FIJI.

(FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.)

LEVUKA, JUNE 14.

During the month just past an exhaustive report, furnished by the acting agent-general, on the subject of Polynesian immigration, has issued from the Government printing-office. It enters into full details, and assists to so correct and comprehensive an idea of the whole matter, so far as it concerns Fiji, that I will endeavour to lay its salient features before your readers.

After detailing the style of introduction, first by the Government and next by private enterprise under Government supervision, it specially notices the matter of cost. In this connexion the statement is referred to that prior to annexation the men were introduced at little more than £5 per caput. In 1879 the Government allotted at £8 per head, in 1880 and 1881 at £10, after which it experienced difficulties in inducing any tender from shipping agents to recruit at even £16 per head, and so traces average cost for 1882 to £20 per head. The principal reasons suggested are that the supply has decreased, and that whereas Fijian recruiters offer but £3 per annum, Queenslanders offer £6, and Hawaiians as high as £12. It is also suggested that cost might be redqced by establishing a central depôt among the islands, and conveying the people thence to Fiji by steam. Regarding the character of the traffic, it is remarked :—"The recruiting season for 1882 (the last year exhaustively dealt with), though not remarkable for success, appears to have been tolerably free from irregularities and abuses, the following being the principal circumstances to which exception was taken by the Government." Here follow six cases, which I will thus condense :—1. The Lotitus engaged a trader to assist in recruiting, whose remuneration was to depend on the number of men obtained, and its licence was refused. 2. The Au Revoir was permitted to sail from Sydney, and on arrival here was found in so unseaworthy a condition that no other such permission has since been granted. 3. "Curio," the boat steerer, and two Fijians from the Taviuni were killed at Santo, and on inquiry before a deputy of the High Commissioner the strong presumption appeared that the incentive arose out of Curio's tampering with native women. 4. Shots were fired over the heads of two recruits who were attempting to escape from the boats of the Lord of the Isles, and a female native who was in the bush was alleged to have been killed. 5. "A second case of the foolish use of firearms took place on board another vessel. In this instance, though several native women were greatly frightened by it, it was satisfactorily established that it was improbable that any more serious result had been occasioned." 6. "Two cases of time-expired labourers being landed at the wrong spot were reported during the season;" and the report proceeds to show how difficult, from the ignorance of the expirees, it is at times to guard against this mistake.

This is the full catalogue, and to understand it thoroughly it must be stated that the report also shows that during the year 18 vessels made 33 voyages, bringing 2,036 recruits, and returning 1,137 expirees. The facts speak for themselves, and it must be admitted that, when no more serious indictment can be preferred, even though cognisance is taken of a careless use of firearms, by which several native women were greatly frightened, very little indeed remains to be said about the "irregularities and abuses" of the Fijian labour trade.

Touching the recruiting of women without their natural protectors, which has been made a grave charge against the trade, the returns show that, for the years ending 1882, but 18 were so engaged out of 5,845 Polynesians recruited. The percentage of women to men under engagement in the colony is 7·08. As bearing on the subject of the treatment of labourers on estates, a table is supplied, showing that, in 1882, from 7,973 Polynesians under indenture, but 48 complaints were preferred against employers under the labour laws, which resulted in 38 convictions; while from 1,333 Indians the complaints were 43, and the convictions 5. On the other hand, the complaints by employers against Polynesians were 97, and the convictions 57; and against the Indians the complaints were 103, and the convictions 39. Notwithstanding this return, compiled from magisterial records, the acting agent-general says:—"Assaults on the persons of Polynesians are very numerous, and should be firmly discountenanced, especially in cases of new immigrants, with whom apparent idleness or stupidity may frequently be the result of weakness or disease. I have little doubt, from my limited experience of Polynesians, that death in the case of more than one immigrant has been greatly accelerated by assault; though it would be most difficult to produce sufficient evidence to secure a conviction for manslaughter, the effects produced being exhibited rather in the form of mental despondency than actual bodily injury." Keeping in view that the labourers have free access to the magistrates, and that travelling inspectors from the Labour department are constantly visiting plantations to receive complaints and to prosecute on behalf of the immigrants, the figures supplied scarcely square with the assertion made in the first part of the above quotation, even supposing all the cases of complaint were for assault. But additional light is thrown on the matter by the column reserved for this special offence, which shows the total number of complaints under the head to have been 25! For the rest, the remarks about convictions for manslaughter in cases where "the effect produced has been exhibited rather in the form of mental despondency than actual bodily injury," may indicate how sweet a thing it is to be a planter under an acting agent-general holding such very peculiar views.

