry there may be seen the novel spectacle of a couple of happy youngsters toddling off with a pail to the nearest stream (often some distance away) to get a supply of the water which is now an indispensable requisite for 'a clean slate.'

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The immediate occasion of the action of the Inspectors is not without its droll side. It appears that in some of the country schools it is a custom with the teacher who is in charge of the younger children to get them to write a 'copy' of their own on their slates, and then, in the case of the very young children, the teacher breathes on the slate and gets the children to clean it, after which she substitutes for the child's copy a proper head-line written by herself. The story goes that not very long ago one of the Inspectors was making a surprise visit to a far away country school and was engaged in watching the work of the Infant room when up came a little girl who, handing over her slate to the teacher, innocently said, 'Please, ma'am, will you "hoo" on my slate,' and the unsuspecting and unsophisticated school-ma'am promptly and vigorously 'hoo'd' on the slate under the very nose of the surprised Inspector. Exactly what was said on the occasion is not reported, but since then the use of water has been insisted on for slate cleaning purposes. As we have said this step is undoubtedly in the right direction and we commend the matter to the practical attention of all who are concerned in the teaching of our Catholic schools.

The Church-Wardens and the Vicar.

A short time ago a Christchurch telegram appeared in the daily papers making reference to what was described as the acute dissatisfaction and dissension existing between the parishioners of the Merivale parish and their vicar, and we have now had sent to us a copy of the *Lyttelton Times* containing a full account of the trouble. As far as we can see, it is little more than a personal difference between the church-wardens and the Vicar, and the bulk of the parishioners, to their credit be it said, have made it clear that so far as they are concerned they have really no quarrel with their ecclesiastical head. It is, of course, a matter with which we have nothing whatever to do, and we would not have made the slightest reference to it but for a remark made by the Vicar himself in reference to what Catholics would think. Speaking at a meeting of the parishioners held to discuss the situation, the Vicar, according to the *Times* report, said that 'the occasion was a very sad one, for a Church to ventilate its scandals and be laughed at by freethinkers and the ungodly. It was certain to injure the reputation of the parish. He was most heartily sorry that the parish must bear the shame and disgrace, and he thought the calling of the meeting a great mistake. However, he had been compelled to act as he had acted. How must the Roman Catholics laugh, and thank heaven they were not Protestants.'

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The good Vicar is greatly mistaken if he imagines that the temporary dissension in his church is at all likely to be a cause or occasion of rejoicing to any Catholic. We are proud

of the spirit of unity and of whole-hearted loyalty which is so marked a characteristic of the Catholic Church, but we hope we are far removed from the narrow petty spirit which could take a malicious pleasure in the quarrels and dissensions of those who differ from us. If we were to express any feeling at all in this particular case it would be a feeling of friendly sympathy with the Vicar in his little trouble, and a hope that he will soon be in a position to carry on his work again in harmony and peace.

How the Women See It.

The daily papers intimate that Mr. Seddon is communicating by telegraph with the members of the House of Representatives in order to ascertain their views as to the advisability of New Zealand offering a tenth contingent for service in South Africa. There is one section of the community who have a somewhat vital interest in the departure of so many young men from the Colony, and whose wishes strangely enough have never yet been consulted in the matter, and that is the young women. If a 'round robin' on the subject were sent to all the unmarried members of the fair sex we wonder what the result would be. The number of females in the country is already far in excess of the males, and the prospect for 'our girls' is, from their point of view, certainly somewhat dismal. We are inclined to think that many of our girls will soon be ready to endorse the decidedly original ideas recently expressed by an American lady as to the proper method for preserving a fair ratio between the numbers of women and men. In a letter to the *Directory* newspaper at Torquay—a town in which females outnumber males in a total population of 33,000 by 7000—she remarks that if matters continue at this rate men will become scarcer and scarcer, and that soon the specimen 'Englishman' will be so rare that the women folk of the next, and presumably final, generation, will flock to the museums and zoos to see him, stuffed or alive! Then she adds:—'The step to take is that which rules all laws of supply and demand, by preserving the men who supply the demand. You preserve your game by strict laws; preserve your men by keeping them at home. If I were the Board of Agriculture—which I gather is the department that regulates the comings in and goings out of stock—I should prohibit the embarkation of a gentleman under the penalty of a heavy fine, while women imported should pay duty.'

Common Sense About Purgatory.

There are few Catholic doctrines that are so little understood and so violently denounced by our non-Catholic friends as the belief in Purgatory, yet there are few doctrines that after a little examination and reflection so readily commend themselves to ordinary reason and common sense. The almost absolute necessity—from the point of view of pure reason—of some sort of intermediate state, some place of purification for the soul after death is now very generally recognised even by Protestant theologians, though their teaching has not penetrated the minds of the people to any great extent. The teaching, for example, of what is known as 'The Shorter Catechism'—the standard popular compendium of Presbyterian theology—that 'the souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness and do immediately pass into glory,' is now entirely discarded by Presbyterian ministers and the doctrine of the Intermediate State bulks very largely in modern Presbyterian theology. As showing how natural and reasonable the idea of a future state of purification appears to plain, practical common-sense, the following bit of dialogue, quoted by the *Ave Maria* from a recent novel, is very apt and to the point:—

'Take an ordinary, every-day sort of a man like myself, for instance. I know I am plenty good enough for New York, but I'm not that conceited as to think I'm just fit for heaven at a moment's notice. On the other hand, I don't think that I'm bad enough to take any real enjoyment out of the bottomless pit. Besides, it will be full of mugwumps, anyway, and that's no kind of society for the like of me. Now, a Baptist preacher would have no hesitation; he'd burn me up for ever and ever. I don't think that would be quite fair. But the priest would say to me, "Come on, Pat, and we'll smelt out of you all those little discrepancies that are very useful in New York, but for which there is no call at all in paradise; and when that's done, you can just take your robe and trot upstairs." It's just like a man going into a Turkish bath and coming out a clean citizen with a white sheet around him. There's a common-sense ring about the proposal which seems to appeal to a plain man like myself; but that's not to say I'm a Catholic at all, for I'm not—that is as far as the returns are in at present.'

Messrs Charles Begg and Co., of Dunedin, Timaru, Wellington, and Invercargill call attention to the fact that they are sole agents in New Zealand for the sale of pianos by several celebrated makers. The Thurmer piano is reported to have the largest sale of any medium-priced piano in New Zealand. It is sweet toned, perfect in construction, and of excellent workmanship....