

The Stoke Orphanage.

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

Previously acknowledged ...	£	s.	d.
Mr. P. McCarthy (Mountainer Hotel, Queenstown) ...	71	11	0
Mr. M. Charles (Lismore) ...	2	0	0
Mr. G. O'Reilly (Waverley) ...	1	0	0
	2	6	

In addition to the subscriptions received by us and published in our columns, the following donations for the Stoke Orphanage Fund are hereby thankfully acknowledged by the Rev. George Mahony, S.M., Nelson:—

Westport Band Concert, £6 4s 7d; Mrs. Beech ((Ohariu), £6; Monsignor O'Reilly (Thames), £5; Mrs. Hughes (Nelson), £5; Leaper Bros. (Nelson), £4; Nelson Rugby Union, £3; Mr. Sidney Hayward (ex-pupil), £3; Father Goggan (Leeston), £2 2s; Mrs. Wells (Wellington), £1; Mr. Hall (Nelson), £1; Mr. John Kirkpatrick (Stratford), £1; Mrs. C. Knapp (Nelson), 10s; smaller amounts, 7s 6d.

In addition to the amounts already acknowledged the following in smaller sums have been received from Nelson, 15s 6d; Wellington, 5s; Masterton, £8 12s 9d.

The sufferers by the disastrous fire thank most sincerely the above generous donors. There is still a large sum required, and the Orphans feel confident that their friends throughout the Colonies will rally round them and give them means to re-erect as soon as possible their New Orphanage.

(To be continued.)

IN MEMORIAM.

QUINN.—In loving remembrance of our dear father, Patrick Quinn, who departed this life on 15th July, 1891, at Arapura, Westland.—R.I.P.

Inserted by A. Quinn and family, Wellington.



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

LEO XIII to the N.Z. TABLET.

THURSDAY, JULY 16, 1903.

THE PROPOSED REFERENDUM



WHEN a former Earl of Argyll was executing a masterly retreat before MONTROSE, he realised that there are occasions on which one pair of legs is worth two pair of hands. For a retreat from an untenable position may be, and often is, like XENOPHON'S, a gallant feat of arms; and in politics, as in war, an honorable defeat is preferable to a dishonorable victory which, like that of Chæroneæ, is 'fatal to liberty.'

There is at present before our House of Representatives a Bill which, if it should ever find its way upon the statute-book, would be a serious blow to the liberties which Catholics, Jews, and other religious minorities at present enjoy under the free Constitution of New Zealand. We refer to the Bill 'intituled an Act to provide for taking a Poll of the Electors on the Question of giving Bible Lessons in the Public Schools of the Colony.' This Bill is a brazen assertion of the principle which lies at the root of religious persecution—namely, the principle of deciding religious questions and matters of creed and conscience by the brute force of a majority vote. The Bill has been aptly described as 'a subterfuge for political cowardice.' It is, we believe, the first time that such a principle of government has ever been mooted in our legislative Chambers. We earnestly trust that it will be the last, and that this vicious and dangerous Bill will speedily meet, not its Chæroneæ, but its Marathon, on the floor of our House of Representatives. Briefly, the Bill proposes to take, on the second Thursday of March, 1904, a plebiscite on these two issues: 'I vote for

Bible lessons in public schools,' and 'I vote against Bible lessons in public schools.' It provides that 'Bible lessons shall include 'simple literary, historical, and ethical explanations,' with a conscience clause in favor of teachers and of children whose parents object.

We may here usefully repeat what has so often found expression in our editorial columns: 'We Catholics do not object to a system of education because it is religious. It is equally needless to say that we are not opposed to denominational schools having the Bible read and taught in them. We teach it in our own schools, under proper direction and with judicious selection, and we wish that a knowledge of its truths could be imparted, under due supervision, to every child, Protestant, Jewish, and Catholic, in the Colony. But we do object to Bible lessons in schools of mixed religion. We hold that the Bible is the depositary, not the organ, of God's revelation to man. We hold that, therefore, it requires an interpreter; and we hold that the Church, through its representatives, is the divinely constituted interpreter or organ of revealed truth. We hold, too, that dogmatic truth is the basis both of faith and of morality. Our position is, therefore, wholly irreconcilable with that which is taken up by rationalists and agnostics, who abjure dogmatic truth and reject the Bible as the depositary of revelation, and by Protestants, who reject the living authority of the Catholic Church and adopt, instead, various methods of private interpretation of the Sacred Word.'

As to the plebiscite or Referendum Bill itself: It is unsound and dangerous in principle; and, in the issues which it proposes to lay before the electors, there lurk a trickery and disingenuousness that are deserving of the strongest reprobation. We readily acknowledge that there are questions for the decision of which the Referendum may be a political expedient of great value. Such are questions on which the average elector is competent to pass a fair and unbiassed judgment. But there are others which are emphatically not of the submittable kind. Such, for instance, are, in mixed communities, all religious questions, questions affecting the natural rights of minorities, and all matters on which sectarian, racial, or political passion has been, or is likely to be, aroused to a degree that may cloud the issues and prevent a calm and just verdict. Now the question of Bible-in-schools is a religious question. It is also, unfortunately, one in which the demon of sectarian strife has already shown his tail and cloven hoof. It, moreover, directly affects the rights of conscience of minorities. It is, therefore, not one on which the majority of the electors of the Colony have any right or title whatever to dictate to the minority. Under our Constitution there is no State Church. The religious rights of all are equal. No one creed has the right to determine or dictate what form of religion shall be taught in our public schools. No aggregate of denominations has authority to do so. But the proposal contained in the Bill, with its provision for 'ethical' or moral instruction, is nothing less than an attempt, by the representatives of half-a-dozen discordant denominations, to create a new State creed, to have it crammed into the brain-boxes of the rising generation at the general taxpayers' expense, and to change the public school system from free, compulsory, and agnostic into free, compulsory, and Unitarian.

It was asserted by the authors of the new State creed that they had definite and specific proposals to go before the country. But the two bare alternatives that are printed in the schedule are ambiguous to a degree and are highly calculated, and apparently directly intended, to confuse the issue and to entrap the incautious voter into agreement with proposals that do not appear on the ballot-paper. The issues of the Referendum appear, in fact, to be stated in terms of studied ambiguity. They are a paltry and contemptible sophism. Take, for instance, (1) the word 'Bible.' No hint is given, no mention made, that the 'Bible' referred to in the Bill is a sectarian and admittedly incorrect version of the Scriptures. King JAMES'S Bible is the book which the authors of the new compromise-creed propose to force upon our public schools. And to Catholics and the vast majority of Christians in the world, King