

Current Topics

Then and Now

Quite a volume could be compiled if it were worth the while—consisting entirely of extracts exhibiting the inconsistency and contradictoriness of the past and present utterances of Bible-in-Schools League leaders. A number of these quotations have already appeared in our columns. Some time ago, for example, we quoted the fierce invective directed by Dr. Gibb in 1903 against the 'right of entry' of which he has now to stand forth as the champion. Last week Bishop Cleary cited in our pages the severe and damaging condemnation of the 'emasculated caricature' of Bible teaching involved in a mere selection of Bible extracts which was delivered in 1905 by the Anglican Primate (Dr. Nevill), who is president of the Bible-in-Schools League. 'I, for my part,' said the Primate, 'cannot be a party to any such chopping up of the Bible into bits.' Today he is compelled, by the exigencies of an extraordinary alliance, to be not only a party to but also an advocate of the very outrage against which, a few years ago, he so heavily inveighed. We may now add to the collection of Bible-in-schools leaders' self-contradictions an utterance of the Bible-in-schools conference of 1904 on the subject of a conscience clause for the teachers. In those days a conscience clause for the teachers was a regular feature of all Bible-in-schools schemes; and a manifesto published by the executive of the Bible-in-schools conference, and dated May 24, 1904, has this to say on the subject: 'A great deal has been made of the teachers' difficulty. We have done our best to safeguard them in every way. A conscience clause means that we are unanimously and determinedly opposed to anything in the nature of religious tests being applied to them.' That was in 1904. In 1914 the Bible-in-schools campaigners are 'unanimously and determinedly opposed' to 'safeguarding' the teachers, and are prepared to be party to the imposition of those religious tests which ten years ago they repudiated and condemned. We may add that the manifesto was signed, amongst others, by Dr. Gibb, the present Bishop Sprott, and the Rev. J. Reed Glasson, Congregational minister, all of whom are now supporters of the League's system.

The Minister of Education and the Referendum

Some of the politicians, also, have got themselves into a similar dilemma. The Religious Instruction Referendum Bill has just been introduced by the Hon. James Allen, Minister of Education; and presumably that gentleman will vote for the measure. If he does, he will have some difficulty in reconciling his action with his previous attitude and utterances on the subject. On the introduction of the first Referendum Bill in 1894, Mr. Allen opposed the measure, not only because he considered that particular Bill badly drafted, but also on a broad ground of principle. In his speech on the second reading of the Bill, after pointing out that the ordinary man needed educating on public questions, he went on to say:—'He had either to read or be educated in some way or other with regard to them, and I say, therefore, that under existing circumstances it is fair to assume that a large proportion of the multitude will be irresponsible, and the tyranny and despotism of that irresponsible crowd will be found to be worse than the tyranny and despotism which might and possibly does exist here sometimes.' (*Hansard*, Vol. LXXXV., p. 281.) If the 'tyranny and despotism' of an 'irresponsible multitude' were to be dreaded on purely political questions, on which electors had some reasonable chance of being fairly informed and in respect to which no specific questions of conscience were involved, how much more indefensible is it to allow a purely religious question, in which the most sacred rights of conscience are affected, to be submitted to such an arbitrament.

Canon Garland and the 'Tablet'

In our issue of May 7, in a current topic entitled 'Frightening the Women Voters,' we drew attention to

a remarkable sermon delivered by Canon Garland at Gisborne on April 19, and reported in the *Gisborne Times* of April 20, in which he stated, in effect, that those of his hearers who, 'no matter how good (their) motives may have been,' opposed the present Bible in State Schools movement, would, on the Day of Judgment, hear from the lips of the Saviour of the world the awful words, 'Depart from Me: I never knew you' would, in other words, receive a sentence of everlasting banishment from God's presence. As the result of our comments, the sermon was brought under the notice of the daily papers, one of which published some scathing comment on the utterance; and these comments, together with quotations from the sermon, were press-associated throughout the Dominion. Canon Garland is not as grateful to us as he ought to be for the exceptional prominence which has been given to his discourse; and in a further sermon he very unkindly and quite untruly includes us amongst those who have 'misrepresented' the sermon. After referring to strictures on his utterance which were published in the *N.Z. Times* and *Wellington Post*, Canon Garland, who, oddly enough, takes the pose of a meek and suffering martyr, goes on to say: 'This was not the first time there was misrepresentation of the sermon. The *Tablet* gave the lead to the action of the correspondent of the *New Zealand Times* by finding itself compelled to place before its misquotation of my words, words which I never used. The *Post*, the mouthpiece of the Secularist Party, I therefore admit is not alone, but keeps the company of the official organ of the Roman Catholic Church in misrepresenting and straining what I actually did say.'

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We need hardly assure our readers that in giving the extract from Canon Garland's sermon as reported in the *Gisborne Times* we were guilty of no 'misquotation.' We herewith repeat our quotation as it appeared in our issue of May 7: 'This appeal can only be felt by Christians; by those who accept the Lord Jesus as their only Saviour, as God manifest in the flesh, to Whom they have committed their whole lives. Because we thus accept Him, we believe He will come to be our Judge, when every one of us shall give an account of the things we have done in this life, for every thought, and word, and deed. What shall I say then when I see Him face to face? Shall I plead: "Lord, I would not trust the teachers of New Zealand." "Lord, I thought the State should have nothing to do with the religion of the children in the schools, though it might with the criminals in the prison." I thought this or that, and therefore I rebuked those that would have brought the children to Thee in their school. What will be His answer then? We know, for He has shown His mind, and it is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. It will be the same at the Day of Judgment when we stand before Him to give an account. The same as it was in Palestine nineteen hundred years ago. He will be much displeased with us, no matter how good our motives may have been, if the result is that we in any fashion place a stumbling block in the way of the little ones coming to Him. "Inasmuch as ye did it not unto one of the least of these, ye did it not unto Me. Depart from Me: I never knew you."'

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That is the portion of the sermon which we selected for quotation, and that is word for word and syllable for syllable as the passage appeared in the *Gisborne Times*. Canon Garland, indeed, expressly admits that he used these words. That virtually settles the question; and the utterance may safely be left to speak for itself. The 'misrepresentation' of which Canon Garland chiefly complains is that the words were quoted by a correspondent of the *N.Z. Times* as applying generally to the opponents of the League, whereas they were intended to apply—Canon Garland says—only to his Christian hearers. Even allowing Canon Garland the benefit of this finely-spun distinction—and it is a distinction which will not, as a matter of fact, bear examination—the words referred to are such as should never have been uttered in a Christian pulpit. They are a plain intimation that when they stood before the