

sundry little knots of oath-bound admirers of the Boer monarch who (as the Orange writer, Sir Jonah Barrington, remarks) 'has been... the cause of more broken heads and drunken men since his departure than all his predecessors'.

Bible-in-Schools

Some laughing philosopher has said that men live to a 'ripe' age by keeping 'green'. Which is a 'wisdom' masquerading in the hide of a 'bull'. The Bible-in-schools organisation in Queensland fancied that the local State Parliament was composed of representatives who were of the ever-green or over-green variety that (according to the laugh-and-grow-fat philosophy) might hope to blossom into centenarians. So the League leaders said things that were childlike and bland about 'our common Christianity', and 'fundamentals', and 'unsectarian' and 'undenominational' teaching, and 'simple Biblical instruction', and so on. It was the same old tune that was played on the political hurdy-gurdy in New Zealand till the public wearied of it,

'And silence, like a poultice, came
To heal the blows of sound'.

In Queensland the sharp notes of the Bible-in-schools tune had not stung the atmosphere to the same extent as here. And the legislators up there are not quite so green as not to know a hawk from a handsaw. So when a Bible-in-schools Referendum Bill was introduced, they defeated it solidly.

Now, whether in Queensland or in New Zealand, such defeats are not customarily taken with stoical resignation or 'the serene repose' which stamps the caste of Vere de Vere'. The defeat had to be accounted for—for, of course, no team and no cause have ever yet been beaten on their merits. A scapegoat had likewise to be found. So—although the hostile non-Catholic vote in the House sufficed by itself alone to kill the measure—it was discovered, by some trick of padded-cell mathematics, that the disaster was really caused by the 'members of the Roman Catholic Church'. So the 'members of the Roman Catholic Church' are being rib-roasted by the leaders of the League for the high crime of having voted as their conscience, common-sense, and political insight dictated—and, as it happened, with the non-Catholic majority. The Queensland public are thus being entertained with a repetition of the experiences of the First Charles' whipping-boy, who had to bear frequent drubbings for acts committed by the young princes, whose skins were 'tapu' or sacrosanct. Artaxerxes got somewhat nearer his blue-blood culprits than did the First Charles or the Queensland Bible-in-schools League: he had offending nobles disrobed and their clothes soundly whipped. Which shows that the gorgeous old-time barbarian had a keener sense of justice than some twentieth-century ministers of the Lord up in Queensland.

A Bible-in-Schools Fiction

In Queensland, as in New Zealand, there are streaks of fiction as well as chunks of Chicago packing-house logic in the Bible-in-schools pie. Readers will recall how we were treated here with a fairy tale to the effect that the system of Biblical instruction given in the public schools of Tasmania 'is accepted by all denominations as a happy solution of the religious difficulty.' Accepted by 'all' denominations! This amazing non-fact was—for reasons that we are unable to state at present—credited to the Secretary of the Department of Public Instruction in Tasmania. It has also been pressed into the service of the sectarianising party in Queensland. The Brisbane 'Age' promptly denounced the sweeping statement as untrue, for the simple reason that the system of religious instruction in the public schools of Tasmania was 'not accepted by the Catholic people of that State as "a happy solution of the religious difficulty".' The 'Age' got into communication with the

Right Rev. Dr. Delany, Coadjutor-Bishop of the diocese of Hobart, which comprises the whole of Tasmania. Bishop Delany is an authority of the first rank on matters educational, and his testimony as to the Catholic attitude in regard to religious instruction in the public schools of the State is at once clear, authoritative, and final.

In the course of a letter which appeared in the Brisbane 'Age' of October 13, the learned Prelate makes hay of the fabled 'happy solution of the religious difficulty' in Tasmania. He says in part:—

'In the first place, if that' (the statement credited to the Departmental Secretary) 'were so, what would have justified Catholics in years gone by, enjoying this "happy solution," in agitating for a change in the vaunted system? . . . We have been active in spreading a system of Catholic education throughout this State. We have at this moment about 3500 children in our Catholic schools, and it will be admitted that, for a Catholic population of little over 30,000, this is no mean effort. Now, why all this expenditure of work and money? Why, obviously, just because we do not and cannot accept the "system existing in Tasmania" as at all a "happy solution of the religious difficulty." It must be pretty obvious to any man of average intelligence that the "religious difficulty" is in this matter our only difficulty. We have no difficulty on the score of secular teaching. Herein we would gladly accept the system existing in Tasmania. But so long as the present system exists regarding religious instruction in Sacred History, we cannot but feel positively aggrieved, apart from the fact that we have not liberty to conduct a true system of Catholic education for our children from the funds which we are compelled to furnish in the education vote of Supply.'

The Coadjutor-Bishop of Hobart and his co-religionists naturally object to a system which establishes religious instruction 'upon Protestant lines, and compels Catholics to pay a share for its working'. Moreover, the use of 'manuals written by Protestants, and upon a Protestant version of the Bible, offends on more than one count Catholic discipline and consequently Catholic conscience'. Then follows a warning paragraph from Bishop Delany's letter which shows that the vaunted 'conscience clause' is as much a mockery, a delusion, and a snare in Tasmania as it was shown, before a Parliamentary Commission, to be in Victoria:—

'Again, as a matter of fact, we have had repeated complaints of the encroachment by Protestant teachers upon points of Catholic doctrine in course of those lessons, and with Catholic children under instruction. You will easily understand how often such encroachments must have taken place before instances come to our knowledge. How can children of tender years discern the trend of a teacher's reflections on subjects of Sacred History bearing on Christian doctrine? It is only when a teacher of unusual impulse or want of caution refers specifically to Catholic terms in a way to shock the sense of a Catholic child that the thing gets abroad. Again and again such things have occurred, however, and we have had very recently to bring such instances under the notice of the Department'.

The writer does not 'attribute the ill effects of the system to an intentional aim at upsetting the faith of Catholic children on the part of offending teachers'. And he adds:—

'Those teachers cannot know the Catholic standpoint. If they are not to forget in one class—that of Sacred History—all they have learnt, as teachers, of the art of interesting the children in the subject of the lesson in hand, how can they refrain from attempting to make ancient history actual as far as may be in reference to actual facts and institutions of an analogous character? Either the teacher who is not a Catholic must sacrifice the best functions of his office, or he must present Catholic children with Sacred History from his own view-point. It is not men we have to blame, but the system.'

We have from time to time touched upon this practical aspect of the Bible-in-schools question in our editorial columns. Bishop Delany's letter to the Brisbane 'Age' is a useful rod to keep in pickle for the next appearance of the legend about the 'happy solution of the religious difficulty' in Tasmania.

A LIGHT purse makes a heavy heart." Buy Cock o' the North, and save your siller!

A E guid turn deserves anither." You are delighted with Cock o' the North; then tell your friends.