

ROBERT MIDDLETON RYBURN examined.

138. *The Chairman.*] What are you?—I am a clergyman of the Presbyterian Church, Wanganui.

139. What do you wish to say to the Commission?—I wish to speak about the religious instruction given to the boarders at the Wanganui Collegiate School. Some years ago Mr. Marshall, chaplain, approached me, saying that the Presbyterian boys at the school when they came to a certain age were neglected. The Church of England boys entered for confirmation. He laid the following proposal before me: that the Presbyterian boys should attend his confirmation classes in several subjects; that I should take them in one; that they should then be enrolled in our membership and attend at communion at the Collegiate School. I said I was pleased at the opportunity so given for dealing with the Presbyterian boys at the school, and that I would consult others and give him an answer. After consultation with others we came to the conclusion that we could not have such a proposal; and I made a counter-proposal that I should attend and give four or five addresses twice a year—in fact, conduct what we call preparatory classes—and that the boys should then be admitted as members of our Church, and attend the communion of our Church—that is to say, twice a year, because they would be away on their holidays on the other occasions. That offer was refused. I just wish to say that we have no opportunity, therefore, of approaching the boys of our own denomination at the Collegiate School. It is very different from the Girls' College. At that College the Presbyterian girls are allowed to attend our church, and the Wesleyan girls to attend their church; and I believe that in the case of a Jewess her religious teaching was looked after by her own people. I have opportunities of conducting classes at the Girls' College, and a number of girls have become members of our Church. It is only my opinion, and may not be worth much, but I do not think the unity of the Girls' College is any different from the unity of the Collegiate School for boys. I think it would be a great satisfaction to the community if the various denominations were allowed to give religious instruction to the boys of their own denomination attending the Collegiate School.

140. Supposing this were a Roman Catholic endowment, would you take up the same position?—Yes, if there were Presbyterian pupils sent there.

141. *Mr. Hogg.*] Do you think it is reasonable to assume for a moment that an endowment representing about one-quarter of the borough would be granted exclusively to one Church if it were to be simply for a denominational school?—I should think it was unfair if it was so.

142. Unfair to the community?—Yes.

143. *The Chairman.*] Have you got any endowment for educational purposes?—We have none. The Otago Church has. I do not think we have any Government endowment in the North Island.

144. *Rev. Mr. Maclean.*] Do the girls attending the Native Presbyterian School at Turakina go to our church?—No, they go to ours. The difference is that that was given by private subscriptions, and was not a Government grant; but we have had Roman Catholics at that school in regard to whom instructions were given to the teachers to make special arrangements.

HENRY CLAYLANDS FIELD further examined.

145. *The Chairman.*] I understand you wish to hand in a further statement?—Yes, as follows: I should like to add the following to my evidence by way of correcting a mistake made by Mr. Bryce. He said that Mr. Dillon Bell only consulted the Rev. Mr. Taylor and a few Church people. I did not see Mr. Bell, as I did not happen to be in Wanganui at the time; but I heard of his visit later on, and am sure he conferred with members of other denominations. He was a Scotch Presbyterian, and therefore unlikely to omit speaking to those of his own denomination. The misunderstanding arose in a different way. He, of course, knew how the proposed schools were to be maintained out of endowments placed in the hands of religious denominations, and, no doubt, supposed that those with whom he talked did so also. But they did not, and thus the impression left on their minds was that the proposed school would be maintained by the Government, just as the common school afterwards was by the Provincial Government. Thus, when they found the terms on which our school was started, they accused him of having misled them. No newspapers were published in Wanganui in those days to keep us informed as to what went on elsewhere. Our trade was almost exclusively with Wellington, in which there were then no schools, except private ones; for though the Wesleyans had a large educational endowment, with a long frontage to Tinakori Road, and extending over the hill towards the back of the Terrace, it was practically inaccessible and useless, owing to Tinakori Road not being formed till many years later, and was ultimately sold to the Corporation without having been utilised. Our endowment was at first pretty much in the same position, as the Avenue roadway was only formed by the Provincial Government in 1854 or early in 1855. I think it should also be stated that two or three years after our endowed school was opened the Wesleyans also started a similar one, under Government auspices, on 200 acres of land adjoining the Kai-iwi boundary of the Wanganui Block, under the mastership of a Mr. Kidd. It was carried on for several years, but during the wars at Taranaki the Maori pupils left, and the master had to come into town for safety, since which time there has been no school on the property, which is let as a farm. I do not say these things as blaming the Wesleyans, but simply because I think it ought to be known that, if our endowment has not done so much as was at first hoped, other similar endowments in this part of the colony have done worse, through circumstances over which their managers had no control. It always seemed to me that when the grant was issued the streets within the block should have been excepted from it. If this had been done the property would have had to be let in 5-acre blocks, bounded by those streets, which would then have been dealt with by the Corporation in the ordinary way. Again, when the Acts were passed providing that the roads in subdivided estates should be formed before they were taken over by the local bodies, endowments, like ours, for purposes of great public utility should have been excepted from the operation of those clauses. I think that all that is wanted to set this