

exercise seems to refresh them. It happened in the county of Down. An over-zealous policeman met a farmer whose name was painted on his cart in script or cursive characters, like ordinary writing. 'My man,' said the uniformed busybody, 'these letters are very difficult to read. The Act requires your name to be painted in Roman letters.' The farmer sat doggedly and sullenly still under the official rebuke until the hated word 'Roman' smote his ear-drum. Then his eyes blazed like a pair of little electric furnaces. 'Roman!' he furiously shouted. 'To hell with the Pope!' And with a fierce whip-cut on his horse's ribs, he was off.

Some of the many and far-reaching results of this melancholy spirit of sectarian animosity in Belfast are set forth in trenchant phrase in the course of one of a series of cleverly-written articles by the editor of the 'Southern Cross' of Buenos Aires, who has recently returned to his desk from an extended tour in Ireland. 'Belfast,' says he in his latest contribution to hand, 'hums with industry and calls itself progressive. And yet, underlying all this commercialism, all this thrift and all this cult of the main chance, there is a cast-iron bigotry—a cruel, corroding, unfathomable, ferocious sectarian rancor. You feel this, too, before you are long in Belfast. It seems to pervade the very atmosphere. It soums existence. It works its way into most fields of human activity. You see it in the stern features of shopmen who actually make their business interests subservient to Orangeism. You read it in the Press. At the custom house esplanade there is a fleece anti-Catholic open air gutter-orator propaganda going on nearly every Sunday. The high councils of fanatics and schemers who direct the no-Popery campaigns may be said to be in permanent session. Of the ten thousand operatives working in the ship-building yards not ten are Catholics. A Catholic's life would not be safe there. The owners of the yards are not bigots by choice. They are the victims of circumstances. If they employed Catholics, they would be in hot water the whole year round. To begin with, things would be constantly happening—to the Catholics. Bolts and crowbars and hammers and packages of rivets and sharp, heavy pieces of scrap-iron would be falling on their heads, coming to all intents and purposes out of the sky. No one could be pointed out as the thrower of such missiles. It would be all put down to accident. There would be no hostile manifestation of a noisy character. There would be no howling. But, all the same, Catholic mechanics would be dropping off from day to day. One would be found lying under a girder at the bottom of a ship's hold, another would be found sprawling on a scaffolding with the point of a three-inch shackle-pin buried in his brains; later on another would be found under a hit with both legs broken. It would all be seeming accident. The police could make nothing of it. The employers might or might not be obliged to pay damages but in any case they would have no end of legal trouble on their hands. No one can control scrap-iron in Belfast when there is sectarian or political trouble in the wind. Odds and ends of boilers and girders and other projectiles disappear from the yards and reappear down town in showers, smashing heads and windows and the peace of the realm. The way to look for smoothness in the labor market, therefore, is to keep the opposing forces apart. The ship builders are not in business to corner bigotry or to experiment in political philosophy. They are merely hard-headed employers who are wise in their generation. They know too well how the cat jumps. They know, for instance, that, notwithstanding the honest, if lamentable, zeal of a few fanatical leaders and some of their followers, there is another fact—the fact that Orange hostility to Catholicism is largely due to sordid political enmity, or in other words to hard cash.'

A Retrograde Movement

Dr. Creighton once said of the English schoolboy that 'the only means to make him learn is at the point of the bayonet.' The agitation of the Bible-in-schools people reminds us that there are many good folk among us to whom it is almost equally difficult to teach some of the plain lessons of history. If there is any fact that the past three centuries of British history teaches more clearly and emphatically than another, it is the hopeless, complete, and admitted failure of every attempt by the State to make a creed and dictate it to

its subjects. And the story of the failure is told in volumes that are writ in blood. In the days of the eighth Henry and of Elizabeth, the idea was equally unworkable. And a never-ceasing protest against it went on until it was finally abandoned in 1829. Nobody nowadays contends that the State has competence or ability to intrude upon the domain of religious teaching. This is not and never can be a function of civil government. It is the duty of parents and the Church. And yet the recent Bible-in-schools conference in Wellington presented to angels and men the following extraordinary spectacle: (1) A number of grave and reverend seigniors, representatives of half a dozen Christian denominations, proclaimed their willingness—nay, their eagerness—to abdicate the right of imparting religious instruction to the young, and to hand it over to the State. (2) They put forward the lamentable assumption that religion is not a divine and connected system or body of truth, but a mere heterogeneous bundle of independent doctrines and precepts, and that they were free to select from among these—as they would select cravats and gloves at a bargain-counter—those that happened to suit their passing fancy or the needs of the moment. (3) The system that found favor in their sight happened to be a form of Unitarianism. And now, despite the lessons of the past, they coolly ask the Government to give its legislative imprimatur to the newly-devised creed and force it on the public schools of the Colony, with a worthless double-barrelled 'conscience clause' which would turn Jewish and Catholic children into little pariahs and lead to the imposition of a religious test in the appointment of teachers! This is, in good sooth, bringing us perilously near a system of religious persecution.

The view of the teachers regarding this proposed return to the bad old-time principle of State-made creeds is sure to be an important factor in the coming agitation. The members of the Tapanui branch of the Otago Educational Institute have spoken out upon the subject in the following resolution, and the voice of other teachers is likely to be heard to some purpose on the subject at an early date:—

'That this branch of the Otago Educational Institute is of opinion that the introduction of the Bible into the State schools would be opposed to the best interests of education, of the State, and of religion itself, and for the following reasons: (1) That the syllabus is already overloaded. (2) It would lead committees to reject teachers who, for conscientious reasons, were not prepared to take charge of the Bible lessons. The institute holds that religious beliefs should be no bar to State employment. (3) It would lead to a distinction being made in our schools between Protestant and Catholic children. In our schools all pupils should meet merely as children of the State, and the institute believes that their ability so to meet for over 25 years has been of very great advantage to the State. (4) It would tend to establish the authority of the State to interfere in religious affairs, an interference which, in the opinion of the institute, history plainly shows to have had evil results on both State and religion. (5) It would be a serious injustice to our Catholic fellow-citizens, inasmuch as they would be compelled to pay for that which they cannot conscientiously approve of. (6) That the institute is of opinion that religious education should be given by religious persons, otherwise there is a danger of the Bible itself being brought into contempt, and of a dislike for it being created in the minds of the children.'

Modern 'Seers'

Samuel Butler pours a fine spray of cold railery upon the seers, fortune-tellers, and 'futurists' who

'Make fools believe in their foreseeing
Of things before they are in being.

'To swallow gudgeons ere they're caught,
And count their chickens ere they're hatched.'

He pays the following tribute to their well-known principle of business caution:—

'But still the best for him that gives
'The best price for't, or best believes.'

In the days of the Puritan regime in England, Parliament licensed the notorious Booker as its own particular fortune-teller, and gave him a strict monopoly of the business of prognostication—after the manner of the professional soothsayers of ancient pagan Rome. Nowadays the business of pretending to probe the future is