Up to this point the report is one by no means unfavourable either to the traffic or the colony, but unfortunately its prominent feature has yet to be mentioned; and this gives the whole matter a totally different complexion. I refer to mortality; and here the figures are sufficient to make one stand aghast. The general statement is contained in the following sentences:—"The number of Polynesian immigrants introduced from the first day of January, 1878, to the last day of December, 1881, into this colony is 7,137. There died out of this number during the above period 1,270 souls who had been passed by the medical inspector as fit for indenture." . . . "The total fluctuating Polynesian immigrant population for 1882 may be stated at 7,973, and the deaths among the same at 603, representing the actual death-rate for the year as 75·61 per mille." In dealing with the subject, the death-rate on shipboard is first noticed, and that for 1878 set down at 9·3 per centum. In 1879 the rate was also very heavy, mainly in consequence of the Stanley being caught in a hurricane, and dysentery of a malignant type breaking out among her men. Of these 10 died on the voyage and 56 in hospital after debarkation. After this vessels were allowed to carry but one recruit to the ton, the former rate being three to two tons, and in 1883 2,141 men were introduced with a loss of but 4, or 1·86 per mille, yet of 1,137 returned 16 died, or 14·07 per mille. Of the 2,164 newly-arrived immigrants that entered depôt during the year 17 died in depôt and 28 in hospital, rate 20·79 per mille; and of 51 cases sent to hospital from seven vessels just returned, between December, 1882, and January, 1883, 21 terminated fatally. It is stated:—"The principal cause of the heavy mortality in depôt and hospital among recruits may be looked for in the length of the voyage, the late season of the year at which vessels arrived, want of accommodation in the public hospital—calculated to hold at the time 26 patients of all nationalities—and the insufficient arrangements made for the supply of suitable native food for the maintenance of immigrants in depôt." Further on, in giving the death rate in Suva hospital for the entire year (1882) as 235·53 per mille, the reporting officer adds—"The condition of Suva hospital during the year 1882 (I refer to the building and appliances) was as little favourable to the successful recovery of patients as it well could be." Evidently. Yet at the time that men crowded into this institution of 26-patient capacity were dying from the causes noted, Sir William De Vœux sat writing the accusatory and denunciatory minutes to the Planters' Association which caused the breach that followed. How far this was justified, and to what extent the planters generally are responsible for this frightful mortality, appears from another table which gives death rates in different districts. General figures are 5,579·75 men, 603 deaths, rate 108·06 per mille. Eliminating from this the Rewa figures (the one planting district in which the mortality has been so appalling), with its 224·57 rate, and the figures referring to Government institutions, the statement then stands thus:—In the other seven districts into which the colony is for this purpose divided, out of 3,999 men, 151 died, or 37·76 per mille, so that the deaths bringing the rate up to 108·06 occurred among 1,580 men on the Rewa and those in Government institutions. It is to be noted that the men sent to Suva hospital from plantations for this year were 72, of whom 12 died. How the rate among the Polynesians in the seven districts above referred to compares with that among native Fijians appears on reference to the census last published, in 1882. This gives the mortality for the previous year as 24·35 per mille, so that though both are alarmingly high, there is no great difference between them, and, reverting to the Polynesian rate on the plantations in these seven districts, the comparison with depôt and hospital figures, coupled with the admissions made as to the inducing causes, certainly gives a very strange complexion to official censure.

The aspect of the case for the planters as a body is still more clearly apparent on turning to another table for 1882, which gives rates on estates employing over 10 men, and 10 or fewer. Under the first head range 97 estates, employing 4,801·75 men, of whom 490 died; rate 10·20 per cent. Under the second head range 273 estates, employing 778 men, of whom 25 died; rate 3·21 per cent. Putting both together the rate is 92·31 per mille, but if one item is excised, namely, "Five plantations, 554 men, and 284 deaths," the rate for the remainder then stands at 365 estates, 5,025·75 men, 251 deaths; rate, 49·95. Deleting 13 other estates the figures stand—4,289·50 men and 151 deaths; rate, 35·21 per mille. Discarding 22 other estates, the rate among 2,531 men is reduced to 21·33 per mille; while, coming still lower, out of 1,489·50 men—more than a quarter of the whole—engaged on 291 estates there died not one. The conclusion is unavoidable, that when allotted to the small cultivators, who engage but few men, and are able personally to care for them in sickness and in health, the people thrive. As the allotment increases so does the death rate, till at last we get to the Colonial Sugar Refining Company's three Rewa plantations, employing 471·75, of whom 240—or over 50 per cent—die. In the face of this fact it is the more to be regretted that the policy of the Government has forced these small employers to the wall, and is fastgiving over the chief agricultural industry of the colony to the large planting companies.

The official view of this whole matter is contained in the last paragraph of the report. It embodies the Suva Hospital 235·53 rate, already referred to, and invites attention to it, "to obtain thorough appreciation of the unsuitability of Polynesian immigrants for emigration to this colony as field labourers." If the statistics printed would, indeed, bear this construction, the system should not be permitted to continue in operation another day, but the facts really seem to point to the conclusion that if the men can be kept off Rewa plantations and out of Government institutions, or if in either or both cases such treatment can be insured for them as they receive at the hands of the planters generally, they will do very well indeed; their chance of life will be at least equal to that of the native Fijian, and presumably better than those they would enjoy in islands from which they emigrate.

