

indeed, some reason to complain, for in paying rates to build Board Schools we really are paying for the satisfaction of the Secularist's 'religious' views. But as for his grievance, it is wholly imaginary, not to say disingenuous, and it is the very effrontery of his insinuation that has sometimes screened its falseness from detection. If he had any sense of justice he would speak as follows. Those who do not believe in Secularism ought not to be obliged to build our Secularist Schools, or to support them. If a tax be levied upon the whole community, the whole community ought to reap the benefit of it. The school rates, therefore, instead of being handed over exclusively to us, ought to be distributed amongst all the certified schools of the district in which they are levied. This is the kind of speech we have a right to expect from him now. But if he persists in reiterating his complaint, we shall know that his is no mere theoretical objection to religion in the abstract, but a very practical antipathy to those who profess it, and consequently that he, while parading as the champion of freedom, is really an insidious, but very commonplace advocate of religious intolerance."

**INHERENTLY
FAULTY.** THE writer in the *Monty* goes on to inquire as to whether, apart from all questions of religion, the uniform state system may be looked upon as satisfactory. "The Board System, or, as we may now

call it, the State System," he says, "is a creature of but yesterday. The vigour of youth is still throbbing in its limbs, and yet we already decry symptoms of that decadence to which all things sublunary are obnoxious. We speak not of mistakes or errors, attributable to that wanton exuberance of spirits which characterises the spring-tide of life, mistakes which we might hope to see rectified by experience and the prudence of maturer years; but of vices inherent in the constitution, such as age can only tend to develop and intensify. To show that it is open to great abuses we need not go so far back as the closing by the Home Secretary of St. Paul's Industrial Board School, for gross mismanagement. It is sufficient to turn to last year when the London School Board issued a circular, by which we learn that it had been possible for their head teachers to sign requisitions for, and distribute, prizes which had never been merited, and to have carried on this practice for a considerable time without being caught. And that it admits of such abuses being quietly pushed up by the managers is proved by the extremely lenient measure of justice dealt out to the culprits. The severest sentence amounted to what nautical assessors would term a suspension of certificate for twelve months, and this was inflicted in only one case. To the rest a pretty little moral sermon was preached, but preached privately to each one, to save them the pain of a public exposure, although in this way the innocent have been left to bear equally with the guilty the ignominy of untruthfulness and dishonesty—hard words, it is true, but they are not exactly ours; their equivalents occur in the Board's own Circular." The writer, nevertheless, does not deny that such a state of things might possibly also occur in connection with the voluntary System. "The point we wish to make now is this, that under the State System, in the metropolis under the very noses of the authorities, and while £30,000 a year was being swallowed up by the salaries of Inspectors, it was possible for we are not told how many school teachers to carry on this organised fraud, for how many months or years before the managers found it out. This fact alone is enough to prove a general remissness on the part of responsible people, and a constitutional vice in the system such as warrants the gravest misgivings, and ought to deter every prudent person from making it the sole depository of all his educational hopes. Rival systems working side by side would afford mutual support in these matters. The vigilant eye they would keep on each other would be a guarantee for honesty in both. We shall, perhaps, be told that means will be found, as time goes on, to eliminate these abuses, or, at least to reduce them to a minimum. But considering that the system is still, as we have said, in its first fervour, and in the vigour of youth we are not sanguine about that. If these things can be done in the green wood, what may we expect in the dry?"

MISMANAGED. BUT even admitting that the faults of the Secular System may be rectified, its superiority over the Voluntary Schools would still remain to be proved

"It is true that the average percentage of passes for England and Wales is slightly higher in Board than in Voluntary Schools. Various causes combine to produce that effect. In the first place, the Board Schools, though built especially for the needy, attract by their luxury the children of the well-to-do middle classes, who crush out the poor, and drive them into the comparatively deserted voluntary schools, to bring down their standard of efficiency by their lower intelligence, their irregular attendance, and the injurious effect of intercourse out of school hours with illiterate people at home. This argument has special force in the case of the Catholic schools, the children in which are almost uniformly of the poorest. Then, secondly, we must take account of the difference of expenditure, which is out of all proportion with the difference in the percentage of passes, the cost of each child under the Voluntary System being only £1 14s. 10½d.

