

audacious. How the Bill ran its course in Parliament with so little opposition from the Tories themselves and with so little effective opposition in the lobbies from the Liberals is not easy to say. It seems as if both Ministerialists and Opposition had been hypnotised by the success of Reaction out of all prudence and reason on the one hand and out of all courage and energy on the other. It seems perfectly clear that the Act is repugnant to the great body of English opinion. Recent elections have shown that. The decisions of Church councils, educational authorities, and the protests of some of the State clergy themselves have shown it. The great demonstration at Leeds showed it. And it is to the eternal disgrace of the Fabian Society that their leading spirits, Professor Sidney Webb and Mr George Bernard Shaw, should have defended and countenanced this Bill, which in motive and in form represents pure reaction, as we Scotsmen, accustomed to non-sectarian education, know perfectly well.

But here again, in connection with this reactionary measure there are several consolatory circumstances. One of these is the way in which the nonconformist clergy have risen to the attack. Reading the fulminations of Principal Fairbairn, Dr Clifford, and Dr Robertson Nicoll against the Bill, and the priestcraft which has inspired it, one realises with pleasure that, after all, there is a wide gulf between the proud priests who support the measure and the sturdy presbyters who oppose it, the latter spitting upon clericalism in education with a rancour which Mr Charles Bradlaugh himself could not well have outdone. Is it possible that Mr Balfour, bored to death with the cares and responsibilities of office held for seven years, devised this bill in the hope of securing a rest by bringing about the ultimate defeat of his Government? It looked all the more like it when we consider that, as a Scotsman, Mr Balfour was bound to see that the system of education which is good enough for Scotland, Europe, and America ought to be good enough for England. For my part I should like to see the Scottish monopoly of education broken through. We are at present producing far too many clergymen, doctors, lawyers, and newspaper men, in Scotland, and far too few skilled workers and captains of industry. I am not unduly enamoured of captains of industry; but I do hold that for the sake of the Co-operative Commonwealth the economic development of Scotland must proceed much further and faster than it has done up to now. In my adopted town I look round, and upon my word I see no industry that is worth the socialising unless it were to stop competition in it, and to develop and consolidate it as private capital will never do. We have municipal gas, baths, water, and a lodging-house, and now that these things have been conquered there is hardly any concern in the town which, as at present conducted, gives the proprietors more than a living wage, while at the same time their personal address and interest are largely accountable for the fact that they get anybody to send them orders to such an out-of-the-world place at all.