

Current Topics

A Hopeful Sign

Some few weeks ago we mentioned in our leading columns that if Parliament does not, in the immediate future, accede to the demand for Bible in schools legislation, there was good authority for saying that the Presbyterian body would take into serious and practical consideration a proposal for building and equipping its own schools. We find express and open confirmation of this statement in some remarks made during the Bible-in-schools discussion at the recent Presbyterian General Assembly. Unless we are mistaken they were not reported in the daily press, and we take our quotations from a full account of the discussion which appears in a recent issue of the *Outlook*. The Rev. R. E. Davies, in presenting a report favorable to the adoption of the New South Wales system in New Zealand, hinted at the possibility of the Government refusing to grant the desired referendum, and in connection with such a contingency made the following pointed remarks: 'They asked now for powers to get behind the boards and let the people decide whether their children were to receive an adequate religious instruction or not. The plea for secular education rested on a misunderstanding of the very nature of education itself. The fundamental work of education was to develop powers not only of the mind, but also of the heart and will and conscience. The foundations of our Western morality had in effect disappeared from our public schools. He quoted the statement of an authority that there was something fundamentally right in the German system, which included religion as a subject of study from the earliest stages of development.—(Applause.) In the public schools of America the child was being taught to be its own god, and the results were becoming patent. He failed to see how our teachers were going to teach morality except upon the basis of the Christian religion.—('Hear, hear.') If the State had undertaken education as it had done it had undertaken moral education and it was bound to give some coherent system of morals and some basis for moral teaching. They had no hesitation, as the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand, in saying that that basis must be the Christian religion. If the State could not do it, then it was high time the Church should face the question and consider whether it should not commence a movement and establish schools of their own.—('Hear, hear,' and applause),—schools permeated with a religious atmosphere from top to bottom.'

From the applause which followed, it is evident that the speaker carried the general body of the Assembly with him on this last point. After that, who shall say that if the friends of religious education were to get into touch with one another, it would be impossible to devise a *modus agendi* which would constrain the politicians to do all-round justice on this question.

The Sacramental Wine Question

The following communications—which explain themselves—constitute the final chapter of the sacramental wine controversy. The first, addressed to the editor of the *Dunedin Evening Star*, appeared in that journal on Wednesday, the night before the elections. 'Sir,—Referring to the telegrams published by you last evening as to sacramental wine, I was speaking to Mr. Hammond at the Dunedin railway station, along with another gentleman, one day last week, when someone, whom I afterwards learned came from the *New Zealand Tablet*, intervened. As a comparative stranger, I listened carefully to all that was said, and I most emphatically confirm the truth of the telegram despatched to Archbishop Redwood by Messrs. Hammond and Nicholls. Finally, the *Tablet* representative said that he was satisfied of the truth of Mr. Hammond's explanation to him.—I am, etc.,

H. EDWARD AUSTIN.'

As it would have been too late to make the necessary correction in the columns of next day's *Evening Star*, the following letter was addressed to the editor of the *Otago Daily Times*, and appeared in its issue of Thursday morning:—

'Sir,—I am very unwilling to be drawn into the maelstrom of prohibition and anti-prohibition controversy, but the published statement of one H. Edward Austin leaves me no option. In seeking an interview with the Rev. B. S. Hammond I had one object, and only one object. It was to ascertain whether, at a meeting at Ashburton on November 18, he did or did not make certain remarks to the effect that, as the doctors were abandoning the use of alcohol for medicinal purposes, and the Churches were dropping the use of fermented wine for sacramental purposes, after national prohibition had been in force for about ten years the present exemptions under these two heads would be non-existent.

'Mr. Hammond, who was at this interview perfectly straightforward, admitted that 'he did say something like that,' and that the report which had been supplied to me though incorrect on one other point, was, as regards these two matters, "approximately correct." He was frank enough to add that, in view of the lines on which education was advancing, he did not see how anybody could say anything else. In all the disclaimers and assurances as to the intention of the party which have been published, it is noteworthy that Mr. Hammond has never once specifically denied having uttered the specific words attributed to him. Your readers may have their own opinion as to the significance to be attached to the Ashburton utterance; but they may rest assured that every syllable which appeared in the *New Zealand Tablet* was carefully weighed, and that every jot and tittle of the *Tablet* account of the interview was absolutely and scrupulously correct. I am, etc.,

EDITOR N.Z. TABLET.'

December 6.

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We have only to add that we have received, both from priests and laity, many letters expressing approval and appreciation of the *Tablet's* action in drawing attention to a really serious danger.

The Elections

By the time these lines are read by most of our readers the thirty second ballots which remain to be taken will be completed; and in the meantime—until the full figures are known—it would be futile to make any detailed comment on the results. On the first ballots the state of parties appears to be:—Ministerial, 21; Opposition, 24; Independent, 2; so that already the Opposition have made a very substantial advance on their previous strength. The election so far has served to emphasise the stupendous blunder which the Government made in introducing their second ballot legislation. They suffered by it at last election; and in the present election, if there had been no second ballot, they would now have had a good working majority—for out of the 30 electorates in which second ballots are to be taken, Ministerialists or Independent Liberals hold the leading position in no less than 21, and Opposition candidates in only 9. On paper, and on all recognised principles of reasoning, the Government ought still to secure a sufficient proportion of the second ballots to give them a majority in the House; but so far in New Zealand, reason—or, at least, consistency—has played a very inconspicuous part in second ballots, and the friends of the disappointed candidates can be depended upon to do almost anything but that which they might fairly be expected to do.

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So far we have seen no reference to the historic 'block vote,' which so often figures in the columns of the press about election time, but which, unfortunately, never materialises anywhere else. The nearest approach which we have noticed to an allusion to this interesting but elusive entity, is the following brilliant and broad-minded paragraph which appeared in a southern