In view of the extent to which this report might affect the future of the labour trade, it is decidedly fortunate for the small planters that, as a prospective labourer, the Polynesian is losing his position of first importance. He is not all a desirable labourer at the rate of introduction quoted, and he has only been sought for, first, in the hope of obtaining his services at a lower figure; and, next, because no substitute was obtainable. Now, with the light of costly experience to guide them, men of limited means would in any case be compelled to let him alone, and, with their attention turned in another direction where the chance of procuring the substitute on infinitely better terms does at least seem to offer, they are but the more willing to do so. This has been brought about by the passing of the ordinance at the last sitting of the Council to authorise the raising of a £75,000 loan, to be devoted to introducing coolies, who will be allotted to planters, on a system of deferred payments, in numbers of from 5 to 30. The ordinance now awaits the Royal assent, and then the scheme for the employment of the money will be more definitely dealt with. The prospect thus held out is the more agreeable, as any hope of procuring Polynesians at a reduced rate has been entirely annihilated by the recent proclamation of a regulation made by the High Commissioner under the Western Pacific Order in Council, prohibiting the supply of arms, ammunition, and explosives by British subjects to any of the islanders, or the carrying of them by British vessels to any of the islands throughout the Western Pacific. Whatever question may arise as to the good policy of this act, it is certain that as the Polynesians only recruit in the hope of receiving these articles, either as presents for engagement, or as wages at the end of the term, its effect must, of necessity, be to render the recruiting more difficult, and materially to increase the cost of the few who may, perhaps, be obtained. For this reason, whether other labourers may offer or not, the Polynesian supply may be regarded as almost closed, at least until conditions very materially alter.

Respecting the good policy of this arms prohibition a great deal may be said. Those who advocate it simply know that the islands have received arms from Europeans, and that they have turned them with fatal effect against those from whom they have obtained them; therefore they argue—If you stop the supply the outrages will cease. On the other hand, men speaking from personal experience say the firearms are less deadly than the poisoned native weapons; the stoppage of the supply cannot be effected by any partial measure, such as an interdict, where British subjects merely are concerned, but the attempt can only be effectual when made under general international agreement, and that whereas the result must be to prevent the recruiting of labourers for the colonies refusing to supply arms, &c., it will only work evil to the planters without producing the least effect in the required direction. The subject has been exhaustively treated of in correspondence between the Colonial Office, Fiji, Queensland, and New South Wales, and Sir William De Vœux, in discussing the advisability of prohibiting the supply of arms as wages, thus wrote the Earl of Kimberley, on February 23, 1882:—"After much and anxious discussion of the question, I decided against such prohibition, with the unanimous consent of the Council, for the following reasons:—That as the immigrants in the colony had for the most part agreed to serve here on the understanding, expressed or implied, that they would obtain arms by doing so, it would be a breach of faith to withhold the price after the three years' service had been already rendered. That the muskets which are purchased here (unlike the rifles said to be supplied in Queensland and elsewhere) are little, if at all, more destructive than native weapons; and that while the prohibition would at once render useless any further attempt to recruit for this colony, and would thus, if suddenly imposed, inflict a ruinous blow on many—probably the majority of the European residents here—it would effect no practical good it other English and foreign countries were not restricted in a similar way." A footnote appended further states:—"It is moreover a fact, established by experience, that wounds made by native weapons result in tetanus much more frequently than those from smoothbore bullets." Further combating the proposition, he says in another part of the same letter:—"For supposing the procurement of arms to be prevented here and in Queensland, the Polynesians who would otherwise have come to a British colony would go to foreign countries, such as New Caledonia, Samoa, Hawaii, &c., where the inducements withheld here will still be offered to them, and where the securities for their good treatment are, to say the least, comparatively weak." These arguments apply with equal force to the supply of arms either as wages in Fiji or as articles of trade among the islands. Since they were used no international arrangement has been arrived at, and the position has only changed by a mutual agreement on the part of New South Wales and Queensland, to prohibit the supply, thus improving the trade in arms carried on by Germans, French, Americans, Samoans, Hawaiians, and others. Yet, despite all he has himself set forth, during his recent flying visit to the colony Sir William framed this prohibitory regulation, whose chief merits, on his own showing, are—it is condemned by the legislative wisdom of the colony. In prohibiting the carriage of arms by a British vessel it will compel a distinct breach of faith with the Polynesians now engaged in Fiji. If it could take away the market it would compel the natives to revert to a more deadly weapon. It will prevent further recruiting, and inflict a ruinous blow on the colony. It will prejudicially affect even the Polynesians themselves, and as it is not a prohibition restricting English and foreigners alike, it can effect no practical good. It really does appear that Sir William is to be complimented not only on the wisdom and consistency of his action, but also upon the extraordinary trouble he has taken to make it apparent.

