

The Stoke Orphanage.

We beg to acknowledge the following sums entrusted to us for the Stoke Orphanage:—

	£	s.	d.
Already acknowledged ...	47	16	0
Mr. John Barrett (Gresford, N.E. Belt, Christchurch) ...	5	0	0
Mr. Thomas Staunton (Hinds) ...	1	0	0
Mr. P. Riordan (Charing Cross) ...	1	0	0

We shall be glad to receive, acknowledge, and forward further subscriptions entrusted to us for this great and sorely-trying charity. Rev. P. Murphy, Adm., has kindly consented to act as Treasurer for moneys received by us for this purpose.

EDITOR, 'N.Z. TABLET,'
DUNEDIN.

MARRIAGES.

O'KANE—REANY.—On Wednesday, June 10, at St. Joseph's, Cathedral, Dunedin, by the Rev. Father Hunt, Elizabeth Marie, third daughter of Mr. Joseph Reany, Dunedin, to James J. O'Kane of Alexandra South, Otago.



'To promote the cause of Religion and Justice by the ways of Truth and Peace.'

LEO XIII. to the N.Z. TABLET.

THURSDAY, JUNE 18, 1903.

A COMEDY OF 'INQUIRY'



THE hearts of the members of the late Methodist Conference at Sydney are probably wiser than their heads. To their heads, at any rate, rather than to their hearts, we are willing to attribute the rank unwisdom with which they have, through the report of their Commission of 'inquiry,' revived the memory of the hasty, ill-advised, and hot tempered resolutions which they passed regarding the burning of Bibles in Fiji and the profession of the Catholic faith by the Governor of the group. We can understand the chagrin which they naturally felt at the conversion of fifteen hundred to two thousand of their Fijian adherents to the Old Faith. But this circumstance does not excuse or even palliate the hysterical clamor of the assembly, their unseemly haste in passing angry resolutions after having refused to await confirmation of the hearsay and contradictory reports about the alleged holocaust of Bibles, and their busybody and intolerant interference with the religious beliefs of the King's chief representative in Fiji. The world has known long since that the artificial hurricane of feeling over the Bible-burning was a tempest in a tailor's thimble, and that otherwise staid Conferences of our Methodist fellow-colonists may, and do, sometimes drive their tin-tacks with a steam hammer and make war upon mosquitoes with an eighty-one ton gun.

The Commission of three—two clergymen and a layman—have sent in their report. It is a strangely written document of nine clauses and deals with (1) the conversion of the Namosi people (Fiji), (2) the Bible-burning at Naililili, and (3) the religion of the Governor of the Islands. We take the document as a few newspapers have printed it. The others have quietly ignored it. It is difficult to understand what useful purpose the report can possibly serve, except in so far as it may be intended as a soothing syrup for the feelings of the members of the Conference. The Commission was appointed to 'inquire' into matters on which the Conference had already passed fervid and emphatic judgment. The whole proceeding was strictly of a piece with the podgy, fat-witted King's farcical mode of

judicial procedure in Alice's adventures in the land of topsy-turvy: 'Sentence first, trial afterwards.' Only two working hypotheses are open to us to account for the appointment of this Commission of inquiry. One is this: that the object was to conduct a searching investigation, in a proper judicial manner, and without fear or favor, into all the evidence, no matter from what side forthcoming, that was relevant to the issues raised. But this supposition is negated by the Conference's eager prejudgment of the case on information that was admittedly provisional, second-hand, and contradictory. It soon turned out that the Bible-burning story was, as to its magnitude and in all its offensive details, either grossly exaggerated or a series of downright fabrications. The only other feasible hypothesis left us to account for the appointment of the Commission is this: that the object was not to set up a genuine committee of investigation, but merely a knot of partisan advocates or special pleaders whose duty it would be to save the face of the Conference and make the best case they could against the unspeakable 'Romanists' who had won over so many Methodist Fijians to the Church of the Ages, and whose numbers and prestige were steadily increasing, while that of the rival creed was as steadily falling, in the pearl of the Western Pacific.

The commission seems to have been actuated during their labors by the spirit that ruled the Conference at the time of its appointment. The following are the conclusions which seem to stare at us from their report: (1) They apparently avoided coming into contact with any part of the mass of published, direct, consistent, and overwhelming evidence which places the action of the Catholic party in a favorable light. It is not even so much as hinted at in their report, and the inference plainly left to be drawn by the reader is that it is non-existent. And yet it is not merely direct and consistent testimony, but it is largely the testimony of white people of irreproachable character and reputation. (2) The Commission has manifestly admitted only one kind of evidence—that which seems to sustain the attitude taken up with such unseemly haste by the Sydney Conference. Moreover, a serious amount of this evidence is hearsay and second-hand. The Commission even eke out their case by a resort to sheer surmise—the greater part of one of the nine paragraphs of their report being made up of fresh accusations of Bible-destruction which they state they 'have reason to believe' took place. The extreme credulity of the Commission is sufficiently evidenced by their repetition of the clumsy fabrication that the Sisters—and French Sisters, of all others—styled two of the Evangelists (after the Methodist fashion) 'Mark' and 'John' (with the title 'Saint' omitted), and ordered them to 'burn' on the blasphemous plea that 'they tell false things'! The wretched calumny is indignantly denied by the Sisters. Not the smallest hint is given by the Commission as to the mad dance of wild, mutually destructive, and sometimes absurd tales that whirled around the Bible-burning story. The reader is nowhere informed that the sole witnesses against the Catholic missionaries and nuns are native Fijian 'boys,' or that (as a prominent Protestant Fiji official declared in the height of the controversy) they and their kind are sheer savages still with merely a thin pellicle of external civilisation. To such, especially when the demon in them is roused by sectarian passion, truth is very apt to be stranger than fiction. And no account is made—not even a dishonorable mention—of the strong and emphatic contradictions, given by the Namosi leaders and by the Catholic missionaries and Sisters, of the stale stories now dished up once more for the delectation of a public that has long since sickened of the paltry effort to turn a harmless and quiescent earth-pimple into a fuming volcano of sectarian hate.

In the crowded state of our columns this week we cannot enter more fully into the demerits of the Commission's report. But, in brief, it serves only to give a fresh point to the verdict of a leading non-Christian barrister in Melbourne, that the Methodist accusers have 'no case.' The abuse of 'the other side'—to wit, the Fiji Catholic missionaries—in the Commission's report is, perhaps, but the natural and customary result of this. The whole paltry agitation however, will serve one useful end: it will make people

RIDE "ANGLO SPECIAL" CYCLES.