

## Current Topics

### Bishop Cleary's Attitude: A Correction

We quoted in our last week's issue—without, of course, endorsing or identifying ourselves with the words quoted—some interesting comments from a secular paper on the Bible-in-schools question; and in the course of its remarks our contemporary fell into a slight and obviously inadvertent error in regard to Bishop Cleary's position. On such a matter even a slight error is of consequence; and it is in the highest degree important that the public should be perfectly clear regarding Bishop Cleary's attitude. In this connection we are authorised by Bishop Cleary to state that the position taken up all along by him has been this: That Catholics have no objection to the Bible-in-Schools party having either the whole Bible, or mutilated extracts from the Bible, for their children in the public schools, so long as they do the teaching thereof themselves, at their own expense, and not force it upon the consciences or purses of conscientiously objecting taxpayers, teachers, parents, or pupils, or lure objectors' children into it by the trickery and false pretence of their Irish proselytising conscience clause. In connection with another matter quoted from the same secular paper, Bishop Cleary's statement has all along been as follows: That if the League only accepted the principle of the fair and equal treatment of consciences of taxpayers, parents, teachers, and pupils, the religious difficulty in education could probably be settled by a round table conference in forty-eight hours, leaving the State system secular for those who desire it so, and religious, on fair all round conditions, for those who wish to have a measure of religious instruction in the schools, but that the League demands, not such equal treatment, but the exclusive party privilege of a State taught and State endowed school religion for a section of four denominations at the cost of fifty denominations.

### Unitarians and the Bible in Schools Scheme

Judging by the number and vigor of the resolutions that are being formulated against the Bible in State Schools League's proposals it would seem clear that the opposition to the scheme is steadily and surely strengthening. Amongst the latest to give articulate and official expression to their sense of the tyranny and injustice of the League's proposals are the members of the Unitarian body. A meeting of Unitarians has just been held at Wellington, at which a number of visiting ministers were present; and before the gathering separated the following motion was moved by Mr. J. Gammell:—'Believing that historical experience has shown that it is advantageous for religion to be separated from the functions of the State, believing that the Bible cannot be taught in the State schools by State teachers without the State interfering with the religion of its citizens, believing that it is a flagrant violation of justice to compel all teachers to teach the Bible in schools, and that such violation of justice would be contrary to the interests of true religion: we record our emphatic opposition to the proposals of the Bible-in-Schools League and our determination to do all in our power to defeat the same.' According to the press report, the speaker said that there was going on in the community at the present time a gross attack on the personal and religious liberty which was taught within the walls of their church. He referred to the system of freedom and religious liberty in their schools which had stood for a generation. He did not know where the impulse came from, but he was certain it was not from above. (Laughter.) 'The motion,' concludes the report, 'was duly seconded and carried unanimously without discussion.'

### The W.C.T.U. and the League

The determined efforts which are being made by supporters of the Bible in State Schools League, both lay and clerical, to persuade or cajole—or, as in the case of the Bishop of Nelson, to intimidate—the members of the Women's Christian Temperance Union into

going back on the declaration adopted by the annual convention expressing opposition to the League's proposals do not appear to be meeting with conspicuous success. As already chronicled in these columns, the Nelson branch some few weeks ago passed, by an overwhelming majority, a resolution endorsing the convention deliverance; and now the influential Wellington Central branch have followed suit. At a well-attended and thoroughly representative meeting held the other day two resolutions were submitted and both were carried unanimously. The nature of the resolutions and the character of the meeting will be gathered from the following letter sent by Mrs. Atkinson, the President of the Wellington branch, to the *Dominion* newspaper. 'Sir,—I sincerely hope that my friend, the Rev. J. Ward, has been misreported in your paper this morning. In your report of the meeting of the Wellington South branch of the Bible-in-Schools League I read:—"The Rev. J. Ward stated that the meeting of the Women's Christian Temperance Union, which passed a vote against the Bible-in-schools movement, was not a representative one of the Wellington branch." The meeting referred to was the regular monthly meeting of the union, announced as usual by pulpit notice and post-card, and there was a good attendance. Mr. Ward's statement is thus absolutely incorrect. The meeting unanimously endorsed the convention resolutions approving the Nelson system, and condemning the platform of the Bible-in-Schools League. A further resolution protesting against "the attempt of Canon Garland's Bible-in-Schools League to force teachers to give religious instruction without providing any conscience clause for teachers," was also carried unanimously. Trusting that you will soon find space for this correction,—I am, etc, L. M. ATKINSON, president W.C.T.U., Wellington Central, Wadestown, May 23.'

### More Misrepresentation

It seems to be a matter of sheer impossibility to stem, or even to check, the tide of League misrepresentation. We have hardly done correcting a misstatement made by one advocate of the League's proposals than another comes along and calmly repeats the same misstatement. The latest offender in this direction is the Rev. J. C. Jamieson, who has been Bible Class Travelling Secretary for the Presbyterian body in New South Wales for the last couple of years, and who is now about to take up the duties of assistant minister at Knox Church, Dunedin. We know Mr. Jamieson well enough to know that he is not the sort of person who would knowingly distort facts or consciously misrepresent the state of the case on this or on any other question. Yet—such is the power of bias—he has contrived to pack into an interview given to the *Lyttelton Times* almost as many false statements as there are sentences—at least so far as his utterances in regard to the Catholic attitude are concerned. We quote a portion of the interview from our Christchurch contemporary of May 31: 'The system was supported as heartily by Roman Catholic teachers as by any other teachers. Outside the schools, as far as he could ascertain, there was no feeling amongst Roman Catholics against the system. In New South Wales the Roman Catholics held a very powerful position in politics, but they certainly were not taking any steps to have the system repealed or abolished.'

Regarding these statements we observe: (1) Mr. Jamieson safeguards himself as far as possible by such saving clauses as 'As far as his observations and knowledge went,' 'As far as he could ascertain,' etc. Obviously, his observations and knowledge of the Catholic feeling and attitude are extremely limited; and, that being so, it would have been wiser and fairer to decline to be interviewed on that aspect of the question. (2) If either Mr. Jamieson or the *Lyttelton Times* wished to know what the Catholic attitude is towards the New South Wales system—either here or in New South Wales—there are recognised Catholic authorities to be appealed to, and they alone can give a definite and decisive answer. (3) Regarding the statement that 'the system was supported as heartily by Roman Catholic teachers as by any other

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