The month has been a very busy one in respect to arrivals and departures by sea. H.M.S. Espiegle and Lark have visited us and gone, the former having on board the distinguished European statesman and diplomat Baron Von Hubner. The Union Steamship Company's Wairarapa arrived at Suva on the 8th with her 104 tourists, and after spending three days at the capital and two at Levuka, left yesterday for Samoa and Tonga *viâ* Vuna and Mago. Every attention was paid to her excursionists during their short stay. They were entertained most hospitably in both ports, and their impressions of Fiji should be decidedly favourable to its residents. The Union Company was further represented by the Penguin, the Hero, and the Suva, all in harbour together; while the A.S.N. Company's Gunga, which leaves in the morning, also helped to make the port look unusually busy. The Hero left for your port last night, and among other cargo she takes 55 tons of sugar, the first out-put from the Mago mill, and 50 tons, the first yield from the Deuba estate (Messrs. Wilson Bros. and Co.). The shipment has been reduced to this amount by a most untoward accident. The Hero was expected off the plantation to take in the cargo some days before she actually did arrive, and a large punt was laden with 50 tons of sugar and towed to the mouth of the creek, where it was anchored in the dark over a coral patch. When the tide went down the punt grounded, and the coral working through the bottom caused a leak which spoiled the cargo, and so spoiled the shipment which should have gone forward. The estate has also been very unfortunate in an abnormally heavy death-rate among the New Britain and New Ireland men introduced last year. The opening-up of these new recruiting grounds was then hailed with great satisfaction, but up to the present the men have done so badly that none would now willingly accept their allotment. They have proved wild and intractable; have absconded in large numbers and taken to the bush, and have on the plantations been attacked by a gangrenous form of dysentery of a peculiarly malignant and fatal type. On the Deuba estate, in particular, they have received every possible care and attention, and the district medical officer has almost been resident on the place, yet the mortality has been excessive, and the death among these people generally will, I fear, make the rate for the year now current an appallingly high one.

COUNT TODLEBEN.

Count Todleben, the famous Russian general, who raised a lasting monument for himself by his memorable defence of Sebastopol against the armies of England and France during the Crimean war, has died at the age of 66. Francis Edward Todleben was of German extraction. He was, we learn from *Men of the Time*, the son of a shopkeeper, and was born at Mittan, the capital of Courland, on the 8th of May, 1818. He was educated at Riga, and in the College of Engineers, at St. Petersburg. His first military service was with the Russian army despatched in 1848 to attempt the reduction of the Circassians. When the Russian war with England, France, and Turkey broke out in 1854, he was second captain in a corps of engineers. Having distinguished himself under General Schilders in the campaign of the Danube, he was sent to the Crimea. The landing of the Allies on this portion of the territory took the Russians by surprise. Todleben was entrusted with the defence of Sebastopol, which, at the time, was almost an open city. Favoured in the first instance by the dilatoriness of the enemy, and displaying extraordinary energy and ability, he succeeded, under the almost continuous fire of the attacking force, in converting the city into so impregnable a fortress that it successfully resisted for more than a year the combined attacks of the allied armies. But for Todleben the brilliant victories of the Alma, Balaclava, and Inkerman would have been speedily followed by the capture of Sebastopol; the terrible winter in the trenches would have been avoided, and the fearful sufferings endured by the English troops, owing to the failure of the commissariat department, would have been in great part spared them. Up to the time of the landing of the Allies, Todleben had no settled sphere of action in the work of fortifying Sebastopol, but once entrusted with the responsibility of the defence, he reanimated the beaten Russian army, and laboured so successfully that he effectually sheltered it. During his heroic exertions, he received a wound in the foot, from which he did not thoroughly recover for two years. His promotion during the Crimean war was rapid, but he was not popular at Court, and his services were never recognised in the degree in which he was entitled to expect they would be. Within 12 months he passed successfully through the grades of captain, lieut.-colonel, adjutant-colonel, major-general, and adjutant-general, and received, among other distinctions, the decoration of the fourth and of the third class of the Order of St. George, which is conferred only for brilliant deeds, and upon the proposal of the Chapter of the Knights of the Order. During the Russian war he was also selected to defend Nicolaieff, and to protect the fleet at Cronstadt. After the peace he was for a long time occupied with scientific and literary studies. In 1865 he published a most elaborate history of *The Defence of Sebastopol*, which was accepted as a valuable contribution to the literature of military engineering. In the same year he visited England, and was most cordially received. The history of *The Defence of Sebastopol* excited great interest in England, where it was translated and published in a condensed form. While admitted to be of extraordinary value as a professional history of one of the greatest military operations of modern times, the statements it contained respecting the part taken by the Allies in the various engagements described were not always accurate or trustworthy. But it was admitted that in everything relating to the operations of the Russians, the general displayed a frankness which conciliated confidence. He was at all times ready to do justice to the tenacity, courage, and intrepidity of the English soldiers, but he condemned the slowness of their movements, and the imperfect manner in which their siege works were carried on. The military services of General Todleben were not again sought by his Government until after the defeat of the Russian army before Plevna in September, 1877, when he was asked to undertake the reduction of that stronghold. He directed regular siege operations by sap and mine against the Turkish fortifications; and having completely invested the place, its heroic defence ended in the surrender of the gallant Osman Pasha. In April, 1878, General Todleben was appointed commander-in-chief of the Russian army before Constantinople, vice the Grand Duke Nicholas, who was stated to be in ill-health, and he was subsequently created a count.

