

Bible-in-Schools 'Unity'

When Canon Garland was conducting his New Zealand campaign he again and again asserted that even if the Bible-in-schools agitation failed, the movement was well worth while because of the wonderful way in which it had brought the Protestant denominations together, and had helped them to understand each other's point of view and to realise how completely they were at one on all the great fundamentals of their Christian faith. It was a favorite theme with the organising secretary, and he waxed warmly eloquent upon it in his addresses to the synods and conferences of the various non-Anglican bodies. United services were everywhere held; Canon Garland frequently preached in Presbyterian pulpits; and we were led to understand that the unity and harmony prevailing among the Bible-in-schools denominations was most edifying and beautiful to behold. But, alas, the boasted 'unity' has proved to be a very fragile and superficial affair; and the beautiful bubble has been punctured at the very first touch.

*

It has happened quite simply and suddenly, in connection with the fitting up of the hospital ship which New Zealand is providing for service in the Mediterranean. It was part of the duty of the Minister for Defence to appoint chaplains to the ship: the Imperial regulations provided for the appointment of only two chaplains, a Catholic and an Anglican chaplain; and the Minister announced that he intended to adhere to the Imperial instructions. Then the trouble began. Presbyteries met and passed hot-head resolutions of protest; Dr. Gibb sent a fiery letter to the papers; and ultimately a Presbyterian deputation waited upon the Minister—all to protest against a few Presbyterian soldiers being left for a very few days to the ministrations of one of those Anglican brethren with whom Bible-in-schools Presbyterians had but lately proclaimed their close sympathy and alliance, and one of whom had during the previous twelve months been a frequent occupant of Presbyterian pulpits throughout the Dominion. The Minister for Defence explained that the Imperial instructions were quite definite on the point that only the two chaplains indicated should be appointed; that though called a Hospital Ship, the *Maheno* would really be a 'carrier' ship, carrying wounded from the Dardanelles to Egypt and Malta; that the wounded would be on her four or five days, or six or seven at the outside; that no soldiers except the wounded would be travelling on her; that those on board who desired it could have the services of clergymen at either of the frequent ports of call; and that she would not necessarily be restricted to carrying New Zealand wounded, but might carry English or French or any of the Allies' wounded. It was all in vain. The deputation denounced as 'an abuse' and as 'absurd and almost insulting' a regulation which left Presbyterians to the ministrations of an Anglican clergyman; and in the end the Minister promised to go behind the regulation and make a special Presbyterian appointment. We do not in the least blame our Presbyterian friends for seeking to obtain what they consider proper spiritual attendance for their men; but after this we will laugh the laugh incredulous when we hear any further talk about Bible-in-schools 'unity.'

The Need for Men

It is almost a part of the religious creed of the average Englishman that no matter what emergency may come, 'England will muddle through'; and the serious and thoughtful English papers are finding it a difficult task to awaken the people to the fact there is a decided limit to England's capacity in that direction, and that the country is up against a crisis in which a blind reliance on this ancient superstition will certainly lead to disaster. The *London Times*, which is neither panicky nor hysterical, is particularly outspoken in its denunciation of the past, present, and apparently prospective lack of preparedness of a nation which has so much at stake. Writing shortly after Neuve Chapelle on what it bluntly called 'The Recruiting Muddle,' the paper remarked: 'The experience of Neuve Chapelle,

which has been so incompletely explained to the nation, has shown us a glimpse of the magnitude of the demands likely to be made upon us. We have to undertake in common with our allies the task of driving the Germans out of Belgium and Northern France, and that task, which itself is only a beginning, has not yet been begun.' Although the number of men now under arms in these islands is extraordinarily large, it must be quite clear that we have by no means enlisted all the men we shall want. Just now there is a lull in recruiting. The agonised advertisements and imploring posters issued under the auspices of the Government are sufficient indications of that fact. The Government will not give the nation facts. It offers instead a series of vague, humiliating appeals which are becoming the mockery of our neighbors and neutral peoples and of the enemy. Until an organised, frank, and courageous attempt is made by the Government to deal with this problem of recruiting, our prospective requirements in war will not be satisfactorily met.' In a more recent issue just to hand this sober-sided paper returns to the matter, and with the utmost earnestness again impresses upon the English people the need of more and more preparation if the struggle is to be successfully sustained. 'From Flanders and from the Dardanelles the same lesson stares us in the face—the lesson we have so constantly sought to inculcate, the lesson that we are still behindhand in our efforts to face dangers and difficulties, unsurpassed in our long history. Our men have done magnificently, our men from home and our men from the Dominions and from India. But we want more and still more men to make good the wastage of seven several campaigns—of which one is the most costly ever known. The casualty lists tell their own story to all who have eyes to read. The consumption of troops is immense, and it is certain to increase rather than to diminish.' The *Daily Mail*, not less outspokenly, stresses the same point. 'In this battle we are fighting for our very life. Defeat at Ypres would bring the Germans to Calais and Dunkirk. It would bring England to the bitterest extremity of peril. Does the nation understand?' And again it says: 'The country is in danger. It can only be saved by every conceivable effort. Every conceivable effort has not been made so long as the State hesitates to take the recruits whom it needs by orderly and regular methods of law.' It is quite within the bounds of possibility that some form of compulsory service may ultimately be introduced into Great Britain; and it is more than probable that the real purpose in forming a Coalition Ministry was that the responsibility and odium—if odium there should be—would be fairly shared by both the great political parties.

PREJUDICE

In an article in the *Daily News* on 'Prejudice,' the Right Hon. G. W. E. Russell says:—To many generations of Englishmen, a hatred of Catholicism seemed a national virtue. They were apparently unable to discern even a trace of Christianity in the form of religion which we encounter when we travel in France or Italy or cross the Irish Channel. We long vaunted our resolve to 'knit the hearts of the Empire into one harmonious concord,' but (until the other day) we declined to let Irish Catholics have the schools or universities suited to them, because their religion was, as we gracefully put it, 'a lie and a heathenish superstition.' If the war has done nothing else for us, it has shown us scenes in France and Belgium before which this particular prejudice must, I should think, give way. Charles Kingsley, in spite of all that was lovable in him, was a mass of blundering, passionate, and inconsistent prejudices. His horror of Romanism amounted to frenzy, and involved him in that deplorable controversy with Newman which increased the influence of the accused even more than it damaged the reputation of the accuser. But when one of his children asked who Heine was, he abruptly replied, 'A wicked man, my dear,' and changed the conversation.