

who kept thrusting his sword everywhere through the threadbare curtain except where Polonius's legs were plainly visible. It has placed its pointer upon the literature distributed by the League, and upon the funds raised to feather a cosy nest for the paid political agent of that organisation. But it avoided—after the fashion of Mr. Crummles's barn-storming Prince of Denmark—all mention of the very duty which should be first in the eye of an organisation that professes to interest itself in bringing the truths and duties of religion home to the minds and hearts of the children in the schools. Of this elementary duty of the Christian ministry there is no whisper, not a breath. It forms no part of the 'exceptionally good work' done during the past year by the League. We may well ask, with the Melbourne 'Argus': What is the real end for which the organisation is working? 'Is it not to encourage Biblical studies among school-children? And cannot this be done without resorting to political agitation? Is it absolutely necessary to ask the intervention of the State, which is not a denominational body?' Catholics have not done so, where it is a question of imparting religious knowledge to the children of their faith. Why should Presbyterians, with their rich endowments and their bulging money-bags, plead in forma pauperis to have the neglected spiritual work of their Church done by public officials at the public expense?

The 'Outlook's' estimate of what constitutes an 'exceptionally good' record of Bible-in-schools 'work' resolves itself into mere electioneering. And this it declares to be the only sort of 'work' which it was 'possible' for the League to do. All else is therefore, by necessary inference, pronounced impossible. A similar plea was once pressed upon Mirabeau by his secretary. 'Impossible!' exclaimed the great revolutionary orator, 'ne me dites jamais ce bete de mot!'—'Never name to me that blockhead of a word!' 'It is not a lucky word,' says Carlyle in his 'Chartism,' 'this same "impossible": no good comes of those that have it so often in their mouth. Who is he that says always, There is a lion in the way? Sluggard! thou must slay the lion, then; the way has to be travelled.' If it was 'possible' for the League to 'distribute literature all over the Colony' to the free and independent electors, was it not also 'possible' for them to circulate wholesome religious publications among the little budding men and maids of their various faiths in schools and homes throughout the length and breadth of the land? It was admittedly 'possible' for them to 'raise between £500 and £600' to provide a comfortable position for their salaried electioneering agent. Was it not 'possible' for them to raise a few hundreds—or, for that matter, a few tens of thousands—of minted sovereigns to establish an organisation of paid and volunteer teachers, to carry the influences of religion not only into the schools, but into the homes, wherever the little adherents of their creeds are gathered, from the North Cape to Stewart Island? And in such a scheme, could not the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand, with its fat endowments and all the piled-up wealth that lies within its fold, take a leading and honored part? Catholics would greet such a movement with a 'Maecte, i fausto pede'—a right hearty God-speed. Can the Presbyterian Church, with all its broad acres and rich emoluments, devise no method of religious instruction for its children without filching coins from the unwilling pockets of Catholics and other dissidents to meet the expenses of the process? And have the Bible-in-schools leaders no shorter cut to the souls of the school-children than through the evil-smelling quagmire of political agitation? Or will our friend the 'Outlook' maintain that what Catholics—fourteen per cent. of the population—have been doing for the children for the past twenty-eight years, is 'impossible' for the Bible-in-schools League, which claims to represent eighty per cent. of the population?

The whole matter just resolves itself into this: that where there's a will there's a way; where there's zeal there's sacrifice; where there's strong conviction, it will quite naturally blossom into action and bear fruit in works. In this matter of Christian education, our friends and critics of the General Assembly have severed the connection between feeling and action. While we Catholics are up and doing, they are content to play the part of the foolish yokel who sat upon the river-bank and waited for the waters to flow away, so that he might cross to the further side. 'Do the duty which lies nearest thee,' says Carlyle; 'thy second duty will then become clearer to thee.' When the Assembly and Bible-in-schools League have done this, and performed more direct and strenuous work for the souls of the school-children than mere electioneering, then, and not till then, will the country begin to take them seriously. The words of a noted New York Baptist divine apply with special force to New Zealand: 'If Protestant Churches were as interested in the education of their children as the Catholic Church is, there would be no religious problem in our country.'

Notes

Church Parades

A recent church parade in Dunedin has given fresh prominence to a wrong idea that has taken up its quarters in the heads of many of our volunteers. And the sooner it is dislodged the better. Many of our volunteer defenders are under the impression that attendance at church parades is compulsory. For their benefit we once more publish, by request, a reply in point that was given some months ago by Col. Webb, of the Defence Department:—

1. Under existing regulations, any volunteer corps is entitled to an honorary chaplain. He, like other officers is elected by the corps, and may be of any denomination, but one chaplain only is allowed.

2. No chaplain has authority to order a church parade. If a church parade is ordered under the authority of the Officer Commanding the District, or any officer to whom such authority may be delegated, the attendance at such a parade is optional and cannot be enforced.

3. Members of a volunteer corps may attend divine service according to their respective religious denominations, or may absent themselves altogether. There is no restriction or compulsion whatever, neither is preference given to any Church or religious body in New Zealand.'

No church parade is, therefore, compulsory. And volunteers of our faith should absent themselves from any such parades, unless they are to the Catholic church. There is no body of our defenders whom Col. Webb's instructions affect so intimately as they do the Catholic volunteers.

The Test of Zeal

'A great capitalist,' says a noted educational writer in the Buffalo (U.S.A.) 'Catholic Union,' is praised for giving ten million dollars to education. The Church (in the United States) has given three hundred million dollars for school buildings, and forty millions more to pay the teachers, in building up the parish school system.' In New Zealand (according to the estimate of one of our Prelates) the Catholic body have expended about a million and a half sterling on religious education, without counting the vast sums that have been filched from them for the instruction of the children of other creeds in the public schools. Here is a test of zeal and earnestness which wild horses would not draw the Bible-in-schools party to imitate. Political campaigning is, for the clergy at least, vastly cheaper and more to their taste.

J. TAIT, Monumental Sculptor

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