

huge misfortune of a secular system is likely to be perpetuated for another half-century unless the Presbyterian Church arises in its might and decides to establish its own schools. In that case the plight of the forty-odd denominations whose cause has been so zealously championed by Bishop Cleary, Mr. Caughley, and others will be a sorry one" (*Outlook*, 27th May, 1913).

The Proposed Innovation.

The proposal is that a system similar to that in vogue in New South Wales should be introduced into New Zealand. It is pertinent, therefore, to inquire into the origin, history, and results of this system.

A Relic of a Church virtually established.

The principal point to note is that the New South Wales system, like the English system, is admittedly a compromise to get rid of the incubus of a denominational system that previously existed. In New South Wales, in 1825, the Church and School Corporation was set up for the religious instruction of the people and for the general education of the youth of the colony in the principles of the Church of England exclusively, and for this purpose it allowed one-seventh of the whole territory to be used by the Episcopalian clergy, with free access in the meantime to the colonial Treasury chest. The evils and abuses of this system soon opened the eyes of the people. Dr. J. D. Lang, in his "Historical and Statistical Account of New South Wales," says, "But the natural results of the denominational system, as they were progressively developed in the country, soon opened the eyes of many who had been either mistaken or deceived in the first instance to the real merits of the question. That system speedily exhibited a mere scramble on the part of the different ecclesiastical denominations of the colony for the largest shares respectively of the public funds. Education, instead of being pursued for its own sake and for that of the benefits and blessings which it would become the channel of imparting to the youth of the colony, became a mere matter of clerical patronage and a means of reducing the public instructors of youth to a condition of abject servility under the clergy of the different denominations. Under such a system general inefficiency was to be expected as the characteristic of the denominational schools, and general inefficiency was the actual result."

About 1848 the national system began, and existed side by side with the denominational system till 1866, the rivalry between them doing infinite harm to the cause of education. In this latter year Mr. (afterwards Sir Henry) Parkes introduced his Public Schools Act, which came into force in 1867. The Act set up a Council of Education to have control of the whole of education, but with power to give grants in aid to denominational schools. In 1862 the principle of State aid to the clergy was abandoned, but payments were continued to the clergy then in office during their lifetimes, and the Act of 1866 gave to every clergyman the right of entry into the schools for one hour a day to teach the tenets and dogma of his faith. The teacher was also required to give general religious teaching. The continued existence of some denominational schools left the problem still unsolved, and in 1880 was passed the Public Instruction Act that put an end to grants in aid, made the teachers Civil servants, and left only the teaching of religion as the legacy of the old system. New South Wales has not yet reached the position attained by New Zealand in 1867, when the Ordinance of 1847 was repealed.

The New South Wales System of Compulsory State-taught Religion

This system operates in four Australian States—New South Wales since 1880, Tasmania since 1885, Western Australia since 1893, and Queensland since 1910. In the four States the system is identical in all essentials, the only variations from the original New South Wales Public Instruction Act of 1880 being in the form of text-book for the Scripture lessons and in the time allotted both to the general religious teaching by the State teacher and to the special religious teaching by the clergy, and in the regulations governing the visits of the clergy. Both Victoria and South Australia have refused to adopt the scheme; both have declared against the proposals at the polls, South Australia by a three-to-one majority. The Victoria Parliament has twice thrown out a religious referendum Bill, although it contained a conscience clause for teachers. The proposals were carried in Queensland by 26 per cent. of the people on the roll.

That this system is the objective and platform of the Bible in Schools League is clear—(a.) From the petition-card of the said League, which reads, "Objective: System of religious instruction in State schools prevailing in Australia. This system has existed in New South Wales since 1866, in Tasmania since 1868, in Western Australia since 1893, in Norfolk Island since 1904, and in Queensland since 1910. (b.) From the repeated statements of the chief exponents of the League (Canon Garland has declared, "we desire the Australian system, the whole system, and nothing but the system"); and, despite its concealments, from the Religious Referendum Bill now before the House.

Description of the New South Wales System.

A fair analysis of the system discloses its gross sectarianism: General religious teaching from scripture-lesson books by the State teachers without the option of a conscience clause; special religious instruction by the clergy, or their representatives, in the distinctive tenets and dogmas of their Church in school hours; a form of conscience clause for parents for both the general and special religious instruction.

The Scripture-lesson Books: With the exception of Tasmania, where "teachers are requested to confine themselves to the narrative as taken from any version of the Bible they may possess" ("Course of Instruction for Primary Schools," p. 31), the lessons are given from text-books compiled by States for the purpose. These text-books vary in quality, but all are based on sectarian versions of the Bible.