

The Irish Text-books: These are in use in New South Wales, and were the objective of the Bible in Schools League in New Zealand in 1897. They were first compiled under the supervision of Archbishop Whately for the Irish Board of Commissioners in the early thirties of last century, for voluntary use in the Irish schools, and after about twenty years were abandoned. As to the versions used the compiler says, "The translation has been made by a comparison of the authorized and Douay versions with the original. The language sometimes of the one and sometimes of the other has been adopted, and occasionally deviations have been made from both. On this point the translator feels that he would require more indulgence than is likely to be granted to him." Then follows this note: "The Commissioners offer these extracts from Scripture to the careful attention of teachers and children, not only as truth, but as truth recorded under the influence of inspiration." This, too, is significant in the present controversy: "The Board of Commissioners of Education earnestly and unanimously recommend these lessons to be used in all schools receiving aid from them. They would rather trust to a simple recommendation than adopt any rule for their use even bordering upon compulsion, persuaded that if the book be not received willingly no compulsion will secure a cordial and beneficial use of it."

As to the plan of the four books—two on the Old Testament and two on the New Testament—in addition to direct translation in the language of Scripture there are numerous summaries and paraphrases in enclosed brackets; there are explanatory and therefore sectarian notes on nearly every page, and at the end of each lesson there are numerous questions: while dates are supplied for all the historical events in the lessons, the date of the Creation being given as 4004 B.C. As to the questions, the highly sectarian nature of some at least will be seen from a few quotations: "What is necessary to become Christ's disciple?" (p. 75, Book I, N.T.) "What is meant by the lost sheep, and by its being found?" (p. 81, Book I, N.T.) "Why cannot a man serve God and Mammon?" (p. 82, Book I, N.T.) "Where was Lazarus carried when he died?" (p. 82, Book I, N.T.) "What has the blood of Christ done for us?" (p. 86, Book I, N.T.) "How must we be justified?" (p. 86, Book I, N.T.) "Whom has God set forth as a propitiation?" (p. 86, Book I, N.T.) "Who is our advocate? and what is he more?" (p. 86, Book I, N.T.) "What encouragement had they to pray?" (p. 52, Book II, N.T.) "What reward for those who shall confess Christ before men?" (p. 64, Book II, N.T.) "What is reserved for him that denieth Christ?" (p. 64, Book II, N.T.) "What blaspheming is not to be forgiven?" (p. 64, Book II, N.T.) And so on. These questions have been selected at random.

Many of the lessons in these books are badly selected, and some are morally unfit for mixed classes of children. The Hon. A. H. Barlow, leader of the Queensland Legislative Council and the Minister in charge of the Education Amendment Bill of 1910, described the Irish text-books as the worst possible, and fit only for the flames. Here is a quotation from the Queensland *Hansard*, Vol. cvi, 1910, page 1813:—"Hon. C. F. Nielson: It is the Minister's suggestion that the people who compiled these four books in use in New South Wales were possessed of common-sense? Hon. A. H. Barlow: I do not think they were. Hon. C. F. Nielson: There could not be a worse selection. Hon. A. H. Barlow: I do not think there could" (p. 1813). Later he said that the Minister for Public Instruction was as much shocked at some of the lessons as he was. Evidently the Irish text-books are a glaring example of how not to do it; and yet these same lessons have existed unchanged for forty-eight years in the New South Wales system that we are now asked to copy. The Queensland Bible-lesson books are of a higher order, but these too are based upon a sectarian version of the Scriptures. The preface states, "and both in the Junior and the Senior course the Authorized Version has been mainly followed" (p. 5).

The Work of the Teachers.

It is "general and religious teaching." This is clear from the actual terms of the New South Wales Public Instruction Act, 1880: see section 7, where the work of the teacher is summed up as general and religious teaching as distinguished from dogmatical or polemical theology. In the West Australia Act, 1893, precisely the same terms describe the work of the teacher. In the Queensland Act, 1910, the teacher's work is referred to as religious instruction (section 22A). In Tasmania the entire course of Scripture lessons are on no account to be read by either pupil or teacher, but to be "graphically related" by the teacher (see pp. 6 and 31, "Course of Instruction for Primary Schools").

Mr. P. Board, Under-Secretary to the Public Instruction Board of New South Wales, said in 1905, "The religious teaching"—mark the words—"is placed on exactly the same footing as geography, grammar, or any other subject, and at the annual inspection of schools Scripture receives the same consideration as any other subject. In the junior classes, when children are unable to read, all lessons are given orally in the form of stories drawn from the authorized Scripture lessons on the Old and New Testament." This is really conclusive. Local advocates claim that with such Scripture-lesson books as are used in Queensland the teacher will only have to explain the meaning of words; but when those words are such words as faith, prayer, repentance, God, Christ, salvation, atonement, how can explanation of such highly sectarian and dogmatic words be given without teaching both religion and sectarian religion?

G. K. Chesterton, in his characteristic manner, put the matter clearly thus: "If Bible instruction is a success, then the Board-school instruction is a failure. If no child ever says of the Bible story, 'Please, teacher, did that really happen?' if no teacher ever feels impelled to tell the child a little of what he thinks himself about things so tremendous as the coming of the Cross and the mystery of the Jewish people, then something has gone wrong between pupil and teacher, and we are not educating at all. There really seems to be only three possibilities in connection with the matter, and they all have objections against them of the most ultimate and iron sort—objections of principle. Suppose a child says, 'Did Jesus really come out of the grave?' either