

254. From Nelson's books there have been several extracts laid before the Committee. There is one called "The Nativity," another is called "The Bridegroom Cometh." Would you not call that religious instruction?—Perhaps so; but it is not direct religious instruction. The whole of English literature is saturated with Bible and spiritual truth. But you would not call reading a passage from Tennyson direct religious instruction. Yet the whole of Tennyson's works is saturated with religious truth and scripture quotations.

255. Those extracts I refer to are from the Bible; and would you not call the teaching imparted by means of them religious?—I think it is wrong to call our present system of education a "godless" system; at the same time I consider the introduction of the text-book now proposed will be an improvement. I recognise that there is a high moral tone and religious feeling in the books read and the instruction now given; but I should like to give the children a good deal more of the same character of instruction.

256. You do not think that our children are worse than the children of other countries?—I do not think so.

257. What is the pressing need for this change if our children compare favourably with the children of other places?—We want to make them better.

258. Do you think this will give satisfaction to Roman Catholics or their priests?—I cannot tell what the opinion of their priests may be. But I believe it will be satisfactory to a good many Catholic parents, because a good many of them have signed the petition. I am informed by those who should know that such is the case. All my knowledge goes to this: that Catholic parents will not object to getting religious instruction for their children. What the priests may think I do not know.

259. Do you consider that Bible-reading will be satisfactory without interpretation by the teacher?—In what way satisfactory?

260. Without interpretation?—Do you not think yourself that reading over such lessons from the Scripture text-book to intelligent children will go a long way in conveying to their minds a knowledge of the truths set forth in the Bible?

261. Do you think it will give entire satisfaction?—I do not say that it will give entire satisfaction to everybody, but it will go a long way towards what we aim at. When we are all agreed to go so far, let us go thus far if the path is good. Do you not think that the history of Christ's life and teaching and works, and of His Church, when read by an intelligent child, is likely to sink into his heart and improve his conduct? If we differ, we cannot go together; but let us go as far as we are agreed.

262. Would it not be awkward for some teachers holding particular religious opinions?—We are not going to force them to teach if they can show that they have any objection. If they are not in sympathy with the text-book, it is better that they should not be required to teach it; I believe, however, that the great bulk of the teachers will be in sympathy with it.

263. Do you think that Committees will be prejudiced against teachers who are not favourable to it?—In other words, you ask if I think that Committees will represent the people and yet be opposed to the strongest wishes and desires of the people?

264. Suppose Wesleyans, or any other denomination, having a preponderance on the Committee, would they not be in a position to influence the Committee against the teacher?—The Committee represent the people. They may be of different denominations, but if they are all agreed to accept this text-book they are simply carrying out the wishes of the people. They are elected a Committee because the great bulk of the people asked them to represent their desires and wishes upon a matter that is very dear to them. If the teacher objects, how are the Committees to carry out the desires and wishes that are very dear to them. They do not wish to prejudice the teacher, but if the teacher objects to carry out their wishes they will not appoint him, and I think justly.

265. If the teacher were a Roman Catholic, would not the Committee be prejudiced against a Roman Catholic?—If the Roman Catholic teacher is a good man, who would read the book in the right spirit, there would be no prejudice against him. The book contains simply what is sacred to the Roman Catholic as well as to the Protestant. The extracts are taken from his own sacred books. If he is a good man, and reads the text-book in a reverential spirit, I do not see that there can be any objection to him.

266. *Mr. Collins.*] I noticed that the concluding words of the resolution passed by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church are to the effect that religious education is working out in harmony with "sound political principles." I would ask you whether it is in harmony with sound political principles that the State has a right, or that it is the duty of the State, to interfere in any way with religious views that would be of a divergent character?—Yes, I do; because I think that the State is simply the representative of the people; and if the people wish religion taught in the schools the State should allow it.

267. Men in authority on political matters have held that view a very long time since?—That may be. If they do not hold that the State is bound to carry out the wishes of the people they do not hold "sound" political principles.

268. But the question is, what is "sound political principles"?—If we are to discuss here what is sound political principles it will not help us much on the subject before the Committee.

269. I do not know whether it is absolutely fixed, or open to dispute?—Is there any principle or theory that is not open to dispute? I say it is sound principle that when the great body of the people want a thing which they believe to be essential to their good, the Legislature ought to recognise and grant it.

270. I am sorry that you do not answer my question?—I have answered it.

271. You said it was your object to make them better?—Yes.

272. Do you think that, comparing the results of our system with the results of systems that