

pelled to receive them. This platform has also been officially adopted, at a meeting held last week, by the Dunedin Council of the Churches, and that body has carried the matter a step further by indicating the method by which it is ultimately hoped to induce Parliament to sanction the desired change. The *modus operandi* is expressed in the following resolution, which was proposed by Mr. Gibb and duly adopted by the Council: 'That the object of the Council shall be to secure that the platform adopted by the above resolution shall be submitted by Parliament to the people by way of the referendum.'

It is no part of our intention to discuss the value of the Referendum as a political agent. In indifferent matters, and in matters of which the average elector is a competent judge, its use might, under proper safeguards, provide a valuable resort both for the Government and the people. But if there are any matters that should not be submitted to the Referendum, they are precisely those which affect the religious or political rights of minorities, and, generally, all questions which have aroused, or are likely to arouse, strong party or sectarian feeling. The matter was submitted to a Referendum in South Australia a few years ago and the verdict was against the Bible lessons. Nevertheless, such a use of the Referendum would open the gate to wide possibilities of persecution. The education question—or, to speak more correctly, proposed remedy for the education difficulty—is, to our mind, decidedly one of the non-submittable subjects. The question of the Bible in the schools is no trifling problem. Its settlement requires cool heads, a thorough knowledge of the Catholic as well as of the non-Catholic side of the case, a spirit of mutual good-will, and a determination to respect rights of conscience at all hazards. Given all these conditions, the solution of the problem is at hand. But, with all due respect for both the intelligence and the fair-mindedness of the electors of New Zealand, we do not think that all the conditions for a fair and final settlement of the question by way of Referendum are to be found in this Colony at the present time.

The Bishops' Committee on Irish Emigration.

The Standing Committee of the Archbishops and Bishops of Ireland have just issued an important statement of their views on the continued exodus of the Irish population—an exodus by which the country has been robbed of a quarter of a million of inhabitants within the last ten years and of little short of four millions within the last fifty years. Providence, the Bishops maintain, has provided sufficient room for the Irish people in their own country. 'If only they were employed in cultivating Irish land and engaged in the manufacturing and industrial occupations that should find place in every city, town, and village of Ireland,' and there can be no doubt that if the old policy, as the Bishop of Raphoe expressed it, 'of denying Irishmen any share in the government of their own country, except as the instruments of oppression, of depriving them of higher education, of taxing them beyond endurance, in addition to maintaining a ruinous land system' were done away there would be no need for the sad outflow that is draining away the manhood and womanhood of the nation. Independent however of the radical cause of the depopulation the Bishops issue an earnest and sensible warning as to the unwisdom on the part of the vast majority of male emigrants to the United States and Canada in quitting Ireland in the present condition of the American labor market. In the old days an Irish emigrant to the United States found work waiting for him as soon as he stepped ashore, but the flood of cheap Continental labour which has poured into America of late years has changed all that, and now it is too true, as the Bishops say, that 'Many young Irishmen are wasting their lives in idleness, and are driven to seek help from public charity far away from home and relatives, in American towns and cities. And many female emigrants, too, have learned to regret that they have abandoned their Irish homes, attracted by some bright vision beyond the Atlantic.'

The remedy for the present serious state of things to which the Bishops attach most importance is practically an application of the principle of 'the land for the people' which had been laid down by the Bishop of Raphoe in the scheme already commented on in these columns. 'We have seen with satisfaction,' they say, 'the efforts made by the Congested Districts Board to have large grazing tracts broken up and distributed amongst the tillers of the soil, and we look to a wider extension of these operations as a most effectual means of stemming the tide of emigration.' Other measures of amelioration are also pointed out, such as the promotion of suitable industries in town and country, the establishment of factories along the numerous rivers of Ireland, and the duty on the part of all classes of the people of practically encouraging Irish manufactures and industries by purchasing Irish-made goods; but dependence is principally placed on the proposal for throwing the land more widely open for settlement by the

people. This policy, however, can only be successfully carried out by adopting the principle of compulsory purchase for which the Irish members are so strongly contending; and that result will only be achieved when the organised forces of the country, Protestant as well as Catholic, have acquired such strength that it will be no longer safe for the Government to refuse their just demand.