while under the State System it runs up to an average of £2 1s. 3½d. for maintenance alone, and, when all expenses are included, to £3 5s. 5½d. a child." The manner, again, in which to compare the two systems is to take an example of each, working in identical circumstances. There are, then, in a certain Midland town three Board Schools and one Voluntary School. "The children in this school are notoriously the poorest of all. The average attendance is about two hundred and fifty, and among their parents there are hardly a dozen who rank above labourers. They are in many cases badly lodged, fed wretchedly, and clothed in rags. Yet at the inspection they beat the highest of the State Schools by eight per cent. We must not omit to mention also that they take the same number of extra subjects as the best State School, while the second and third State Schools do not take any. They find the three R's as much as they can manage." But it may be said that the Voluntary School is an exceptionally good one. "This supposition might very fairly be disputed, for there are in the country many other Voluntary Schools equally, or even more successful. But apart from this, while the plea might have some force if it were a case of school against school, it is very weak where there are three against one, and as an explanation of the inequality of the three State Schools among themselves it is, of course, absolutely worthless. Nor will it do to say that the case is an isolated one, and that a similar one might be found in which one State School beat three Voluntary Schools; for although that might betray a weakness in the Voluntary System, it would not prove that the State System was strong, and this is the point which the advocates of a State monopoly ought to make good. Here, then, we have the two systems subjected to a fair trial, under circumstances which, if not identical, lean to the advantage of the State; yet the result not once only, but year by year, is practically the same, the Voluntary pressing hard on, or out-stripping the best State School, while the other two State Schools are wholly out of the race." Neither difference in social status, then, the children, of the Voluntary School being in this respect below those of the State Schools, nor difference in the ability of teachers, since inferior teachers would not be employed in the Government schools, nor difference in locality, all four schools being within a short distance of each other, will account for the state of affairs that obtains. "We are driven, therefore, to the conclusion that there must be something faulty in the system itself. Precisely so. It is the management. But what difference does that make? It is the management that differentiates the systems, and therefore to blame the management is to blame the system." The writer then goes on to examine into the nature of the School Boards, and concludes his examination as follows. "No wonder that the setting up of State Schools is a popular thing in a certain class. 'Wheresoever the body shall be, there shall the eagles also be gathered together? Self-immolation on Boards is not a very common virtue, or to speak more in accordance with modern philosophy, not a very common folly, and when we see one member using his position to solicit the votes of his comrades in order to secure for himself a contract, a second returning the compliment, on the principle that one good turn deserves another, a third packing the meeting in order to have himself elected to the humble post of visiting officer at a salary of £40 a year; when we witness these doings we cannot help suspecting that the intellectual elevation of the masses is hardly the object which Boards have most at heart."

It may, nevertheless, be replied that the mismanaged State Schools produce, on the whole, better results than the Voluntary Schools. Let us therefore see to what extent such is the case. The percentage of passes in reading, writing, and arithmetic for 1883-4 was, respectively, for the Voluntary Schools 89-14, 82-03, 77-51; and for the State Schools 89-96, 84-61, 81-23. The percentages in the three subjects combined were for the voluntary schools 82-99, and for the State Schools 85-26, leaving a difference in favour of the State schools of 2-37. The cost, meantime, of each child in average attendance at a State school was £3 5s 5½d, that of each child in average attendance at a Voluntary School being £1 14s 10½d, or a difference in favour of Voluntary Schools of £1 10s 7d. "We find, then, that to secure a superiority of a little over two per cent. in the passes, the State incurs nearly eighty-eight per cent. more in outlay. This can hardly be looked upon as a brilliant feat, and we do not begrudge School Boards any of the consolation they derive from it." But as to the part that the managers have in this superior work, it is only indirect. "It (the work) comes in reality from the severe competition carried on among teachers, and this competition is kept alive by the principle of paying on results. The managers, therefore, can be said to cause it only inasmuch as they leave the teachers practically uncontrolled, both in money matters, and still more in the pressure put upon children. It is by their permissive will only that success comes. Their efficacious will, as theologians would say, has nothing to do with it. They are the cause of it, not by active interference, but by passiveness." Again, as to the success itself, the advantage of it may very well be questioned since it is obtained by over-pressure on the children—the inevitable efforts of payment by results not properly