

of Christianity from the life of the nation.' These are strong statements to make, but that they are indeed 'the unvarnished truth' the Fathers prove by an effective appeal to contemporary history, particularly in the United States, and to actual admitted fact in the present condition of our own Colony.

*

There are certain regular stock objections which are commonly and constantly urged against the Catholic demand for justice in educational matters, and these are considered with a patience and fulness to which their intrinsic merits certainly do not entitle them. The idea that the secular system is 'democratic' is shown to be entirely erroneous, the truth being that religion is the real Palladium of our democratic liberty; the notion that the public schools are in some mysterious way 'superior' to the Catholic schools is proved to be an assumption and a delusion; and the defence of the present state of things on the ground that we must have a homogeneous or uniform system of education is shown in its true colors as absurd, undemocratic, unchristian, and irreligious. But by far the most practical and most persistent of the objections put forward by those who refuse to endorse the Catholic demands is the plea that these demands are not feasible. That is, in particular, the favorite refuge of the politicians. 'We admit the injustice you suffer under,' they will say; 'we cannot help feeling sorry for you, and if we could do anything for you we really would, but, you know, what you ask isn't feasible.' Well, the Fathers of the Council have pricked that little bubble and shown clearly and unmistakably that State aid to denominational schools is entirely practicable, and has worked smoothly and admirably wherever it has been fairly tried. 'Such a fair distribution to us (of the taxes levied for education) is,' say the Fathers, 'quite feasible. England and Germany, Protestant nations, have denominational schools supported by the public purse. With them education without religion is inconceivable. In the several hundred neutral or mixed schools in Germany religion is part of the curriculum. The same holds good for colleges, or gymnasia where religious education is obligatory.' And again they say: 'It is beyond all question that the establishment of separate religious schools is feasible; for the most intensely Protestant nations in the world insist upon them; have no difficulty in adjusting themselves to the diversity of creeds; and have found by experience that instead of dividing the country they weld it together, by permitting men to have their dogmatic differences, and thus inciting these very divergences to send from every direction their multitudinous streams that pour down from a thousand different sources, and swell each in its own way the great common current of morality, which thus reaches every condition of society.' For the future Catholic electors will know exactly how much reliance to place on any politician who again attempts to fool them with this 'not feasible' nonsense.

*

Having thus cleared the ground by pointing out the essential defects in the present system and by disposing of the objections commonly urged against the Catholic demands, the Fathers of the Council proceed to lay down, in a pointed and altogether admirable passage, what precisely these demands are. 'As far as our schools are concerned,' they say, 'we have often indicated an easy course for the Government to satisfy us. It would be to acknowledge our schools as public schools, paying them, under Government inspection and examination, for their results in purely secular instruction, leaving their religious training entirely to ourselves. By this proposal we claim "an equal wage for equal work"; we claim that public moneys contributed by all classes of the community, from whatever source they come, shall be paid equally to all schools which fulfil the standard educational requirements; we claim that no one should be compelled to pay taxes in support of schools of which he cannot conscientiously make use; that no one should be fined by reason of his religious opinion; that schools doing the common work of the nation must be placed, as far as secular instruction is concerned, on the same basis, and not be fined because they give instruction in one extra subject—religion.' That is terse, clear-cut, unambiguous. To add to it would be to spoil it, and to attempt to explain it would be superfluous. It is essentially

a statement that says what it means and means what it says. It is the whole Catholic position in a nut-shell, and so clearly and admirably put that he who runs may read.

*

Then comes the grand crucial question, How is the desired result to be obtained? What are the means and method we are to adopt in order to secure the redress to which we have established so good a claim and for which we have waited so long? The recommendations of the Letter on this head are certainly sufficiently temperate. There is nothing violent, nothing aggressive, nothing that 'could offend the most fastidious' in the injunctions laid down. 'We enjoin our Catholics,' says the Letter, 'to be registered, and to be ready to take an intelligent interest in all public matters; we enjoin them to exercise most faithfully and conscientiously their rights and discharge their duties as good citizens.' So much in a general way. As to the particular exercise of these rights we have the following:—

'Any candidate of our faith who by word or act opposes our just claims in educational matters is wholly undeserving of our support, and should be treated as an enemy. As for non-Catholic candidates, many earnest-minded men recognise the injustice done to the Catholic body, and are willing to redress this injustice without interfering with the present Public System of Instruction; we exhort all Catholic voters to give their support to such honorable and fair-minded men.'

*

That is good so far as it goes, and if all the Catholic voters in the Colony did faithfully and conscientiously discharge their duty in this respect such united action would no doubt have an appreciable effect. But to us it seems clearly evident that something more is needed before we can indulge in any reasonable hope of final success. Even if our Catholic voters did manage to return a number of friendly members and if we did succeed by any lucky accident in securing a snatch victory in the House we would gain no real or permanent benefit from it so long as the public opinion of the country is against the measure of reform. For our own part we have the most assured conviction that there is one way, and one way only, to ultimate success, and that is by educating public opinion to the justice and reasonableness of our claims. It would not be by any means such a difficult or hopeless matter as many think. Let Religious Education Leagues (consisting of Catholics and all non-Catholics who would join) be established in all the chief centres of the Colony; let suitable leaflets be prepared and distributed; let lectures and discussions be arranged; and we venture to say that after three years of honest energetic work in this direction the Catholic education question would have a great deal more vitality in it and be a great deal nearer settlement than it is to-day. We have neither time nor space to say more at present, but may return to this matter again. In throwing out the foregoing suggestion, we do so, we need hardly say, in an entirely non-committal and non-official way, but, for our own part, we are convinced of this, that unless some Forward Movement of this kind is made, the Catholics of the Colony will have to carry their heavy burden for many a long year to come.

Notes

The Premier's Departure.

It has been announced that Mr. Seddon will take his departure on Saturday by the Drayton Grange, which will also convey the northern battalion of the tenth contingent to South Africa. In selecting this route for his journey Londonwards to take part in the Coronation arrangements, the Premier has displayed his customary adroitness. Few persons desiring a pleasant voyage would choose to make it on a troop ship, even though the best arrangements to secure comfort were made. The Premier in selecting the Drayton Grange sinks not only all considerations of state but of personal ease. But on the other hand he will materially add to the effect of his arrival in London, more especially if he goes from the Cape accompanied by a contingent taken from the field, as seems to be contemplated. By this method he will still further accentuate the heartiness with which New Zealand has offered men for the war. He will be recognised not only as the Premier of the small and distant Colony that contributed more men in proportion to its