

Current Topics

The Elections

The final results of the elections were known at the close of last week; and the strength of the respective parties now is: Government, 34; Opposition, 36; Independent, 3; Labor, 4. By common consent the two main factors which have brought this reverse on the Ward Government were the giving of a Dreadnought to the Imperial Government without consulting Parliament, and the acceptance of a baronetcy by Sir Joseph Ward—and principally the latter factor. A similar action killed Sir Robert Stout as a politician; and there can be no doubt that, temporarily at least, Sir Joseph Ward's prestige as a leader is gone. The lesson has been a severe one, but it will be effective; and there will be no hankering for baronetcies among New Zealand politicians for many a long day to come. So far the Government have not announced what course they propose to take in the existing situation; but the indications are that Parliament will be called together at an early date, and the Government's chance of carrying on will be put to practical test in the new House. There are three Maori elections to be held this week, and if the Ministerial candidates are all successful this will give the Government a majority of one as against the Opposition. The only other feature of the elections that calls for comment is the gratifying rejection of quite a number of politicians of the 'wowsers' type. Young New Zealand is turning strongly against 'wowsers', and if the present state of feeling continues our political Chadbands are in for a bad time.

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More important to us than the personnel or party leanings of the candidates returned is their attitude towards Catholic educational interests; and in this connection, as we have before taken occasion to remark, better work has been done at this election than for many years past. In our issue of November 16 appeared a list of questions for candidates from the gifted pen of his Lordship Bishop Cleary, whose tireless zeal and unceasing interest in this subject have already done so much to make the question a live one and hold out such assured promise of fruitful activity in the future. Regarding these questions, one of the ablest priests in Australia writes: 'These questions resume in a few words the whole Catholic attitude on the education question. They are beautifully put; in fact they are perfect; and they are most necessary even for Catholics themselves.' The substance of these questions was submitted to most of the candidates throughout the Dominion; and, considering that our action was in the nature of a preliminary and tentative effort, the response has been most encouraging. Candidates, generally, showed a decided disposition to be fair; and several of those who have been returned stood up unreservedly for our claims, speaking out boldly and decidedly from the platform. A most hopeful and gratifying feature of this election is the fact that some of the keenest and most active fighters on the education issue have been our young men. In Auckland, in particular, the young men threw themselves into the fighting line with a vim and enthusiasm that are beyond all praise. Where the interest and co-operation of the young men is obtained, the foundation for the future is securely laid; and the work of these sturdy young Gideonites of the north is a happy augury of good things to come. We heartily congratulate the Auckland Catholic young men on the progressive spirit and splendid example they have shown; and we hope their action will be an inspiration and an incentive to our young men generally to come boldly forward, and fight, as their fathers have fought, for the interests of their faith and Church.

The Assembly and 'Ne Temere'

A further letter on this subject from the Rev. R. Wood was published in Friday's *Otago Daily Times*; and the following reply thereto appeared in Wednesday's

issue: "Sir,—'Infamous and intolerant,' 'as ill-mannered as they are illogical,' 'flounders and splashes himself,' 'plunging into logical mud-holes,' 'boorish, futile, and ridiculous'—these are a few specimen flowers of speech culled from Mr. Wood's latest contribution to your columns. The letter—shot through and through as it is by such scurrility—is a weird exhibition for a Christian minister to make before the public; and his Church and people are to be commiserated. This coarse vituperation is interesting only for the evidence which it affords of the sore straits in which your correspondent finds himself. When a man—and a minister—loses his self-control to the extent to which Mr. Wood has done on this occasion, the display is a very palpable flag of distress."

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'Your correspondent complains, in effect, that I have hit him in the wrong place. Finding that the statements made by himself and Dr. Gibb have fared very badly under examination, Mr. Wood now practically abandons these, and, making a strategic movement to the rear, elects to fall back upon the formal deliverance of the Assembly. The refutation of this, he says, is 'the task that lies before me.' It is unnecessary to point out to the thinking portion of your readers the absurdity of such a pretence. The shoe is on quite the other foot. The merest tyro in logic knows that in any discussion the burden of proof in respect to any statements made, lies upon the persons making the statements. Statements—even in an Assembly deliverance—are not to be taken as true merely because they are made; and until some proof is forth-coming, no onus, beyond that of calling for evidence and proof, is cast upon those who question such statements. The only 'proof' advanced in connection with the Assembly deliverance was that contained in the statements made by the two speakers on the occasion, and to these I rightly and logically directed my attention. For reasons which will hereafter be indicated, I think the Assembly might very well have refrained from interfering at all with the domestic legislation of another religious body. But if a statement had to be made, I frankly admit that, on the whole, the deliverance adopted, so far as its actual terms are concerned, was a temperate and moderate presentment of the Presbyterian point of view. There are one or two clauses in it to which I would, of course, take exception; but these are not of sufficient importance to have made a controversy worth while, and had the deliverance been unaccompanied by Messrs. Wood and Gibb's misstatements and misrepresentations regarding 'certain Canterbury priests,' 'Kaiser Wilhelm and his warriors,' 'conversion by coercion,' etc., it would have called forth no comment from me. Under examination, these misstatements—which were dealt with in my first letter and again summarised in my last—have broken completely down, and in respect to them Mr. Wood has not so much as attempted to 'make good.' With the only practical portion of the Assembly's deliverance I have already dealt. In it the Assembly called upon the Government for 'protection,' and 'exhorted their faithful people to avoid contracting mixed marriages.' I have sufficiently shown the absurdity—in the existing state of the law in New Zealand—of the first proposal, and Mr. Wood is now wisely silent on the point. With the Assembly's exhortation to their people to avoid mixed marriages, Catholics are in entire sympathy; and those ministers who are giving practical effect to this recommendation instead of dissipating their energy in gratuitous attacks on 'Rome,' are showing their real earnestness and sincerity in this matter. Your correspondent represents the Assembly deliverance as 'summing up the indignation of the Church and nation'—the nation, no less. As a matter of fact there is not a single expression of indignation in the whole deliverance. Here it is in full: 'The Assembly having considered the *Ne Temere* decree which has been promulgated in this Dominion in its historical setting and practical working, and while recognising the right of every branch of the Christian Church to formulate its own terms of communion and to exercise ecclesiastical discipline upon its members in accordance therewith, but inas-