How the Lord Chief Justice Died.

Lord Russell of Killowen, the late Chief Justice of England, who belonged as is well known to a family which has given several gifted sons and daughters to the Church, was himself a man of the most simple faith and deep and earnest piety. In the biography recently published by Mr. Barry O'Brien many interesting examples are given of the fidelity and fervor with which he attended to his religious duties. On the occasion of his very last circuit—little more than a fortnight before his death—happening to have a free day while at Carnarvon, he went in the afternoon to see Carnarvon Castle and later on paid a visit to the Catholic priest of the district, which is thus described by the author of 'My New Curate':—

'A few days ago,' wrote Father Sheehan to Father Russell, S.J., 'one of our priests was travelling in North Wales, and came across the footsteps of the Lord Chief Justice. In one case the old priest at Carnarvon told him with enthusiasm how Lord Russell, a few days before, had clambered up to his eyrie, had asked for Confession, and had left £2 for the mission. He was at Mass and Holy Communion next morning.'

The account of the closing scenes of Lord Russell's life, as given by Mr. O'Brien, is very touching and very characteristic of the whole-souled piety of the man. On the Sunday preceding his death he asked to see a priest, and on Monday made a general Confession to Rev. Father Tyrrell, of Farm street. After many medical consultations it was decided on the forenoon of Thursday that Mr. Treves, the famous surgeon, should perform an operation that evening. At half-past six Lord Russell requested the surgeon to prepare a diagram showing the nature of the operation. He looked over the diagram with Mr. Treves, asked many questions, tapped the paper with his glass, as was his wont, and sought all information that could be given to him. Afterwards he expressed a wish to receive Extreme Unction before the operation was performed, and Father Basevi, of the Oratory, came and administered the last rites of the Church. The Chief asked Lady Russell to help him to make the responses, saying he felt his voice very weak. But as a fact he answered clearly and distinctly, and when the priest told him to make an Act of Contrition he began at once to say aloud the old familiar prayer which he had learned at his mother's knee, "Oh, my God, I am heartily sorry that I have offended Thee, and I detest my sins most sincerely because they are displeasing to Thee."

'On Thursday evening the operation was successfully performed, and the patient seemed to have borne it well. Throughout the night the Chief remained in a broken slumber, half sleeping, half waking. Towards morning the patient grew a little more uneasy and restless; yet there were no alarming symptoms. Then a change appeared in the face. The shadows had fallen suddenly, the night was quickly closing in. The end was near. It had come swiftly. And as the dawn broke, with his wife and children praying by his side, and on his lips the words, "My God, have mercy upon me," Charles Russell passed away, dying, as he had lived, full of courage and full of hope.'

An Explanation.

In reply to our comments on the methods adopted by the promoters of the petition to the Right Hon. R. J. Seddon we received shortly before we went to press last week a letter from Mr P. M. Twomey, Wellington. It appears that a committee, of which Mr Twomey is hon. secretary, was formed some time ago in Wellington for the purpose of collecting subscriptions in aid of the Irish Parliamentary Fund. In this they were highly successful, receiving support beyond their expectations. Then it occurred to the committee that it would be a good thing at the present juncture to forward a request to Mr Seddon asking him to bring the Irish Land Question before the conference of Colonial Premiers in London. As the time was limited it was found impossible to take concerted action in the various parts of the Colony and so it was decided to acquaint the Irishmen in the principal centres with what the Wellington committee was doing. The assistant secretary was directed to send a copy of the circular, or requisition, to Auckland, Christchurch, and Dunedin, not to get signatures to it but merely to show what action was being taken in Wellington. It was never intended that it should be published before reaching Mr Seddon, and therefore its publication in the Dunedin daily papers, some days even before it appeared in our columns, was the result of a misarrangement. Taking into consideration the circumstances under which the petition was introduced to the notice of the Irishmen of Dunedin Mr Twomey and his committee must admit that our criticism at the time was perfectly justified.