

much objection to the clause ; but by the Education Amendment Act which we passed last year, we have taken away from the School Boards the very large majority of children that were likely to be helped by the School Boards, and handed them over to the guardians. I should suppose, taking the country throughout, that three-fourths, if not a great many more, of the children that have come under the operation of the 25th clause will now come under the operation of the new Act, because they will be the children of out-door paupers. Further than that, I can only say this much, that I have no doubt the Government would most carefully consider any proposition that may be made to them to remove any objection that may be felt. I do not think that a poor man, by reason of his poverty, should lose his right to choose a school when you compel him to send his children there, and I believe compulsion impossible. I want to say a word in regard to compulsion. I am as anxious as any member of a School Board, or any member of any society, to see a measure of compulsion applied to the whole kingdom. I must say this much, that after most carefully looking into the question of the possibility of having a general compulsion for the Kingdom, I should be ready to produce a measure which I think would convert the whole Kingdom, but it would be impossible to be passed into law, and impossible to work throughout the country, if it did not avoid these two things : first, you must not compel a parent to send his child past the school in order to go into one you like, but he does not ; and, secondly, you must not compel the ratepayers to build schools merely because you prefer that those children should be sent to them. If men who are earnest in regard to education are so convinced of the necessity of compulsion that they can admit these two conditions, I believe it will be comparatively easy to pass such a measure, and I believe that then we should have done almost all for the education of the masses of our population. I believe that there are several men—good men—throughout the country who think that in so far as I had to do with this Bill, I planned it and passed it with the object of promoting the interests of the Church of England, and to injure Dissenters. That is to myself the most extraordinary charge almost that I can conceive, and I think it would be to them also if they knew me ; and the only reply that I can make to that charge is that in what I have done I had no wish to injure the Church or do the Church good. I simply wished to get the children to school—that was really and solely the only object I had. But it is said to me, “ You are endeavoring to maintain the principle of a State Church ; ” and I have sometimes been told by some of my friends, “ Ah, there never was any Act like the Education Act for propping up this decayed fabric of a State Church. But some others of my friends who take the same views as those whom I have quoted with respect to the question of a State Church, say, “ Probably you did not mean it, but you have hit it the heaviest blow it has ever had.” Now I must honestly say I had no such high object in view. If I was a member of the Liberation Society, which I am not, and if I was determined to pull down the Church as fast as I could, I do not see why this Act, so far as I have had anything to do with it, should not have been precisely what it was. Our object was to use all the forces for education which we found existing, and when we found the clergy, or the priest, or the dissenting ministers, or any persons, laymen or spiritual men, ready to help us in the matter, we were ready to take their help, and I do not know how the Act could have been framed in any other way, unless when bringing forward the measure apparently for education, one had tried to make it really against the Church. What would be the

result ? Simply this, that if the members of any Church, or the officers or the clergy of any Church, did their duty, they might gain some influence by it. That is an indirect result with which I have nothing to do. If they do not do their duty, if they are intolerant in their demands, they will do themselves harm and the body to which they belong. The next charge which is brought against me is of my exceeding folly and ignorance in ignoring the religious difficulty. Well, it is not my business to make the most of the difficulty with which I had to do. I never supposed that I should hear nothing about it, but I said, in bringing forward the bill, what I say now, that I believed these difficulties were not difficulties in the actual education of children ; that they were not difficulties felt by the parents of the children or the schoolmaster. And I said also this ; that when we were told that we were imposing upon the Boards the solution of these matters, and that that would make it impossible to work the Act, I replied in these words—“ We impose upon the School Board practical work ; we say it is your duty to be the practical managers, and to see that this education is given, and we believe that immediately, as regards the enormous majority of the children, the religious difficulty will disappear.” Now I can point to what has been done by School Boards throughout the country in consequence of that statement. A day or two ago I met the London School Board. After debating for some days they came to the almost unanimous resolution to have the Bible read, intelligently explained, and taught—and that they would also have a prayer and a hymn at the beginning of the school meetings, and carry out the principle of the Act as undenominationally as possible. Well, they provided at the same time a power of appeal to the School Board by any parent, or manager, or teacher, or ratepayer. Not a single appeal has been made by any one of those persons. That has been the experience throughout the country of one School Board after another. I took up the *Leeds Mercury*, a day or two ago, and found speeches from two Leeds gentlemen, both Dissenters, and I can't help quoting one or two remarks they made. My friend Mr. Thomas Harvey, who belongs still to the Society in which I was born, and who is a most excellent member of the Society of Friends—what does he say ? “ The religious question looked a very formidable one, but, happily, like very many other obstacles, it had proved a theoretical one.” Mr. Jowett, the vice-chairman of the Leeds School Board, says, “ How many times did they think parents had objected to the religious teaching given in the Leeds Board Schools during the last three years ? Never in one single instance.” I will never be a party to a law which would prevent the schoolmaster or the mistress from giving instruction in religion ; to say that we should take hold of this teacher and that teacher, and say to them that they are not to say to our children anything at all that may affect their souls, I really cannot understand how we can so conduct our teaching. What would have been the result ? Why, you would have in place of your present teachers, teachers who either cared nothing about religion, and no better teachers ever existed for secular subjects, or you would have them feeling themselves so hampered and so hindered in their work, that they could not consent to proceed with it. I really believe that the very best of them would leave you. I feel how delicate a matter this is, I know that I have given offence to many of those for whom I have the highest respect, but I would ask those of my Non-formist friends who care very much about these matters both as to education and religion, if they would allow me to make one remark in all kindness to them, and that is, whether they have quite realized what is their present