

knife has cut in two and action is paralysed; the wires that bear electric energy have been broken, and the current of their zeal fails to follow its normal path of discharge, or to set in motion any of the machinery necessary for the religious education of youth. In his recently published volume of New Zealand verse, Mr. B. E. Baughan hits off this empty and inoperative habit of mind:—

'While, as for work an' such—Look here!
I guess the one success you do
Is THINKIN' you're agoin' to.
Oh, all's right then: looks good an' sound,
An' plump, and regular all-round—
Puff-ballosh! Prove it, an' it's broke,
For all that good fat shape was—Smoke!'

And all those years of pre-election talk, talk, talk, was—idle wind. They deplore—as we also deplore—the hard secularism of our educational system. In so far, they think aright and talk aright. Why do they not accustom themselves—as Catholics do—also to act aright? Why sever the connection between feeling and action? Their action reminds one somewhat of the unfeeling British legislator who formed one of a deputation that accompanied the Rev. Benjamin Waugh through some of the most fetid of the London slums. 'The conditions are truly deplorable', said the maker of laws. 'They are, my dear sir', agreed Mr. Waugh, 'but what do you propose to do about these deplorable conditions?' 'Deplore them, my friend, deplore them!' quoth the legislator.

'For every ill beneath the sun,
There is some remedy, or none'.

The true remedy for the ills of the purely secular system of public instruction is that which has been often indicated in our columns—it is the remedy that is in beneficent operation in Canada, Germany, Belgium, and in other progressive nations of mixed religious belief. The remedy suggested by the Rev. W. Gray Dixon last week in the Auckland papers is the no-remedy. It can neither be discovered nor applied. He wants our 'national system of education' to teach 'our national religion'; and he asserts that it is the duty of the Government to add to its meat and poultry activities, and its grading of dead Langshans and Aylesbury ducks, a scheme for the instilling a knowledge of religion into the minds of the young. It is the function of the State to protect the rights and promote the material well-being of the people. It is a secular organisation for secular purposes; and, while it should protect and encourage parents and the Church in their work of religious and moral instruction, and aid schools in which this essential work is performed, it can never lawfully encroach upon the spiritual domain so as to set up as a teacher of religious belief. For it was to parents, and not to civil Governments, that God gave His positive command to train up their children to 'fulfil all that is written in the law' (Deuter., xxxii., 46); and it was the Church, and not the civil power that received from on high the commission to 'teach all nations' the truths of eternal life, ministering unto them in the things that are of God.

According to the Rev. W. Gray Dixon, 'our national religion' is 'the British national religion', and 'the British national religion' is 'broad, Biblical Christianity'. But this is only defining an unknown thing by a more unknown thing. There is, of course, no such thing as 'our national religion'. If any one asserts that there is, let him define it, if he can, set forth its tenets, show who holds it, and how and when it became 'our national religion'. Why, there is not a tenet in that imaginary 'national religion', from the Trinity to the inspiration of the Sacred Scriptures, but will be questioned or denied by some clergymen or groups of clergymen throughout the Dominion. Moreover, the Christ of the Jew is not the Christ of the

Protestant, and the Christ of the Protestant is not the Christ of the Catholic, Who instituted a Church to be His representative, Who is the Light and Life and Joy of that Church, Who guards her against error, and Who has left a Vicar to be supreme head of that Church, under Him. As to 'the' British national religion—it is a figment of the imagination. According to the London 'Times', Britain has 'eight hundred religions and only one sauce'.

And who is to decide what is 'the' British national religion that is also 'our national religion'? We may here usefully quote a paragraph in point from the manifesto issued by the New Zealand Catholic Hierarchy in 1904, in reply to a pronouncement by the Bible-in-schools League:—

'But even if the Civil Government had the right—and it emphatically has not—to impart religious instruction in schools, it would, in countries situated as New Zealand is, be debarred from the exercise of that right by its inability to determine what quantity and kind of religion it would teach. Our Government could only determine this matter in one of two ways: (a) by its own authority; or (b) by reference to some authority outside itself. (a) Now, if it has the right to decide for itself what shall be the religion of the public schools, no individual and no religious organisation would have any right as against this (supposed) right of the State. For it is an axiom that rights cannot clash. The Protestant statesmen of to-day might direct Protestant teaching in the schools. But the agnostic or infidel statesmen of to-morrow might direct infidel teaching as "part of the school curriculum"; and (in the hypothesis) nobody would have any right of protest or disobedience. (b) But let us suppose that the Government allows a religious denomination—or a group out of the odd scores of religious denominations in the country—to decide the kind of religion it shall have taught in the public schools. This (as an eminent American writer has remarked) would be "an official recognition of such religious denomination or group as the State creed—as the only true exponent of revealed truth, and as the guardian of the State in faith and morals." And this grave public wrong would be still further aggravated by compelling dissentients of every creed to pay taxes, from which they could derive no benefit, in order to defray the cost of teaching a State religion to which, on grounds of conscience, they object. It is admitted that "it can never be for the common good that conscience should be violated." Yet the question-begging plea of "the common good" has been advanced to justify such an invasion of the domain of religion and conscience by the Civil Power as would be an outrage upon indefeasible rights, personal, parental, and divine. The teachings of history clearly show that no Government has ever yet usurped spiritual functions without injury to the cause of religion and tyranny over the individual conscience.'

We may conclude with another extract from the same manifesto: 'We value God's Sacred Word. We use it in our schools. We would gladly welcome any change in the Education Act which would enable every child in the Colony to be well grounded in the doctrines of its faith, so long as this can be done without detriment or danger to the faith and the religious sentiments of the children of other creeds. But we will strenuously resist the introduction into our country of principles of government that would violate or menace those God-given rights which we can never abdicate, and which no power on earth can lawfully take away.'

Notes

Awkward Queries

A Wellingtonian asks the Dunedin 'Evening Star': 'Why not set to work and find out the most beautiful girl in New Zealand?' The 'Star' answers this one question by asking four very pertinent ones: 'Who is to be the judge? And what are we going to do with the most beautiful girl when we find her? And is the test to be simply physical? And how are the unsuccessful candidates to be appeased?'

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