THE EDUCATION QUESTION.

REPORTS OF THE TWO PARTIES IN THE EDUCATION COMMISSION.

His Excellency the Acting-Governor yesterday received the final report of the Education Commission, and an independent report by His Honour Acting-Judge Rogers, of Tasmania, the chairman, who some months ago left Victoria for that colony. The report is signed by Colonel Templeton (acting-chairman), and Messrs. Ham, Meares, Love, and Ormond. It deals exhaustively with the administration, organisation, and general condition of the existing system of public instruction, and the questions of religious instruction and the Catholic claims. In the first division, one of the most important recommendations is as to compulsory school age. The commission recommend that if a child does not attain the compulsory standard at 13 years of age, the parent should be compelled to pay for his or her education until the compulsory standard is reached, or until the child becomes 15 years of age. The questions of religious instruction and the Catholic claims are of such importance that we give the report of the commission upon them in full, reserving the publication of the other divisions for future issues. The report of the commission is as follows:—

PART II.—RELIGION IN RELATION TO EDUCATION.

In connexion with this part of our inquiry, we deemed it advisable to address circulars to the heads of the various religious denominations throughout the colony, asking them to nominate representatives who should attend to give evidence before the commission on behalf of their respective denominations.

The Free Presbyterians, Unitarians, Baptists, Bible Christians, and Congregationalists declined to nominate any representatives; and from the following denominations no reply to the circular was received, viz:—The Free Primitive and Methodist New Connexion, and the Catholic Apostolic Church.

Witnesses, both cleric and lay, were sent by the following denominations, viz.:—The Church of England, the Presbyterian Church, the Wesleyan Church, the Lutheran Church, the Society of Friends, the Hebrew Church, and the Roman Catholic Church. Other witnesses, not specially nominated by their respective denominations, were also examined.

The evidence specially referring to this part of our inquiry has been numbered and printed separately from the general evidence.

(1.) RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION IN STATE SCHOOLS.

We have throughout this branch of our inquiry had presented to our minds two considerations—the one, the fact that the education of the young without the inculcation of moral principles, based upon the authority of God, is defective and imperfect; the other, that as this colony consists of persons of the most diverse religious opinions, and as the constitution of the colony recognises no distinctive religious belief, the introduction of any religious teaching into the state schools is a question of great difficulty.

We are satisfied, from the evidence given before us by the several persons sent to us as the representatives of the various religious denominations in the colony, as also by other independent evidence, that a very general desire exists in the minds of many parents in the colony that the difficulty of religious education in connexion with state schools should be grappled with, and that it should be so treated that the benefits of a general system of instruction in secular subjects should be maintained in its integrity, whilst at the same time the necessity for the religious instruction of the young should be recognised, and such facilities afforded in the state schools themselves as are compatible with the principle of complete religious toleration and non-interference by the Government in the religious differences which exist amongst the various religious denominations in the colony.

In directing our attention to this most important branch of our inquiry, we have recognised the existence of the principle that all religious denominations shall be treated upon an equality of independence and freedom from restraint in matters of conscience. Keeping this principle in view, we have considered what additional facilities might be afforded for the giving of religious instruction to the children attending state schools.

The majority of the witnesses representing the various religious denominations expressed the opinion that the absence of religious instruction from the state schools had a very injurious effect on the children, and they earnestly urged that the school curriculum should be extended so as to include specific religious lessons. They admitted, however, that they had not visited state schools for the purpose of observing the system of instruction adopted, or the conduct of the children while under instruction or in the playground. They appeared to be unaware of the extent to which lessons on religious subjects are distributed through the reading books used in the schools, and, when examined on this point, one of the leading witnesses stated that he did not know that there were lessons in the school books teaching children that they ought to pray to God night and morning.

We have carefully examined the whole of the reading books used in the schools, and find that they contain many lessons of a religious character, and the evidence of state school teachers proves that these lessons are taught in the schools. One teacher, in answer to questions, stated that the necessity or benefit of prayer was explained, and added—

"I would always encourage teachers not to lose an opportunity of enlarging upon such points, by which we reach the children's hearts. . . . I cannot understand any teacher giving a lesson without explaining the moral point contained in it."

Other teachers gave similar evidence, of which the following are specimens:—

"Well, suppose I took a boy into my room, and seriously investigated, say, a case of lying, I certainly appeal to him in this way, that although he may deceive me, he cannot deceive God."

"We endeavour to illustrate all matters in the reading lessons, whether religious or otherwise."

"Referring to a lesson on prayer I should ask, 'What are we taught to do in the morning?' 'To pray.' 'Taught to pray how?' 'Continually.' 'And what we are taught to pray for?' 'Grace.' 'And what is meant by grace?' 'Favour,' or some explanation of that sort; and then we are asked to be ready to forgive—we should explain that."

