

Current Topics

A Warning Lesson

For good or evil, one of the shortest cuts to the soul of a nation goes through the school. The Revolution knew this when it introduced the fad of hard secularism into the schools. 'We have already the school without God', said a French educational journal; 'at length we shall have the Republic without God'. And this (according to M. de Lanessan, who was Minister of Marine in the late Waldeck-Rousseau Administration) is what is actually coming to pass in lodge-ridden France. In a recent article in the London 'Times' (which had previously appeared in the Paris 'Siecle') he said: 'The young people who have received their education in our secular schools during the last twenty-five years have completely given up religion.' 'This,' says the 'Catholic Times' of October 10, 'is an admission the force of which ought not to be neglected by members of Christian denominations during the present crisis. Here we have an avowal from a French Minister that one of the results of secular education is the destruction of the faith of the rising generation. This time M. Lavino, the implacable enemy of the Catholic Church, who represents the "Times" in Paris, deserves the thanks of the Christian Churches. He has rendered the good cause a useful service, and so has M. de Lanessan, who, by the way, is the gentleman that at Toulon kicked a crucifix out of the door of the hospital, the chapel of which he had converted into a music hall.'

A Profound Politician

'Trust me', says Pluto in Disraeli's 'Infernal Marriage', 'I am a profound politician. I keep each faction in awe by the bugbear of the other's supremacy'. A Reverend Pluto from the Empire City seems to be 'a profound politician' of this school. Last week, at the Presbyterian Assembly, he awed (or rather sought to awe) simple-minded folk of his own religious persuasion by the overshadowing fear of the undue political domination of one-seventh of the population of New Zealand over the remaining six-sevenths. The presence of one Catholic in the Cabinet, and of two Catholics in the House of Representatives, is, so far as we are able to judge from his somewhat cryptic utterances, the ostensible reason that has scared our old friend into recourse to his smelling-salts. The good man is welcome to all the 'friendly watchfulness' in our regard that he can spare from his own flock. The watchfulness is nothing new; the friendliness thereof would constitute a novelty that would be highly appreciated. Kind words, especially from unexpected sources, are sweet draughts in the cup of life, 'a concert of music in a banquet of wine'. But one needs a compound microscope to discover either kindness or good sense or patriotism in an attempt to inject sectarian distrust and passion into our public life. That sort of devil is easy to raise, but difficult to lay. New Zealand will, we hope, long be spared the grave scandal which has begun to settle like a blighting curse upon political life in two of the States beyond the Tasman Sea. In New South Wales and Victoria, an ill-conditioned and turbulent faction, headed by the Orange leaders and the 'yellow' clergy, have conducted, and are now conducting, election campaigns on a purely sectarian issue—the one plank in their platform being the exclusion of Catholics and of fair-minded and tolerant Protestants from public life. May God guard New Zealand, and every part of it, from the spirit of sectarian disunion and hate that has turned the north-east or 'yellow' corner of Ulster into a political hell of the damned!

Growth of Unions

Germany is, perhaps, of all others, the land of the industrial 'verein' or union. Herein it has more than

any other European nation, retained the traditions of the middle ages and their employers' and workers' guilds. The Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act of 1894 and its amendments (1900 and 1901) have, in proportion to population, made New Zealand, in the matter of such unions, what Germany is among the nations of Europe. In 1896 (when the Act came into active operation) there was only one union of employers, with 30 members and 65 unions of workers, having an aggregate of 9370 members. In the present year of grace 1906 the employers' unions have risen to 133, with a membership of 3,276, and the workers' unions to 261, with a membership of 29,869. During the period 1895-1906 the 'factories' (within the meaning of the Act) have increased from 4,109 to 9,881, and the workers employed therein from 29,879 to 70,403. 'During the year 1905-6,' says a pamphlet just issued by the Department of Labor, 'Inspectors of Awards have collected, on behalf of workmen, the sum of £1,154 for wages due under awards, etc., and have conducted 263 cases before the Arbitration Court, winning 213, losing 31, and 19 being withdrawn.'

A Political Humbug

The Freemason-Atheist 'Bloc' organ, the Paris 'Siecle', is as frank as M. Clemenceau and M. Briand in avowing the hostility of the dominant French party to religion. The aim of the Government (it admits) is 'to shake off the yoke of the Papacy'. And, as with associations nearer home to us, any stick, however rotten, is good enough for the back of 'Rome'. One of the weapons that it has taken up—or that has placed itself in the hands of the Government—is the anti-Catholic journalistic hack, Des Houx, a hired employee of the anti-Christian 'Matin', who has started an organisation with the fraudulent title of 'The League of French Catholics'. The object of this anti-Catholic organisation (as stated in our issue of last week) is to further schism (if possible) by getting the control of ecclesiastical property into the hands of organisations hostile to all religion, and to use the leverage of the position thus gained for the purpose of forcing the Pope and the French Hierarchy to recede from that attitude of firm determination in regard to the worship associations which has proved so embarrassing to the ruling clique. So clumsily transparent a device will hardly achieve its purpose. And the unknown Des Houx is not quite the man to carry to a successful issue a revolt against the ecclesiastical authority in France. He reminds one of a character in 'Sybil'—Muddlebrains, who is described as 'a political humbug, the greatest of all humbugs; a man who swaggers about London clubs and consults solemnly about his influence, and in the country is a nonentity'. Des Houx is a nonentity in Paris as well as in the provinces. The studious reticences of the cable-demon clap upon him the tinsel aureole of Catholic leadership. But going to Des Houx, and his atheistic associates, for Catholicism is like the process which in the Celtic saying is described as going to the goat's house to look for wool.

Bible-in-Schools

The Bible-in-schools agitation in New Zealand has passed out with the flowers that bloom in the spring. At the inquest that was held upon it at the recent Presbyterian Assembly in Dunedin, it seems to have been generally agreed that it met its death through cold, exposure, and neglect—the cold of a chilly atmosphere of popular disapproval, exposure to the merciless logic of destructive criticism, and neglect on the part of the Churches to which it owed its existence. In Victoria the movement is also a forlorn hope. But in that afflicted State it seems to have been recently captured and in part captained by the 'yellow' faction. The result is just what one might expect: much senseless hysteria, and the customary tornadoes of abuse and vituperation of 'Rome' for its attitude of antagonism to the Protestantising of public instruction at the

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