

Current Topics

Ignorance or Misrepresentation ?

The *Wairarapa Daily Times* appears to be going out of its way of late to show its animus, and incidentally its ignorance, on questions in which Catholic interests or Catholic principles are involved. In a leader on the Bible-in-schools question in a recent issue it remarks: 'It is interesting to note that the attitude of the Roman Catholic Church towards the movement is not the same in all countries. In New Zealand that Church is one of the most inveterate opponents of Bible teaching in the State schools. It holds, apparently, that the secular system should be maintained in its entirety.' It holds, of course, nothing of the sort; and the *Wairarapa* paper's statement is flagrantly untrue. The Catholic Church has no objection to religious instruction in the public schools provided it is given under conditions that are fair all round, and with adequate protection to rights of conscience; but it does object to Protestant Bible lessons given under a fraudulent conscience clause and at Catholic expense. Nine years ago the Catholic Bishops of New Zealand wrote in a manifesto published in all the leading dailies of the Dominion: 'We value God's Sacred Word. We use it in our schools. We would gladly welcome any change in the Education Act which would enable every child in the Colony to be well grounded in the doctrines of its faith, so long as this can be done without detriment or danger to the faith and the religious sentiments of the children of other creeds.' Bishop Cleary has taken precisely the same attitude; and again and again during the past twelve months in letters to the press and in public addresses has uttered such sentiments as these: 'Let the League abandon the several unjust and oppressive conditions under which it is now proposed to introduce such lessons into the public schools, and the more Bible they can teach to their children in the schools, the better pleased Catholics will be.' Either the *Wairarapa Daily Times* was aware of these utterances or it was not. If it was aware of them, it has, in writing as it has done, been guilty of deliberate misrepresentation. If the paper was not aware of these repeated public statements of the Catholic attitude, it is not competent to accurately and intelligently discuss the important question with which it attempted to deal.

A Dunedin 'Demonstration'

The Bible-in-schools demonstration on Friday night—which, according to the preliminary locals and advertisements, was to have been of an 'impressive and educative' character—turned out a very flat affair. The hall taken for the occasion—the Burns Hall—is one of the smallest in Dunedin; and even it was not full. The best the *Daily Times* report could say of the gathering in respect to its numbers was that 'while Burns Hall was not filled, the attendance was not small.' As Burns Hall is seated for about five hundred people, the public can judge for themselves as to how large the attendance was. The meeting was further robbed of any weight or interest which it might have had by the withdrawal of Dean Fitchett from the list of speakers on the ground of indisposition. A substitute chairman presided; and a substitute speaker had also to be found for the Rev. W. M. Grant, who also was an absentee through indisposition. Altogether it was a decidedly scratch team that gathered round Canon Garland; and, if it is not unkind to say so, it was a decidedly scratch performance which he and they achieved. Not the faintest attempt was made at refutation of the deadly evidence advanced by Mr Caughley against the League's scheme; and not an argument, nor even the semblance of an argument, was brought forward that merits the slightest notice from anybody.

Out of the four speakers, three were Presbyterian ministers; and how completely they are departing, in the stand they are taking on this question, from the

true principles of Presbyterianism may be gathered from a recent utterance of that master mind of present-day Presbyterianism, Professor Denney. Dr. Denney, Professor of New Testament Language, Literature, and Theology, in the United Free Church College, Glasgow, since 1897, and author of *Gospel Questions and Answers*, *The Death of Christ*, *The Atonement and the Modern Mind*, *Jesus and the Gospel*, etc., is universally recognised as the greatest living authority on questions affecting Presbyterian doctrine and polity. He contributes to the June issue of the *Constructive Quarterly*, a new 'Journal of the Faith, Work, and Thought of Christendom,' a striking article on 'The Constructive Task of Protestantism,' in which he deals incidentally with the question of religious education. Let our New Zealand ministers listen to what he has to say. We transcribe his words as we find them quoted in the *Expository Times* for August last: 'The confusion between the function of the Church and the function of the State has much to do, Dr. Denney holds, with neglect of Christian education. Christian education is the one great task which Protestantism has conspicuously neglected, and with the most deplorable results. "In modern communities," he says, "education is the business of the State, but State education is inevitably determined by State ends. It neither is, nor can be, nor ever will be, Christian education, and the passive surrender of education by the Church is simply suicidal. Catholics are abundantly right when they emphasize the importance of the religious atmosphere, and maintain that Christianity can only be communicated by Christians; and until the Protestant churches recognise that faith is social, that it is the conviction and inspiration of a community which its immature members must breathe as continually and unconsciously as they do the air which fills their lungs, Protestant Christianity will suffer from a congenital weakness. A doctrine of the Church is wanted which, while it will secure the freedom of the spirit in all its relations to Christ, will recognize the fact that faith has to be naturalized—not indeed in the world, which is impossible, but in the Christian home and the Christian church, and that to educate its children into the freedom and fulness of faith is a primary and inalienable duty of the Church itself.'" That is what Bishop Cleary, and Catholic apologists generally, have always contended for; and if the Rev. R. E. Davies and his Presbyterian colleagues are to be true to the principles of their own Church, they must range themselves on the Catholic side in this question.

Dr. Denney on Prohibition

In this same article Dr. Denney has some wise words as to the proper attitude of the Church towards such vexed social questions as local option and prohibition. The social reformer, he remarks, often has an ideal of his own from which he criticises the actual existing Church. 'Even loyal members of the Church may be in need of enlightenment on this point. They are interested in various good causes, economical, social, political, and what not; and because the Church in some sense must be interested in all good causes, they would like to see it taking a more active part with them. They are eager to take it by force, and enlist it under their banner, as the multitudes would have taken Jesus by force and made Him a King; and when it is slow to move they are apt to denounce it as indifferent to evil and hostile to progress. What needs to be made plain is that while there are many cases in which the Church and, let us say for illustration, the State, or trades unions, or political societies, may have the same ethical ends in view, the Church is not at liberty, as a spiritual society, to use all the means in pursuing these ends, which are appropriate and legitimate for others.' Dr. Denney takes temperance legislation as an example. Temperance is a great moral interest, but it does not follow, he says, that the Church should directly promote any particular piece of temperance legislation, such as a high licence law, an abolition law, a local option law, or whatever it may be. It has its own motives and weapons for fighting intemperance, and it does not gain strength, it only