

IV. WHERE LEAGUE CLERGY ARE TO BLAME.

The League clergy, in a word, have been proclaiming their denominational failure as an argument in favour of this Bill. In other words, the clergy in question seem to consider it worth while to pillory and expose themselves before the public, if by this means they may coax or force the Government to shoulder a part of their denominational responsibilities. Speaking at the Presbyterian General Assembly, in 1913, ex-Moderator Rev. A. Cameron said, in this connection. "It is the Church crying out in its weakness, calling for the assistance of the State. The Church is crying out that it cannot do this work, and it is calling for Cæsar to help it. The home has been so neglected by the Church that parents are not doing their duty. Now we have to compel the school and the teacher to do what the parents should have done." It would (he added) be an injustice to the teacher, to the children, "and to the whole Church" to impose that duty upon the teacher. (*Outlook*, 20th January, 1914.) In advancing the argument of denominational failure in support of this Bill the League clergy, however, concealed from their petitioners the vital facts and considerations set down in the following paragraphs:—

1. What, precisely, have the League clergy been doing during the past thirty-seven years to keep alive religion in the place where religion should begin—namely, the home? Mr. John Caughley, M.A. (a foremost Presbyterian elder and Sunday-school superintendent), gives the following testimony hereon: (a.) "The writer has, during the last twenty-five years, heard some 2,000 sermons preached; but not more than ten of these were directed towards impressing on Christian (not irreligious) parents their duty and privilege in regard to the religious training of their children—though, at every baptism, the parent and the Church made solemn vows before God that they would see to his training." (Article in *Auckland Star* in December, 1912.) (b.) Of the members of the Bible-in-schools League he says, in the same article, "Not one-fifth of these have read the Bible regularly with their children throughout this year"; and he laments the "almost universal banishment of the Bible from the place where, first of all, it should be recognized." So far as the present writer is aware, there has never been a reply to this indictment.

2. This "pagan," "barbarous," "atheist," and "morally degrading" system was created by the direct votes of the League denominations. In actual practice, it has been steadily fostered by the vast bulk of the League clergy. At most they have fought the "paganism" of the secular system as British armchair warriors fought Kruger—with their mouths—not with heart and hand and coin and personal effort. Even since the beginning of the present agitation no case has been recorded of even one League clergyman removing his children from the "desolating blight" of schools which they now discover to be seed-plots of "barbarism," "heathenism," "atheism," and "degradation." Have they not thereby condoned—nay, even contributed to—the very "heathenism," &c., which they now (as part of a political campaign) so loudly complain? These facts have an obvious and important bearing upon this Bill, and the grounds upon which it has been introduced and commended to the Parliament of New Zealand.

3. Under the present (secular) Education Act, facilities (such as they are) are offered to the clergy and others for religious instruction outside of school hours. Here and there, small and elect bodies of devoted Protestant clergy and lay helpers have faithfully done what they could thus to bring religion and its sweet influences to children in the public schools. They claim a real measure of success, and their work has been blessed and encouraged by Synods and Assemblies. For instance, thirty-two zealous Protestant instructors have brought religion to all but three of the State schools of Dunedin. They are regularly imparting religious instruction to 2,643 out of 2,906 on the standards register in eleven Dunedin schools. The detailed figures for each school were supplied by the instructors' convener (Rev. I. K. M'Intyre) to the *Outlook* (Dunedin) of the 9th June, 1914.

4. What are the League clergy doing to combat within the school buildings the "paganism," "heathenism," "atheism," and "moral degradation" of the system to which they now send their children to be trained? The great body of them are doing simply nothing. This was shown in sufficient detail by a New Zealand parliamentary return of the 2nd November, 1903 (published in No. 37 of session, 1903, p. 259). About seven-eighths of them did not take the trouble of visiting the schools for religious instruction; only nine schools in every hundred in New Zealand were visited by the clergy; and out of the total number of clergy visits paid to the schools the Catholic clergy (although they had so many religious schools of their own) paid proportionately about twice as many as the others. Is not this grave neglect at least a partial cause of so much spiritual "ignorance" and practical "heathenism" as may exist among their several flocks? Here again are disturbing facts which have an important bearing upon the "Referendum" Bill now before Parliament. It is well that these significant facts should also be known to Parliament and the country.

5. The League and the League clergy are now threatening that, if Parliament and the country do not meet their wish, they will "wreck" or cause "detriment" to the present "national" system by starting a rival denominational system. (Their words—including those of an official League publication—are quoted, and duly referenced, on pages 7–10 of the Catholic Federation Series, No. 6, copies of which are herewith presented to the members of your Committee.) Who is preventing their now opening schools of their own? Who has prevented their doing so for the past thirty-seven years? Yet during all that long period—with only a very occasional verbal protest—the clergy of those large and wealthy denominations have accepted the "paganism," "heathenism," "barbarism," "atheism," which they now discover in the secular system, rather than go—and urge their people to go—to the cost of inaugurating (as the vastly smaller and poorer Catholic body did) a system of primary Christian schools. Is not this evidence that they have not considered good Christian, anti-"atheistical" schools deserving of so much personal effort and sacrifice? And are they not thereby, on their own confession, promoting the very