"If the word 'prayer' cropped up in a lesson, I would explain it as well as I could, without reference to any particular church, and say what I understood by prayer—that the morning and evening prayer I should refer to it in so far as the passage would allow me."

"Undoubtedly I explain the sentiment" ("of the decidedly religious lessons"), "and not only that, but elaborate it by practical instances." "Undoubtedly I would, and explain what prayer meant." "And on turning thanks for money?" "Undoubtedly I would impress that on them, and be glad of the opportunity."

On the other hand, some of the teachers stated that they treated these lessons simply as reading lessons. The following extracts are given as specimens:—

"Simply as reading lessons—none of my teachers make any comments by way of religious instruction. . . . The explanation is more as to the meaning of words, not as to teaching of doctrine. . . ."

"I explain them simply as grammatical terms, without entering into any doctrinal teaching whatever."

We have considered it desirable to forward with our report (see appendix C) a series of extracts from the reading-books at present used in the state schools. A perusal of these extracts is sufficient to prove that, in the administration of the Education Act, the term "secular instruction" has not been defined so narrowly as to exclude all religious instruction, and to show the extent to which such instruction has formed part of the school curriculum. Several witnesses, however, urged that in the present state of the law it would be possible for the Minister of Public Instruction to eliminate all religious references from the books, and they referred to the fact that a former Minister did expunge certain lessons having reference to Christianity (see appendix D). We think it is much to be regretted that the Minister should have done this without consulting Parliament, and are of opinion that legal provision should be made to prevent any alteration of the text-books in future without the sanction of Parliament. In order to prevent any doubt as to the meaning of the term "secular instruction," &c., we recommend that the act be amended by inserting an interpretation clause, such as the following, viz.:—"That the term 'secular instruction' as used in the act shall include general religious teaching of a non-sectarian character."

Many of the witnesses testified to the value of giving a specific time to religious instruction from the Bible or some recognised book of selected Scripture lessons, so that the children might know that the instruction given was distinctly religious. We cannot see the slightest objection to this being done, provided that parents having conscientious reasons be allowed to withdraw their children from such instruction. We therefore recommend that the hours for secular instruction be not interfered with—viz., two hours in the forenoon and two hours in the afternoon—and that provision be made in the school curriculum for religious instruction of a non-sectarian character, either before or after the time set apart for secular instruction, with a conscience clause for the protection of both teachers and children. The text-books to be used might be the books of Scripture lessons issued by the National Board of Education of Ireland.

We further recommend that, during the time set apart for religious instruction of a non-sectarian character, the children of such parents as desire it may receive religious instruction separately, from some teacher approved by such parents, and that such separate instruction may include the teaching of the tenets of any sect.

We are also of opinion that the disability in regard to religious instruction under which the teachers now labour should be removed, and that those willing to do so should be permitted to give religious instruction in the state school building in other than the ordinary school hours.

(II.) THE ALLEGED GRIEVANCES OF A PORTION OF THE POPULATION.

The opinions held by the Roman Catholic Church in this colony with regard to the Education Act are totally distinct from the views of others who advocate the introduction of religious teaching in the state schools. The evidence taken by us shows that nothing will satisfy the authorities and the majority of the members of that church except the payment out of the education vote of certain sums of money in support of their separate schools.

We have entered most fully into the matter, and have examined a large number of witnesses delegated by the different Roman Catholic dioceses throughout the colony. Their evidence shows us that the Roman Catholics spend large sums of money in maintaining separate schools of their own. Since 1872, when the Education Act came into operation, they appear, from returns furnished to us, to have expended the large sum of £265,552. They consider themselves aggrieved that, while they expend so much on the education of their children without any aid from the Government, state schools, which they have no desire to use, should be supported out of the general revenue, to which they contribute in common with their fellow-citizens. All these witnesses concur in the view that aid should be granted to their schools in the form of payment by results, to be ascertained by periodical examinations in secular subjects of the children in attendance, and they are unanimous in expressing the opinion that the giving of facilities for religious instruction in state schools by their clergy and authorised laity would not satisfy their requirements. The children of Roman Catholics, they say, must be educated in schools under the authority of their church, and that in these schools the doctrines of the church must permeate the whole of the instruction given.

Pope Pius IX., in the syllabus appended to his Encyclical of December 8, 1864, reprobates, proscribes, and condemns a number of propositions, and amongst others, proposition 48, which is as follows:—

"Catholics may approve of a system of educating youth unconnected with the Catholic faith and the power of the church, and which regards the knowledge of merely natural things, and only, or at least primarily, the ends of earthly social life."

The reprobation, proscription, and condemnation of this proposition are held to be binding on the consciences of all the members of the Roman Catholic Church, and therefore they feel bound to maintain their separate schools. At the same time, in districts where there is no separate school, Roman Catholic parents are held by the church to have an excuse for sending their children to state schools.

