

### Bible-in-Schools

The retiring President of the Methodist Conference apparently sees more moonshine than sunshine in the immediate prospects of the Bible-in-schools campaign. He regards it as a phrase and little more. 'The Bible is not,' said he at the recent Conference, 'in the schools of the Colony, and at present it can hardly be said to be on the way there.' On Thursday last a small and seemingly somewhat dispirited meeting took place in Palmerston North to put some horse-power—or, rather, lung-power—into the campaign. One reverend orator (Rev. C. C. Harper) strongly condemned 'playing right into the hands of party politicians.' Another equally reverend advocate of the sectarianising of our public schools (Rev. I. Jolly) as stoutly maintained that it was indispensably necessary to drag the movement into 'the turmoil of the political arena' and to 'let politicians know that the question means votes.' The Rev. C. C. Harper 'felt he was perfectly justified in saying there was hardly a person in Palmerston qualified to express an opinion on the question.' The Rev. I. Jolly heaved a chunk of old red sandstone at his reverend confrere by quoting the sham, amateur, open-vote 'plebiscite' as evidence that there are whole battalions of people in Palmerston North qualified 'to express an opinion on the question.' The proceedings ended by the payment of sundry contributions towards the expenses of the hired political agitator whom the Bible-in-schools Conference is sending to stump the country in the interests of a group of clerical 'Weary Willies' that are too indolent to attend to their proper duty of instructing unto righteousness the children of their various faiths. We shall be prepared to believe in the sincerity of those dilettante black-coated servants of the Lord when they begin to invest in the Christian instruction of the youth of their flocks as much jawbone and as many sawbees as they are now sinking in a sordid political campaign for the purpose of shifting to the shoulders of lay State officials one of the elementary duties of the Christian ministry.

In the meantime, it is just as well to remind them that there is and can be no such thing as 'non-sectarian' religious instruction. The term is simply a threadbare and not over-honest party watchword. To our Bible-in-schools folk what is Protestant is non-sectarian; what is Catholic is sectarian. An editorial article in the last January issue of the 'Reformed Church Messenger' (American) tells how useless and unprofitable is every attempt in the German Fatherland to impart a religious training to children in the Simultan or mixed State school. 'At a largely attended meeting, recently held at Barmer' (says the Philadelphia 'Catholic Standard' summarising the 'Messenger's' article), teachers and others demanded that the existing Simultan schools should be abolished for five reasons: (1) The Simultan school furnishes a poor religious training; (2) for this reason it impairs true patriotism; (3) it undermines the force of personality, because the teacher cannot teach what he believes; (4) it disturbs the peace between Catholics and Protestants; (5) it does violence to the conscience of parents by obliging them to send their children to schools not approved by them. Such considerations, however, will probably have no effect upon the minds of the Bible-in-schools clergy. So long as they are relieved—at the general taxpayers' expense—of an onerous and unpleasant duty of their calling, it apparently matters little to them that the hapless little ones of their flocks be spiritually dragged up, during their most plastic and impressionable years, on minimum doses of agnosticism, or of colorless philosophy, or (at best) of boiled-down Unitarianism.

### 'A Miners' War'

Way back in 1856 Disraeli damned the authors of the bungling Crimean campaign by indirectly labelling them with an epithet that will endure. In a somewhat roundabout way he hinted that, instead of being the vindicators of international order, they had degraded them-

ves into becoming the gladiators of history. John Bright was hooted off platforms and pelted as a 'traitor' because he raised his voice against that wretched campaign of the thousand blunders. Well, time has amply justified him. And he lived to see the day when the jingoes who hosed him with journalistic vitriol in 1854 would not dare to set up a defence of the Crimean war. A similar fate befel the jingo fury that danced its wild and insane carmagnole around the blundering three years' war in South Africa. Mr. Chamberlain voiced the jingo pretence of the time when, at Cannock Chase, in October, 1900, he declared: 'This is a miners' war.' The world knows better now. It knows that the South African war was fought chiefly in the interests of the hook-nosed foreign magnates of the Stock Exchange, and that the good red English and Irish and Scottish and Colonial blood that dyed the veldt was no more shed for the working miner than for the man in the moon.

The London 'Morning Leader' of a recent date, in republishing an old cartoon, shows that the situation on the Rand has in no way improved for the white man during the past twelve months. The Government Emigrants' Information Office (London) has just issued a circular which says: 'There is a considerable amount of distress in the Transvaal. There is no demand for white miners, of whom there are large numbers on the spot without work.' Well, 'no white man need apply' while there are 30,000 imported Chinese seifs to do the work. The 'N.Z. Tablet' was, perhaps, the only newspaper in New Zealand that, amidst the rushing folly of the jingo fever, kept its feet warm and its head cool and read aright the purpose of the war and tore the mask off the thin pretence that the sword was drawn to enable sundry British subjects to expedite the transference of their allegiance from Queen Victoria to Oom Paul. The sword was scarcely sheathed when events that more than fully justified our contention came pouring in at the rate of a mile a minute. Some of our erstwhile Australasian jingo journals have come at last to frankly see and say the obvious truth regarding the Transvaal. The Melbourne 'Age,' for instance, was one of the journals that helped to raise the war-heat to the temperature of an electric furnace. Yet, only a few weeks ago, it took heart to say:—

'There is very little more freedom to-day in the Transvaal for an unattached son of the British Empire than there was when Kruger played the tyrant in Pretoria. If true liberty consists in that condition of society in which a man, before being a foe, has leave to speak the thing he will, there is no freedom under Lord Milner's rule in the Transvaal. . . . But that the national honor and interests were involved in preserving South Africa under the British flag, the Transvaal and the Orange River State were really better off under Dutch rule than they are now under British. This is a hard saying. It is one which raises a blush on the cheek of a citizen of the Empire. But it is absolutely true.'

The Melbourne 'Advocate' is right when it says: 'We are all pro-Boers now.' And in the front-rank are some of the very journals that, in the wild days of the war, 'poured out execrations without stint upon all those who sought to allay the blood-thirst' which they did their best to foster.

With a little encouragement in the shape of reduced excise duty (says an English paper, whose fiscal policy is freetrade), the cultivation of tobacco in Ireland could be carried on with great advantage on a large scale. That has now been clearly established. The series of experiments carried out during the last six years have proved that in at least sixteen counties tobacco can be successfully cultivated. The growing of the leaf has been tried on a commercial scale in the County Meath, where twenty acres were devoted to the crop, the barn and curing operations having been erected by the Department of Agriculture. The results are regarded as most satisfactory. In the opinion of Irish manufacturers, for color, texture, body and size, the home-grown product compares favourably with tobacco of the same type imported from America.