

There is also a section of the Liberals—a split off from the Dynastic Liberals—who show strong anti-clerical tendencies, but there is not anywhere the remotest approach to any such well-drilled anti-clerical 'bloc' as that organised—with such calamitous results—by M. Waldeck-Rousseau.

Leaving out of count a number of small and insignificant political groups there are, roughly speaking, three leading political parties in Spain—the Liberals, the Conservatives, and the Republicans. The Liberals, who are at present in a majority—numbering 229 out of a Lower House of 405 members—are divided into three distinct sections. First there is the Democratic Liberals, led by Senor Montero Rios, the man last named in our New Zealand cables as having been sent for to form a Cabinet. He describes himself as 'a Catholic and a defender of the supremacy of the civil power.' While Prime Minister in 1905 he declared his intention of altering the law in such a way that all the Religious Orders might have a legal status without any exceptions being made in their favor by means of a Concordat. He commands the largest following in both Houses. Next, there is the Dynastic Liberals, led by Senor Moret. According to a writer in the 'Dublin Review'—to whose brief but illuminative article on 'Church and State in Spain' we are indebted for most of the facts here presented—he displayed, when a member of the Liberal Cabinet in 1902, a fixed determination not to take any steps affecting the Religious Orders without the consent of the Vatican. On all such questions he declared that the Government must 'proceed in accord with the Holy See.' He has the support of a good number of senators and deputies. From the Dynastic Liberals has sprung a third Liberal section under the leadership of Senor Canalejas. These comprise the extremists of the Liberal party, and they have developed a marked anti-clerical bias. Of the Republicans we have already spoken. The Conservatives form the constitutional opposition party, and are led by Senor Maura, a very gifted speaker and the best lawyer in Spain. The speeches made by him as Conservative Premier a few years ago, in defence of the Religious Orders, are said to have been the most eloquent that had been heard in the Cortes for many years. His party has the support of the wealthy and educated classes in the country, and comprises over a hundred deputies and about the same number of senators. From this brief sketch of the state of political parties it will be seen that though the Liberals have an absolute majority they are unable, owing to their divisions, to make any effective use of it. No one section is strong enough to carry through a coherent programme, and such anti-clerical measures as are brought forward are proposed, not really on principle, but simply as a bid for the necessary support of the Republican faction.

In order to give our readers a still clearer view of the situation we may consider very briefly the actual anti-clerical measures that have so far been proposed, the reception they have met with, and the outlook for the future. The first active outbreak of anti-clericalism took place on the return of the Liberals to power just after the Spanish-American war. The Minister of the Interior, Senor Gonzalez, on the plea of giving effect to public opinion, signed a decree which ordered the Religious Orders to comply with the conditions laid down in the Associations Law of 1887—a law which, at the time of passing, was not intended to affect Religious Orders at all. 'The Bishops at once took action; the country was aroused; and Gonzalez was obliged to resign. The next move was made on August 27 of last year, when the Minister of Grace and Justice, Senor de Romanones, issued a Royal Order annulling the circular of the Marquis del Vadillo regarding civil marriage. This circular had required, for

the validity of civil marriage, a declaration of non-allegiance to the Catholic faith on the part of one or both of the contracting parties. Again the Bishops issued pastorals strongly condemning the new measure, to the extreme annoyance of the Minister, who threatened one of the prelates with legal proceedings. The threat, however, was never carried out, and many high authorities throughout the country have pronounced the Royal Order absolutely unconstitutional. But by far the most serious blow at the rights and liberties of the Church was struck on October 25 when the new Associations Bill was presented and read in the House of Deputies. Amongst other things, the Bill gives the Government the right to dissolve any association of which the supreme director resides out of Spain, and it would practically have the effect of completely suppressing the Religious Orders, with the exception of a very few which are specially exempted. The measure has been coldly received even by the other sections of the Liberal party. Senor Moret, through his organ, the 'Imparcial,' has expressed his conviction that the Bill has been merely introduced for display, and is never meant to become law. Senor Montero Rios condemns it as being really inconsistent with Liberal principles; and Senor Maura in an important speech in the Cortes on November 9 made it abundantly clear that the measure runs counter to the feelings of the whole country:

From what has been said it will be apparent that the anti-clerical movement in Spain is of strictly limited dimensions, and that, in the present divided state of political parties, there is ample material and opportunity for a successful Catholic resistance. Already, indeed, there are unmistakable signs of a Catholic reaction. In all the large centres Catholic demonstrations, in protest against the Bill, are being carried out with great vigor and enthusiasm, and the Spanish Bishops have addressed a dignified and weighty petition to the King, praying him to withhold his sanction, if it should be asked, for the obnoxious Bill. The writer of the article in the 'Dublin'—of whose valuable contribution we have made the freest use—is of opinion that the Associations Bill will not be carried through, and that after one or two more attempts to form a Liberal Cabinet the Conservatives under Senor Maura will return to power—a view that has every appearance of probability. Whether that should prove to be so or not, at least sufficient has been said to show that the state of things in Spain is by no means so bad as it has been painted by the press and that that country is very far from having embarked on the career of godlessness and anti-Christian vindictiveness which marks the present condition of unhappy France.

Notes

Catholicism and Suicide: A Protestant View

'Whatever may be the immediate incentive to suicides,' writes Cardinal Gibbons in the January issue of 'The Century Magazine,' 'they can be primarily traced to moral cowardice and to the absence of religious restraints. . . . I maintain, then, that a sovereign antidote against suicide is to be found in a strict compliance with the lessons set before us by the religion of Christ.' Curiously enough, at the same time a Protestant medico, Dr. C. W. Saleeby, writing in the January number of 'Cassell's,' gives expression to almost precisely the same view. Dr. Saleeby sets out to investigate the cause of the increase in suicides, and he finds the prime factor is worry, which has undisputed sway over the minds of many, owing to the absence of their belief in dogmatic religion. And he writes thus regarding the comparative influence of Protestantism and Catholicity on the question:—

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