We have had no evidence as to the number of Roman Catholic children attending state schools, but from the census returns it appears that on 4th April, 1881, there were in all the schools of the colony 157,191 children, and of these 16,430 were in Roman Catholic schools, 11,704 in private schools, and 129,057 in state schools. Assuming that the number of Roman Catholic children bore the same proportion to the total number of children at school as the number of Roman Catholics in the colony bore to the total population, it would appear that a greater number of Roman Catholic children were being educated in state schools than were to be found in their own separate schools.

One point worthy of notice in connexion with the attitude of the Roman Catholic Church towards the state school system is that while "all faithful Catholics are called upon to reprobate, proscribe, and condemn it," yet there is no objection to members of that church acting as teachers in state schools under the existing system. A leading witness says:—"It is the teaching as affecting the children that is condemned; the teachers are only discharging an official duty for which they are paid." It is in evidence that about one-fourth of the state school teachers are Roman Catholics.

In dealing with the question of the expenditure of money from the general revenue, it would be quite impracticable to take into consideration claims made by churches, societies, or any other combination of individuals, to be specially dealt with on the basis of their contributions as citizens to such revenue. Such a method of dealing with expenditure would gradually lead to the disorganisation of the state. Yet some of the witnesses urged that because Roman Catholics contributed to the general revenue, and the education of the people is paid for out of such revenue, therefore they should receive a portion of the money expended on education in support of their separate schools, and more than one witness went so far as to advocate a division of the vote for education, based upon the proportion of Roman Catholics to the total population.

In a Roman Catholic school, everything is subordinated to the inculcation of the doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church, it being the first object of the teacher to make the pupil a good Catholic. Such being the case, any payment by the state to Roman Catholics towards the education of their children would be tantamount to endowment by the state of that particular form of religion. We fully sympathise with the Roman Catholics in their difficulty; but, as it is purely a church difficulty, it cannot be remedied by the state, in a country where state aid to religion has been abolished by the will of the people.

In any general system of education supported by the state, it is obvious that only such subjects should be taught as are acceptable to the great mass of the people. In this respect, it is a great tribute to our state school system to find that the witnesses who are most opposed to it as a system have no fault to find with the subjects actually taught; their objection is that something they desire is not taught, namely, the particular doctrines of their own church. In other words, their objection cuts at the root of any general system of state education; and as the only way of meeting that objection would be to recognise denominational schools as entitled to aid from the state, we are unable to make any recommendation to Your Excellency on the subject.

J. M. TEMPLETON, Acting Chairman.
C. J. HAM.
GEO. MEARES.
FRANCIS ORMOND.
DUNCAN LOVE.

The independent report of the chairman on the question of religious instruction and the Catholic claims is as follows:—

The necessity of accepting a professional engagement in the colony of Tasmania has prevented me from being present at the discussions of your Excellency's commissioners upon the draft report which, at the desire of the commissioners, I had, as stated in the report, prepared and submitted for their consideration before leaving Melbourne.

I regret that the alterations in reference to religion in relation to education, and those especially having reference to "the alleged grievance of a portion of the population," made by the majority of the commissioners present at their deliberations upon the draft report, differ so much from what appears to me to be the weight of evidence taken before the commission, and from the conclusions which I have drawn from that evidence, that I cannot give my assent to the report, although there are many recommendations in that part of the report which relates to the general organisation and administration of the existing system of education which were embodied in the draft report in which I agree, and which will, if adopted and acted upon, be found to be amendments upon the existing system.

I shall therefore, I think, best discharge the duty imposed upon me under your Excellency's commission by embodying, in the form of a separate report, the conclusions at which I have arrived in reference to matters upon which I differ from the views expressed in the report.

The most careful and unbiassed consideration of the evidence taken before the commission has satisfied me that the defects existing in the present act, upon the subject of religious teaching, have not been sufficiently dwelt upon in the report, nor have the claims of the Roman Catholic portion of the population to relief from the grievances of which they complain been dealt with as the evidence required.

The report wisely and properly enunciates the proposition that "the education of the young, without the inculcation of moral principles based upon the authority of God, is defective and imperfect." It becomes, then, a question of paramount importance to inquire whether the departmental system of education, as established under the existing act, and for which it appears that the Government expends out of the revenues of the colony a sum exceeding half-a-million of money per annum, provides for the inculcation of those principles "based upon the authority of God," without which, as the report correctly states, the education of the young is imperfect.

If it does not do so, then the system as at present established is defective and imperfect, and, unless the people are content to expend over half-a-million per annum upon a defective and imperfect system, should be amended. But the question goes far beyond the mere consideration of a great expenditure upon an imperfect result.

The important question is whether, if the present system be persisted in without any amelioration, it will not result in a few years in the production of a population wholly wanting in the distinctive moral and religious character which belongs to a Christian people.

The weight of the evidence taken before the commission certainly tends to establish the probability of such a result.

