

Catholics would be quite willing that Protestants teach whatever amount of religion they think well of in the public schools during school hours (with a conscience clause, of course), and let the Catholics be adequately remunerated for the secular teaching in their schools, provided it be up to the required educational standards of the department. In case no working agreement, as the result of the conference, could be arrived at, Catholics would at any rate have done all in their power to meet the situation and so clear the field more fully to enable the public to comprehend and meet their just demands.—I am, etc.,

Catholic Presbytery, Gore.

P. O'DONNELL.

To the Editor.

Sir,—It is very refreshing to find in your columns that Mr. J. A. Scott's valiant proposal has been supported by the Very Rev. Dean Burke and Mr. Marlow. Their prompt and hearty responses to his appeal have done excellent service by setting the ball rolling. That the field is now open for discussion and action I take for granted. Therefore I venture to offer a few crumbs of thought on the all-absorbing question under review.

1. Mr. Scott's scheme does credit to head and heart alike. As to the soundness of his plan of campaign, he need have no misgivings. Nor need he fear a hostile criticism from any Catholic quarter. His initial treatment of a supremely grave question is sagacious enough to win the sympathy of every fair mind. The policy he propounds is lucid, vigorous, and statesmanlike. The plan of campaign he advances deserves high applause. It holds the field; and no braver or wiser seems feasible. It reveals a thoughtful and earnest mind, zealous for Catholic interests; and throbbing to solve a deep and perplexing problem. The constructive policy he offers cannot fail to set a new spirit stirring on the education question. It is calculated to create a compact and solid phalanx of all who appreciate the necessity of religious education. Mr. Scott's appeal to the clergy for an expression of their views on the great question under debate must not be disregarded. Every Catholic should study and digest his suggestions, and gather knowledge and inspiration therefrom.

2. There was a time when the education question was a living policy in New Zealand. In the lifetime of Dr. Moran and Mr. Pyke there were stirring years of conflict. In those days the Catholic claims were debated with persistent vigor. The pulpit, the hustings, and Parliament resounded with eloquent advocacy of our just and equitable cause. In the House of Representatives and throughout the country there was a strong and influential body of fair-minded Protestants on our side. Brave and constant agitation had won them over. Mr. Pyke's Bill for the payment of just capitation to our schools was lost only by a small minority. But the lamented death of the two chief athletes caused the question to lapse and fall into oblivion. Now for a revival on the lines of the plan of campaign devised by Mr. Scott. Now for a renewal of the conflict, which was all but crowned with victory some years ago. The Catholic position is stronger now than it was then. It has acquired fresh strength by the addition of many new schools, and the gathering into them of an ever-increasing number of pupils. Besides, the Catholic prelates, ably supported by the 'Tablet', have won a decided victory over the attempt to foist a Bible-in-schools religion on the country, while the secular press recognised and supported the Catholic position. Herein I see a decided gain. The Bible-in-schools advocates must now be convinced that they can get nothing without our support. To borrow the language of the prophet Aggeus, they were 'putting their wages into a bag with holes.'

3. I am not oblivious that, in matters of faith and practice, there exists a wide gulf between the Catholic Church and the Protestant denominations. Yet there are points of contact and of mutual interest, which would serve as a basis of operations on Mr. Scott's lines. The rules that govern their actions are not such as the laws of the ancient Medes and Persians. They must not be regarded as wooden rules. They will yield to logic and self-interest on the question under debate. The anti-Catholic mind, taken in its most virulent phase, will yield to the logic of utility. The eirenicon Mr. Scott desiderates is quite possible, where mutual interests are found in accord. This mutual interest is religious education. We impart it in our own schools, supported by our faithful and self-denying people. They are waging a vain struggle for a miserable measure of religious instruction through the medium of the State schools. This we cannot allow for a twofold reason. Our money goes to support the

State schools, and a large number of Catholic children frequent them. Our opponents have for long years treated us unjustly by opposing our undoubted right to support for the educational work we have been doing. They cannot logically complain that we refuse them the unmerited privilege of converting the public schools into endowed Protestant schools, to the detriment of our children. Let them erect their own schools, pay their own teachers, and then join in battle with us for a system of denominational education suitable to both parties. Here are, then, two conflicting forces having, apparently, one common object in view—religious education. Mr. Scott is sanguine of establishing a modus vivendi between the interested parties. His bold and original scheme deserves both praise and practical trial. Even failure would not be total defeat. The debate would raise the education question to a level and an interest of very great value. While we maintain our principles intact, the gulf between us and our antagonists might be bridged over. The proposed deputations to their conferences would remove misgivings, dissipate misconceptions, and end in moulding their minds upon our views and conceptions of religious education.

4. This consummation appears quite feasible. Take an example of much cogency. No two bodies could be more mutually antagonistic and repellent than the landlords and tenants of Ireland. Wide and deep and hereditary was the chasm between the oppressors and their victims. Many a fierce struggle had been made by the plundered tenantry to secure some modicum of justice. After each fray they were found battered, wounded, banished. The arms of the State had fought for their tormentors. Who ever imagined that the haughty landlords would sit at a round table with their tenants? But persistent agitation had forced the land question into the domain of practical politics. In the September of 1902 appeared the following startling communication from Chief Secretary Wyndham, in the Dublin papers: 'No Government can settle this Irish land question. It must be settled by the parties interested. The extent of useful action on the part of any Government is limited to providing facilities, in so far as that may be possible, for giving effect to any settlement arrived at by the parties.'

Thereupon, the leaders of thought and action flooded the press with correspondence on the all-absorbing question. This resulted in the grand conference held in Dublin between the chosen representatives of both landlords and tenants. The agreement they arrived at was the basis of the Irish Land Purchase Act of 1903. This Act was a nation-building measure. So far it has effected much good. It would have done far more had the Government and the landlords worked it out honestly. They have taken an unfair advantage of its defects. In the September just passed, it was resolved by the National Directory of the United Irish League: 'That the question of compulsory purchase has become urgent, and we call upon the Irish Parliamentary Party to force forward a Bill on the subject at the earliest opportunity.'

5. This apt and forcible example has a convincing moral as touching the case between us and the Bible-in-schools party. We need friendly relations with them. They are in the same boat. Can such friendly relations be established? Try a round table conference on Mr. Scott's lines. We have crippled their recent efforts. They must be shrewd enough now to appreciate our goodwill, which the proposed conference is calculated to secure them. Who knows but the desired round table may evolve a scheme, as it did in Ireland, which the Government would be forced to adopt as a basis for a Bill satisfactory at once to the Catholics and to all others having religious education at heart?

Very apt in this connection are the following remarkable words by President Roosevelt on religious education. They deserve the utmost publicity everywhere: 'I cannot understand any American citizen, who has the faintest feeling of patriotism and devotion to his country, failing to appreciate the absolutely essential need of religion in the broadest sense to the welfare of his country.'

The laissez-faire policy should give way to such an agitation as would stir the whole population to its depths. I offer Mr. Scott the old Roman greeting: 'Macte virtute esto.'

J. GOLDEN.

Catholic Presbytery, Kaikoura.

Lord Brampton—it is hardly necessary to recall his earlier name of Sir Henry Hawkins—has entered his 90th year. The famous ex-judge has but three seniors in the Upper House, Lord Gwydyr, Lord Field, and the Earl of Cranbrook, all of whom have completed that 90th year and more besides. Indisposition unhappily still keeps Lord Brampton indoors. He is, indeed, but rarely seen in Parliament now, being practically confined to his house.

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