

Catholic prisoners were committed for less than a fortnight (through inability to pay fines); that thirty-eight per cent. of them were imprisoned for but a week or less; and that only four per cent. of them had to serve sentences of three months or longer. The figures to which our contemporary refers were, of course, those circulated by the "Protestant Press Bureau" in its anti-Catholic campaign of which Mr. Edwin Charles, a pressman, wrote the other day that never in the course of twenty-five years' press experience has been the like of it for willful misrepresentation and unblushing mendacity. For ourselves, we came to the conclusion long since that the effusions of the "Protestant Press Bureau" are utterly unworthy of serious notice in our columns.

Mr. Vincent Crummies used to 'gag' in all sorts of plays in order to justify the introduction of the 'infant phenomenon'. And our readers may depend upon it that the cheap, street-corner order of controversialists will from time to time resort to the customary journalistic 'gag' for the purpose of introducing these 'faked' Liverpool statistics and drawing a shocked 'moral' from them to the disadvantage of the 'Romish' Church. In the circumstances, it is well to know that the 'authority' for those sham 'statistics' is not the 'Catholic Times', but the 'Protestant Press Bureau'. And if its other efforts are on a par with this, we can well understand why Mr. Edwin Charles scourged it so lustily for 'willful misrepresentation and unblushing mendacity.'

Referring to the fraudulent misstatements of their religious belief so frequently made by prisoners in this and other English-speaking countries, we said in our issue of September 20: 'Entries of the religious profession of prisoners are made for two purposes—with a view to spiritual ministrations, and for statistical information and comparison. For this latter purpose, accuracy becomes a matter of public right and of scientific and moral interest, and it should be secured by adequate precautions. Such affirmations as to religious profession should be taken as statutory declarations, in which false statements would be punishable as perjury. The details of this much-needed change could be readily worked out, and a few prosecutions for perjury would serve to convince even the criminal fraternity that, in this matter at least, truth-telling is the better policy.'

### Mock Conciliation

Some time ago (as the cables sufficiently informed us) M. Clemenceau (the French Premier) and M. Briand (Minister of Worship) played the lion and roared far-resounding threats as to what would happen the Church in France on the fateful day (December 12) when the Separation Law would come into operation. But as the momentous date approached, they changed their note and, by comparison, roared 'as gently as any sucking dove'—as mildly 'an 'twere a nightingale'. The French Ministry was placed between the upper and the nether millstones. On the one side there lay the extreme probability of grave disturbances—amounting possibly to something like a state of insurrection—over wide districts of the country. On the other side, there were the raucous clatours of the Extreme Left, calling for a regime of swifter and more savage proscription against religion and those who practise it. 'In a situation of such delicacy', says the London 'Tablet', 'a policy of bluster would be provocative and dangerous, and therefore the most elementary prudence—coupled with an anxiety for the safety of their own skin—suggested to the Government an attitude and tone of conciliation'. In the course of a long policy speech in the Chamber of Deputies a few weeks ago, M. Briand, with roundabout politeness, made it clear that the Government were not to be driven into the dangerous extremes favored by such men as Combes and Pelletan. He even spoke in tones of unaccustomed respect of the Pope and the Bishops. He dismissed

the Des Houx hoaxes—the 'Matin's' sham 'Catholic' associations of worship as 'caricatures'. He graciously announced that the refusal to form (uncanonical) associations of worship would not be regarded as an act of revolt against the law of the land. He stated furthermore that (contrary to previous intimations) the clergy would not be deprived of their civil rights as 'officials of a foreign power', and that the churches set aside for public worship would remain open to the clergy to minister in, and to the people to pray in, whether singly or in common. 'We will leave you the churches—on sufferance', said M. Briand to the clergy. 'Public worship will go on uninterruptedly. You can take advantage of the law regulating public meetings'.

A few weeks previously the Government had declared that 'sans l'association, culturelle, la célébration du culte devient légalement impossible'—apart from the (exclusively lay) associations for public worship, the celebration of worship would become impossible throughout France. It was likewise announced that the Government would legalise these associations whatever their religious beliefs or disbeliefs might be. And they so far acted upon this declaration as to hand over the legal ownership of the church property at Culey and Puymasson to 'caricature' associations which were openly and notoriously in schism and rebellion against the ecclesiastical authority. The Clemenceau Ministry now finds that it has bitten off a bigger chunk of persecution than it can well chew. The 'Bloc' is 'blocked' just when it was getting its forces together for the grand assault upon Christianity in France.

If this change of voice betokened a change of heart, it would be as welcome in the fervor of political feeling in France as the coming-up of the cool 'southerly buster' at the close of a sweltering day in Sydney. But in the Third Republic, policies and political parties are as shifting

And variable as the shade  
By the light quivering aspen made.

The ministerial statement looks unmistakably like a ministerial weakening before the perils of a position from which even the Man of Blood and Iron might well recoil. Moreover, the new utterances of M. Clemenceau and his atheistic confreres must be read side by side with ministerial pronouncements made in moments of official candor. We cannot, for instance, afford to forget the boast of M. Clemenceau that he had scaled heaven and dethroned God. And M. Briand's soft phrases of a few weeks ago are not set in their full context till we place them side by side with the declaration of war which (with a collective 'we') he made against Christianity a short time beforehand at the Teachers' Congress at Amiens:—

'We must get rid of Christianity. . . . We have hunted Jesus Christ out of the schools, out of the university, out of the hospitals, the refuges, nay, even out of the gaols and the lunatic asylums. We must now hunt Him out of the Government of France.'

And on the very day previous to M. Briand's declaration of ministerial policy, his confrere, M. Viviani (Minister of Labor), made the following further brag-gart declaration of war on religion, which (be it noted) was placarded by the Government on the walls of every town-hall in France:—

'All of us together—first by our forefathers, then by our fathers, and now by ourselves—have been attached to the work of anti-clericalism and irreligion. We have snatched the human conscience from belief in the Beyond. Together, too, we have with one sweeping gesture quenched in heaven the lights that shall never be rekindled. Do you think that the work is at an end? No, it is but commencing. Do you think that it has no morrow? Lo, the morrow is dawning.'

French Catholics know very well by this time that they have no justice to expect from the Clemenceau Ministry, and only as much mercy as overruling circumstances may compel the Christ-hunters to show.

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