

are against the proposed Bible lessons scheme? Is the evidence for the statement that a teachers' conscience clause is unnecessary to be found in the fact that an eminent and universally respected Catholic Bishop has during the last few months, through the newspaper press, declared to the League and to the general public of New Zealand that Catholic teachers must necessarily be conscientious objectors to this feature of the League's proposals? In this connection I may mention that in one education district alone with which I am specially familiar, more than 50 per cent. of the board's teaching staff profess the Catholic faith. Who are the rightful parties to say whether or not these teachers need a conscience clause—the teachers themselves and their recognised pastors, or the members of an organisation who can make no claim to any special knowledge of the teaching and discipline of the Church to which the teachers belong? Is the evidence that a teachers' conscience clause is unnecessary to be found in the fact that in your issue of March 27 a secular teacher expressly declared that he for one has conscientious objection to giving the proposed lessons? A teachers' conscience clause is not unnecessary merely because a League representative says it is. In the meantime, I ask your readers to note that the net result of my query to Dean Fitchett on this head has been to establish the fact that the League officially and flatly refuses to recognise the rights of conscience of the teachers, and that it is its declared and deliberate policy to force the profession, willy nilly, to take up this work against which the teachers have already officially protested.

I had asked Dean Fitchett why, if the Bible lessons were not religious teaching, it should have been necessary to provide a conscience clause—of a kind—for the children. His answer is, in effect, that it is because there are in New Zealand 5529 people describing themselves in the census returns as "of no religion" and 111 as Atheists. I have only to say regarding this that, as an explanation, it does not explain, and as a statement of the reason for the conscience clause it is not true. It does not explain, because if the Scripture lessons are only literature or only morals, and contain no religious teaching, even the people "of no religion" are not entitled to a conscience clause. And the suggestion that the conscience clause is provided merely out of solicitude for the children of 111 Atheists is too much even for the most simple of your readers to swallow, and is contrary to well known fact. League orators have again and again assured us that the clause is intended to safeguard the rights, amongst others, of the children of Catholics, which latter body forms in New Zealand one-seventh of the population. The Bishop of Waiapu, for example, one of the vice-presidents of the League, in a printed address which lies before me, and which I understand is issued as a League publication, says, "We are well aware that the Roman Catholics would not sanction their children attending the Scripture readings under the supervision of the teachers," and goes on to indicate that the conscience clause in the Australian system is intended to meet all such cases. I therefore repeat my unanswered question: If the Bible lessons are only literature, or, as Dean Fitchett now suggests, only morals, why is a conscience clause provided for anybody at all?

'In my next letter I shall deal with the lessons as they are actually being given.—I am, etc.,

'March 29.'

'J. A. SCOTT.

For the first time in local history, a State Governor of New South Wales assisted at Mass in St. Mary's Cathedral as a Catholic on Sunday, March 16, when Sir Gerald Strickland, his daughters, and suite were present at the blessing and distribution of the palms and the High Mass.

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THE PROSPECTS OF HOME RULE

IRISH LEADER'S GREAT SPEECH

The Mansion House, Dublin, which has been the scene of many historic gatherings, was crowded to the doors long before the proceedings commenced on Friday night, February 7, at a great meeting, which voiced Ireland's protest against the action of the House of Lords in rejecting the Home Rule Bill. Inside, the magnificent Round Room presented an appearance altogether inspiring. Brilliantly illuminated, its statuary and harmoniously tinted curtains constituted a striking background to a scene of enthusiasm. All round the rostrum, which was draped in green and gold, a mass of representative citizens was solidly packed, and the audience overflowed from the main hall, which accommodated about 3000, into the vestibule and the adjoining corridors, while the galleries were thronged. Great as was the assemblage inside, it was but a trifle in comparison to the vast numbers who congregated in Dawson street and Stephen's Green, unable to even get near the entrance of the Mansion House. For their benefit two platforms had been erected, one in the garden of the Mansion House, abutting on the street, while another was constructed so as to be within range of the gathering at the Stephen's Green end. These were illuminated and formed the rallying centres for an enormous and enthusiastic crowd, whose cheering was periodically audible to those in the Round Room.

The Lord Mayor of Dublin presided, and delivered the opening address. After him came Mr. P. J. O'Neill, chairman of the General Council of the County Councils, he in turn being followed by Mr. Michael Davitt, son of the late Michael Davitt.

Mr. John E. Redmond, M.P., in coming forward, received a great ovation. The audience rose in their places, waved hats and handkerchiefs, and cheered enthusiastically for some time. He said: It is at all times a happy and a blessed thing to come home; but to come home as we do to-night, after months of labor, and receive such an inspiring welcome, is something twice blessed. I think I fully understand the meaning of your enthusiastic greeting. It is an expression of confidence in the Irish Party, in its honesty and in its wisdom, and, in addition to that, it is, I think, an expression of absolute confidence in the immediate future of our cause. So far as the Irish Party are concerned, I take the liberty of saying that your confidence has been earned by a record of steadfastness and success, I believe, unparalleled in the history of any Irish political party in the past. But, fellow-citizens, though this expression of confidence, in my judgment, has been well earned, it is none the less pleasing to receive. The Irish Party has always from people professing to be Nationalists received tokens of sympathy and of confidence in the past, and I tell you here to-day, understanding my responsibility and knowing all the circumstances of the case, I tell you that the most of our difficulties in the immediate past have come from the doubters, from the cynics, from the prophets of evil, and from those superior persons of our own side, so to speak, who have found no time or energy left to aid us after their exhausting and all-absorbing work of criticism and fault-finding. Well, we have succeeded in spite of these men, and I am gratified to find that our success is appreciated by the people. A little over three years ago—barely three years ago—we enunciated the policy of

Concentrating Upon Home Rule

and by subordinating every other issue to that end. When the Veto of the House of Lords came prominently before the public in consequence of their unconstitutional act in rejecting the Budget Bill, we believed that that we saw in that situation the possibility of destroying that Veto once and for ever. We believed that the Veto was the most serious of all blocks in the path of Home Rule, and we therefore resolved to subordinate everything else to the policy of smashing the Veto. We knew it would take time; we knew that it might entail sacrifices in Ireland; but we thought it was well worth any sacrifice that might have



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