

## Current Topics

### Catholicism and Protestantism

We direct our readers' attention to an interesting and thoughtful article which we print elsewhere in this issue from the leading columns of our Presbyterian contemporary, the *Outlook*. We have omitted incidental references to the Bible-in-schools question and to the Chapman-Alexander mission which were introduced merely to illustrate the main theme, and there are, of course, in what is left sentiments and points of view with which we are not in entire agreement; but there is so much of good in it, and so much that furnishes food for thought that we have reproduced the article exactly as it stands, without further excision. As we took occasion to remark some time ago in our leading columns, when the *Outlook* speaks of and for itself its tone and attitude towards the Catholic Church and things Catholic are uniformly courteous and gentlemanly; but when it is under the unpleasant necessity of becoming a sounding board for the sentiments of others it is liable, if we may be allowed to mix our metaphors, to get seriously off the rails. On the present occasion the *Outlook* is speaking in *propria persona*; and the article which we quote gives us, both as to matter and manner, the *Outlook* at its best.

### An Historic School

By this week's mail from England there came an intimation that this year would be celebrated the third golden jubilee of the 'venerable and historic school,' Sedgley Park. The 'Park' was opened in 1763. The school authorities write: 'The very mention of that date carries back our minds to the trials and sufferings of the penal days, and to the golden story of the heroism with which those sufferings were borne; at the same time it fills us with admiration for the stout-hearted courage of the men who were bold enough to set up a Catholic school when the penalty for so doing was imprisonment for life. Trusting in God, they nobly dared; and their work has survived in life and vigor to the present hour.'

At the expiration of its ninety-nine years' lease the school was transferred to St. Wilfrid's College, where the celebration is to be held on Whit Tuesday, and the disposal of the money subscribed for a fitting memorial will be determined upon. We are requested to state that Parkers or Wilfridians living in New Zealand can send their contributions to Mr. James Plunket, 145 Aikman's road, Christchurch, who has been placed on the general committee and authorised to receive subscriptions; or, if they wish, direct to the Rev. S. J. Gosling, secretary for the fund.

### Is it a "Just" Scheme?

Speaking last week at a meeting of women interested in the Bible-in-schools movement the Rev. G. H. Balfour, minister of (Presbyterian) First Church, committed himself to the statement that the League's platform was a 'just' one. The following reply appeared in the *Dunedin Evening Star* of Saturday:—

'Sir,—In your issue of April 22 the Rev. G. H. Balfour is reported as saying: "The platform of the League was broad, just, and equal." I contend, on the other hand, that it is narrow, unjust, and sectional. Let us test, first, the claim that it is a just scheme. If it fails on this head, by that fact alone the scheme must stand condemned, for every Christian and every honest citizen must stand opposed to injustice. In this connection I would ask Mr. Balfour to make good his assertion by answering the following questions:—(1) Is it just to compel teachers, of all beliefs and of none, to give "general religious teaching" at variance with their conscientious convictions? Ten years ago the Bible-in-schools denominations, in a conference held at Wellington, very properly laid it down as essential to a just scheme "that teachers who conscientiously object to give Bible lessons shall not be compelled to give them." To-day the League insist that teachers who

conscientiously object to give Bible lessons shall, nevertheless, under penalty of loss of pay and pension, be compelled to give them. The burden of justifying this change from Christian liberty to unchristian tyranny lies upon the League. Why do the League refuse to include in their proposals a conscience clause for the teachers? How has that which the Christian conscience of the Bible-in-schools denominations absolutely refused in 1903 to acquiesce in become justifiable and morally right in 1913?

(2) Is it just to compel objecting taxpayers to pay for "general religious teaching" at variance with their conscientious convictions? It is obvious that a man's rights of conscience are as much violated by compelling him to pay for religious teaching which he regards as error as by compelling him to listen to it. "God alone is lord of the conscience," says the Westminster *Confession of Faith* (chap. xx., s. 2), and by a curious coincidence, the copy of the *Confession* from which I am transcribing the sentence belonged originally to the first minister of First Church, whose name and memory are still so justly revered. How does his successor justify himself in abandoning a tenet which Macpherson in his handbook on the *Confession of Faith* (p. 123), describes as "a fundamental principle of Protestantism"? By all means let all who desire religious instruction for their children in the schools have it, but let them not force dissident taxpayers to pay for it.

(3) Mr. Balfour has referred to the case of the Jews. Here they are in this community, devout worshippers of the only living and true God according to their conscientious convictions, and entitled as of right—and all the more so because they are few in numbers—to absolute religious equality. Is it just, I ask Mr. Balfour, to compel Jewish teachers, present and future, to teach, and Jewish taxpayers to pay for, the dissemination of Christianity? The moment the taxes of the Jew are appropriated to a form of religious instruction alien to his faith, and which teaches its falsehood, he is persecuted; and the persecution is intensified when the religious teaching for which he is to be compelled to pay constitutes, as he has been taught, blasphemy against the God of his fathers. Would Mr. Balfour be willing, for "all the tea in China," to administer lessons or to voluntarily pay for teaching which he regarded as blasphemy against God? Yet that is the humiliation and injustice which the League proposals compel the Jew to submit to.

'I notice that the League are prepared to take charge of the consciences, not only of Jews, Catholics, etc., but also, and, I suppose, *a fortiori*, of their own Christian women, and particularly of the recalcitrant members of the W.C.T.U. "God alone is lord of the conscience," as the *Confession of Faith* teaches, and the members of the W.C.T.U. are responsible not to the Bible-in-State-Schools League, but to their own conscience and to God. When in doubt as to the right or wrong of a particular course, for Christian women as for Christian men, there is but one thing to do, and that is to cling firmly to Christian principles that are clear and definite, and in regard to which they are quite sure. The two Christian principles which bear on the features of the League's scheme, to which I have above referred, and which I commend to the attention of the W.C.T.U., are "Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them," and the uncompromising apostolic injunction which forbids us to say "Let us do evil that good may come."—I am, etc.,

J. A. SCOTT.

'April 25.'

### An Anonymous 'Educationist'

In the local columns of Thursday's *Otago Daily Times* there appeared quotations from an extremely bigoted letter written to a Dunedin citizen by an alleged 'educationist' in Queensland, and submitted to the *Otago Daily Times* by the Rev. R. E. Davies.

# Better Teeth

At HOWEY WALKER'S,

Less Pain.

QUEEN STREET, AUCKLAND,

Less Expense.