

CLERICALISM ON THE RAMPAGE.

During the past fortnight Canterbury folks have been entertained with another phase of Salvationism. The meeting of the Diocesan Synod has afforded the clergy an opportunity of making a wordy onslaught upon the Education Act. One Rev. gentleman said the morality of the public board schools was nil—and although he was flatly contradicted by one of the lay members who having been connected with the public schools from their initiation, and is now a member of the Board of Education, was therefore well able to speak authoritatively upon the subject—it did not induce the Rev. gentlemen to moderate their strictures, nor prevent them deploring the probable future result of their being denied facilities for indoctrinating the youthful mind with their sectarian dogmas; for this is their real contention, and accounts for all their lugubrious lamentations about the absence of morality and religion in the public schools which they further emphasise as Godless. This “war cry” meets with little attention or sympathy from outsiders, notwithstanding all their bluster and asseverations as representing the general opinion of the community. It is well known that all the lesson books in use inculcate morality and religion except those limited to arithmetic, for even “Colenso” could not adopt the assumption that “one is equal to three, and three the same as one.” The most hopeful feature for the future of our country is that this opposition to our invaluable educational system is chiefly limited to the interested leaders of the various denominations, and finds little or no response from the general public, evidence of which has been afforded from time to time when the integrity of the Education Act has been made a test question at elections. Notably was this shown when Sir Edward Stafford contested the Heathcote election against a very inferior and inexperienced candidate, and was rejected solely on account of his known hostility to the Secular system. Similarly, Bishop Moran’s defeat in Otago, and also in the result of every election when the Education Act has been made a prominent question.

Our representatives in Parliament honestly and consistently reflect the public mind upon the same question when defending it from numerous and covert attacks, notably the Rev. W. M. Green’s last disingenuous attempt to authorise the introduction of the Bible in Schools, which was rejected by a majority of 52 in a House of 68 members. To counteract the effect of the undenominational teaching of the public schools, the necessity for establishing Church day schools wherever practicable, was debated at great length in the Synod and finally carried, grants from the Church Estate to be devoted to this purpose. This debate opened up an interesting discussion upon the value of the Church Estate in this diocese, by which it appears to be not less than £250,000, exclusive of Churches and Parsonages valued at another £90,000. One of the clergy deprecated making public these particulars. It would be interesting to know how the Church acquired such a valuable estate, and if any, or a considerable portion, did not form part of the reserves made by the Canterbury Association and handed over to the first Provincial Council upon its payment to the Association of the sum of £25,000 or £30,000—which sum was raised by the sale of a block of land within the Town Belt, that had been especially reserved as an endowment of the future Municipality, and still known as the Town Reserves. In the early days of the settlement, a great deal of acrimonious discussion took place over the fact of the Canterbury Association having “borrowed” £10,000 from the Bishopric fund—perhaps this was repaid in hand, which at that time was a drug upon the hands of the Association, the first flush of founding a strictly Church of England settlement having passed away.

Strict morality has ever condemned the jesuitical maxim that “the end justifies the means”—still in the flagrant violation of the principle of the Education Act occasionally brought to light, Ministers apparently consider they are doing a commendable service to their Church and order in infringing it wherever possible. In one notable instance near Christchurch the members of the School Committee are virtually the nominees of the Clergyman, and as a very experienced and efficient master was obliged to resign, because he could not reconcile his duty to the Act with the requirements of the Minister, and as the school is now opened with prayer, and may be con-

sidered a church day school in all but name, and is referred to as a model of what may be done by a persevering clergyman, the presumption is that a pliable schoolmaster now fills the post. Bishop Moran has brought some of these proselytising schools under the notice of the Minister of Education, but as the Minister happens to be a Bible-in-schools advocate—he pretends to be unable to enforce obedience to a public law, for the proper administration of which he is supposed to be responsible. Why this anxiety and tribulation, lest the rising generation should discard the old myths! Such a change in the future, from an absolute and distracting theology to a rational and therefore natural religion, would not be greater than has occurred in the past from Roman Catholicism to some modern development of Unitarianism. If the clergy fear, when the bulk of the people of the future, having passed through the secular schools, and in consequence have been taught to take sensible and rational views of life and its obligations, that their occupation will be gone, and their order swept away—may take heart of grace from the fact that organisations similar to the various religious bodies will continue a necessity so long as the existing conditions of society remain unchanged, and a band of earnest self-denying men will still find their vocation as leaders and teachers and administrators of the vast wealth of the churches in the interests of humanity, now shamefully diverted into so many useless and unworthy channels.—X., Christchurch

EDUCATION.

Let us make our education brave and preventive. Politics is an afterwork, a poor patching. We are always a little late. The evil is done,—the law is passed, and we begin the up-hill agitation for repeal of that which we ought to have prevented the enacting. We shall one day learn to supersede politics by education. What we call our root and branch reforms of slavery, war, gambling, intemperance, is only medicating the symptoms. We must begin higher, namely, in Education.—Emerson.

Reviews.

Science and Religion: A Review of Judge Higinbotham's Lecture, by T. CHEYNE FARNIE, M. A. Dunedin: Joseph Braithwaite.

Mr Farnie, while sympathising with Judge Higinbotham's views where they are definite, pushes them to their logical conclusion. Enforcing and illustrating the distinction between religion and theology, he observes that religion is “the worship of ideals.” In this sense true religion “has the very closest connection with man's individual and social welfare.” But with modern theology, “worship has sunk into an accident, a second place, while belief is the essential element—belief in the existence of a divine architect and ruler of the universe, belief in the excellencies of creed and dogma pertaining to the antique churches.” “Theology has faded from the rank of a religion, and fallen into that of a superstition.” But is the distinction founded on true ideals only? Whether a divine architect exist or not, the belief sets up the ideal, and that is religion. The distinction is probably one of degree only, and not in the nature of the things described. Mr Farnie's reply to Judge Higinbotham on the vital point of his lecture is quite conclusive—“If man did not fall, then there is no need for the system of the Christian Churches— that system topples over as soon as this is shown.” Where Mr. Farnie deals with Theology and Science, he shows that Theology is not entitled to be dignified by the name of Science, and he asserts that it has “not given birth to one single new idea for hundreds of years.” Yet the conception of a supreme mind has been subject to a process of evolution, in passing from the region of revelation to that of metaphysics. Science is a very loose term wanting a better definition than any yet given to it. We agree with Mr Farnie that Theology is not entitled to be called a Science: but with the qualification that many other things so designated are also inaccurately described. Mr. Farnie clearly shows that the anthropomorphic conception of God cannot be got rid of while it is necessary to predicate attributes. Deprived of his attributes he is unthinkable. Mr. Farnie concludes his able and eloquent review by an apotheosis of the ideal of duty—perhaps the only thing worthy of the honor.