

can accept biblical matter selected at will by the Government, forced upon the nation by the Government, and taught by the Government. To the many who cannot, in conscience, accept a Bible edited (perhaps gravely mutilated) by the Government, the Government is asked to say, in effect, "You shall be put outside the pale; you shall pay for the sort of Bible scraps we edit and teach; but you shall get no benefit from them unless you and your conscience conform to the State religion."

3. The League demands, and the Bill provides, a revolutionary change in our Education Act. and in the relation of the various religious denominations towards the Government and towards each other. Catholics go even further than the League in their views as to the essential union of religion and true education. Catholics alone have proved the utter sincerity of their convictions herein by long-sustained and ever-increasing sacrifices of money, personal effort, and numberless devoted human lives. They would joyfully aid their Protestant fellow-citizens to secure biblical and religious instruction for their children in the public schools so long as the equal rights of conscience of other interested parties before the law are not thereby violated. They would wish to see the education system made truly national—suited for all the people of the nation: secular for those desiring it secular, and religious (on fair conditions all round) for those desiring it religious. But they can never accept such an attempt at a solution of the difficulty as that now demanded by the League and embodied in the Bill: a scheme that violates rights of conscience which God gave, and which no League, Government, or majority can in justice take away.

II. ARGUMENTS FOR THE BILL.

The arguments already advanced, and likely to be advanced, in support of the present Bill are (summarily stated) based upon the following chief grounds, as set forth by the League in its official literature, or by League exponents on the platform and in the Press.

1. There is a serious decline in domestic religion, much "paganism," "barbarism," "atheism," &c. The secular system is a focus thereof. The League Churches can see no other way out of the difficulty unless by the State teaching of State-compiled biblical extracts, and the right of entry for the clergy into the public schools during working-hours.

2. A large body of electors have signed a petition (not yet presented) that this matter of "religious instruction" and conscience be decided, not by Parliament, but by a plebiscite (misnamed a "referendum") over the head of Parliament.

3. The proposed scheme "works smoothly," "absolutely without friction," and without any "sectarian difficulty" in certain parts of Australia.

4. The proposed scheme affords "equal rights," "equal treatment," and "equal opportunities to all," and "special privileges to none."

5. If Parliament and the people will not adopt the League's scheme, the League will work "detriment" to—or even "wreck"—the "national system," by establishing a rival system of denominational schools.

III. A CONFESSION OF FAILURE.

1. The League's cry of denominational failure represents a vast falling-off in spirit, hope, and energy from pre-agitation days, when the League clergy proudly pointed to the achievements of their denominations in moulding the national character in Great Britain as to make it (they said) first among the nations of the earth.

2. Out of the numerous lamentations about the decline in personal and domestic religion, let the following suffice: A right reverend member of the League executive (Bishop Averill) tells us that religion is now running risks of becoming a "vague sentiment," a "refined form of agnosticism" (*New Zealand Herald*, 25th May, 1914). At Gisborne, two League orators pleaded the small extent of Bible-reading in the homes as a reason for the Government introducing it into the schools (*Poverty Bay Herald*, 22nd April, 1914). Rev. C. H. Laws and Bishop Averill lament the spread of "heathenism" and "appalling ignorance" of religion among followers of their respective faiths (*Auckland Star*, 23rd May, 1914, and *Hawke's Bay Herald*, 19th June, 1913). No account is here taken of the League pulpit sermons on that well-worn subject, "Why don't men go to church?"

The Secular System.

3. According to statements and arguments put forward by the League or by its exponents in favour of this Bill, there is a measure of connection between those conditions and the secular system. One official League publication declares that under that system "your scholar comes out of your hand a barbarian." An editorial article in the chief League organ (the *Outlook*) states that children in our secular schools are "educated on pagan principles." Prominent League officials (such as Canon Garland, Rev. Isaac Jolly, Rev. John Mackenzie—all members of the League executive) and others describe the secular system as a system of "white heathenism," "dogmatic secularism," "Godless," "a relic of barbarism," "the desolating blight of secularism," and a system that "degrades morals." (Fuller details and references to these and other denunciations will be found on pages 2 and 3 of the Catholic Federation series of publications, No. 4, copies of which are herewith presented to your Committee.)

4. By their strenuous personal efforts and sacrifices of nearly forty years, Catholics have proved the sincerity of their conviction as to the evil of divorcing religion from the school period of a child's training. At the same time we recognize that social phenomena are, as a rule, very complex, and that it is at times hard to trace the play of cause and effect. By all means let us attribute to the secular system the evils which, in its nature, and in the circumstances of its operation in this country, it is calculated to produce. But the League clergy have been laying to its charge a serious measure of bad results which are fairly traceable to their own act or default.