The majority of the representatives of various religious denominations examined before the commission expressed the opinion that the absence of religious instruction from the state schools had a very injurious effect upon the children, and the Protestant Bishop of Melbourne (Dr. Moorhouse) stated that, whilst he approved in general of the provisions of the present act very heartily, it was defective "in that it did not permit teachers to give elementary undenominational religious instruction, that as a consequence the children sometimes spoke of religion with astounding irreverence, and that the probable future of the secular system would be the demoralisation of the children and a very serious interference with the moral tone and dignity of the teachers."

Upon the question of fact, as to whether the children have already deteriorated in moral conduct since the introduction of the present system, the evidence of witnesses outside the department was that the conduct of the children had already deteriorated. On the other hand, the Government inspectors and teachers who were examined generally expressed a favourable opinion of the general moral conduct of the children; but the departmental evidence, especially that afforded by the officers and records of the department, greatly impaired the value of that opinion, as the evidence very clearly showed that the attention of the inspectors and teachers is directed almost exclusively to the conduct of the children in reference to their school work, and that there is an indifference to the inculcation of moral principles and to the character of the children, and a disregard to their conduct out of school.

This ought not to be attributed to any want of individual moral tone in the officers or teachers, but rather to the system of the department, which is shown by the evidence to ignore all responsibility in reference to the children outside of school, and to be wholly directed to producing a certain amount of intellectual sharpness, and the acquisition of a fixed amount of secular knowledge.

It becomes, then, necessary to see whether the cause of this want of attention to the moral conduct of the children is in the act itself, or in the administration.

It seems to me that the cause must be sought in the act itself, by which the department is guided in its administration.

The 12th section of the act is imperative as to the strictly secular character of instruction to be given, and in its prohibition of any religious instruction by the teacher in school buildings:—"In every state school secular instruction only shall be given, and no teacher shall give any other than secular instruction in any state school buildings."—(Sec. 12.)

If this enactment were strictly followed, then were any state school teacher to instil into the minds of his pupils "moral principles based upon the authority of God," it might certainly be contended that he was guilty of a violation of the letter of the law.

This consideration may possibly have been the reason which induced a late Minister of Public Instruction to eliminate from the reading books (as stated in the evidence, upon the application of a small anti-Christian section of the community) all the passages having references to Christianity, an elimination of Christian precepts which, as stated by the Protestant Bishop of Melbourne, in his evidence, rendered the religious teaching which was left in the books imperfect, "because it, in fact, abandoned the Christian religion for a form of religious teaching common to Buddhists, Mahomedans, Christians, and Theists."

This consideration may also have weighed with those teachers, and there are many of them who stated in their evidence that they used the Theistic religious passages which remained in the books for the purpose of teaching the art of reading, and not for the inculcation of religious sentiments.

Those teachers would appear to have been more logical than the Minister of Instruction, who, when he excised the Christian passages from the reading books, which, to have acted consistently, have at the same time removed also those passages which teach a mere Theistic religion as distinct from Christianity. By eliminating Christianity, and leaving mere Theistic passages, the only inference which could fairly be drawn would be, that whilst state aid was by the act withheld from the Christian religion, the aid of the commission might be afforded to the inculcation of religion so long as it was not Christian. Two of the Protestant witnesses examined adverted to this point very plainly, the one stating that "he found that the name of Christ was as some evil taint taken from the books," another stating "no one said that there was no religion in the books, but every bit of Christianity was taken out."

There is no doubt, also, that the construction which many have put upon the section referred to, as a direct prohibition to the teaching of religion in state-school buildings, produced the difficulties which until very recently were thrown in the way of the use of state-school buildings for the purpose of voluntary religious instruction.

It must be equally clear that as one Minister of the Crown was able, of his own mere will, to eliminate from the school books all references to Christianity, so another Minister might at any moment cause to be expunged all references to religious sentiments, however vague in character, which remain in the books.

The evidence upon this branch of the subject certainly shows that there exists in the minds of a very large proportion of those who desire the advancement of the education of the people, a feeling of alarm at the possible consequences of a continuance of the existing difficulties, and that the parents of the colony, speaking generally, entertain a great desire that all the existing difficulties in the way of the religious education of the young should be grappled with, whilst at the same time the system of a compulsory gratuitous system of education should be preserved.

On the other hand, there is no doubt a portion of the population who are satisfied with the act in its present form and who desire no change, but these constitute, if I may judge by the evidence, a small minority, consisting mainly of the Freethinkers who would destroy all religious influences, and the Jews at whose instigation the Christian passages in the reading-books were eliminated.

The evidence, however, shows that the vast majority of the population desire that such amendments should be introduced into the act as would, whilst removing the present appearance of antagonism to religion, afford facilities for the religious instruction of a Christian character to the young.

The evidence shows that the Protestant denominations, speaking generally, despair of being able to afford religious instruction without some modification of the present act, hence their complaint of a grievous defect in the act, and they urge, as a foundation to which their other assertions may be auxiliary, the paramount necessity of Scripture readings, from both the Old and the New Testament, being made a part of the school curriculum.

The Bishop of Melbourne, Dr. Moorhouse, put the matter in a practical form when he stated that "the voluntary movement lacked a very important element, viz., that the ordinary teacher