

swine. But with our vivid faith, and with the children—the hope of the future—gathered in the Church's mother-arms, she is racked with no failing trust in God's unfailing Word, smitten with no dying devotion, crippled with no array of empty Sunday benches. There is growing vigour in her limbs, high courage in her heart, within her soul a glorious hope. She looks into the future with fearless and unwavering eye. From her strong heart goes up no cry of failure, no appeal to Cæsar or to Parliaments to relieve her of part of her divinely imposed burden lest she faint by the way.

2. Cannot the League read the two contrasting omens? An official League leaflet speaks about "the Roman Catholic devotion in supporting their own schools." If their example is deserving of admiration, is it not still more worthy of imitation? We have every sympathy for, and willingness to aid, the introduction of the Bible into the public schools, on conditions fair to all users and supporters of those schools. But the scheme should be just, and the grounds of it fairly stated. It is not just for the League to demand for itself (through a plebiscite) special privileges of State biblical teaching at State cost which it refuses to all others. And it is not a fair statement of the position to demand such special privileges because of alleged "heathenism" and irreligion for which the League clergy are themselves in part responsible. In thirty-seven years the great body of them have done practically nothing to bring religion into what they now call the "pagan" and "atheistic" State schools. And (to give a slightly altered turn to the Rev. James Chisholm's quoted statement) if they had put half as much money and energy into leagues of family prayer and Bible-reading as they have put into political agitation, their various denominations "would have been vastly the better by now."

VI. THE MISSING PETITION.

1. The chief argument put forward (and likely to be repeated shortly in Parliament) in support of this Bill is this: that a large body of electors have signed petition cards, as hereunder, in favour of it. As already stated, this petition has not been presented. But the League statement has (as we gather from the Right. Hon. the Prime Minister's recent remark) given rise to the Bill now before your honourable House. In fact, the League's petition-card is, in a modified form, what Bishop Spratt describes as the League's own and "only" ballot-paper in the Bill. It is the source, inspiration, and substance of the Bill. The only difference in substance between the League's petition and the League's ballot-paper in the Bill is this: the League's ballot-paper gives the League more than the League's petition asked for. It is well that Parliament should know both their points of resemblance and their still more significant points of divergence in favour of the League.

2. The League's petition-card, demanding this Bill is printed on both sides. The front of the card bears (among others) the following words: "I am in favour of the system of religious instruction in State schools described on the other side, and request a referendum to be taken thereon." The "system of religious instruction" is officially "described" by the League as follows "on the other side" of its petition-card:—

"OBJECTIVE.

"System of Religious Instruction in State Schools prevailing in Australia.

- "Lessons read in school hours by the children themselves from Scripture books provided by the Education Department; State-school teachers supervising the reading but not giving sectarian or dogmatic teaching:
- "Visits during school hours by ministers or accredited teachers from the churches, instructing children in the faith of their fathers:
- "Conscience clause, by which the parent has complete control of the child's religious instruction in the public school.

"This system has existed in New South Wales since 1866; in Tasmania since 1868; in Western Australia since 1893; in Norfolk Island since 1906; and in Queensland since 1910."

VII. LEAGUE PETITION METHODS.

1. Both the League's petition and the present Bill demand (as shown) a revolutionary change in our law. As a matter of fair dealing, both the League card and the Bill should have stated clearly, precisely, and accurately the nature of the legislative changes desired. The League petitioners on the one hand, and legislators and the general public on the other hand, should have understood the proposed legislative changes in their true sense, in their full sense, and in the same sense.

2. Unfortunately, in these respects, both the League petition and its ballot-paper reflex are lamentably wanting herein. In what they say and in what they conceal both are so worded that they could not fail to confuse petitioners on the one hand, and Parliament and the general public on the other hand. In fact, it is a matter of sheer impossibility to understand either of them in a clear sense, in a true sense, in the same sense—I might almost say, in any sense: certainly in any sense that is capable of lucid expression in a single "Yes" or a single "No."

3. Let us take the Bill and the League's own and "only" ballot-paper in the Bill.

(a.) It purports to be a "referendum" Bill. It is no such thing: it is a vastly different and more objectionable thing—it is a plebiscite Bill on a matter of personal religious liberty and personal religious conscience. Herein Parliament and the public are misled. The Bill reflects even the League's incorrect use of plain terms of political science.

(b.) Part of the wording of both the League's petition and of the League's ballot-paper is hopelessly ambiguous.