

## Current Topics

### Significant Figures

'The more I seek to blot out the name of Christ,' said Diocletian, 'the more legible it becomes; and whatever of Christ I thought to eradicate, takes the deeper root, and rises the higher in the hearts and lives of men.' That was a persecutor's experience many centuries ago; and in this respect history is repeating itself to-day in France. In spite of grinding persecution, carried out with the set object of robbing the little ones of Christ, the Catholic schools, privately owned and supported by purely voluntary effort, are making substantial headway, while the anti-Christian State-subsidised schools are heavily losing ground. The figures have been tabulated by the Minister of Public Instruction, and so may be accepted as authentic and authoritative. Last year (1910) the State schools were augmented to the extent of 3.10 per 1000; in the same period the private schools grew by 9 per 1000. Pupils in public schools increased at the rates of 17.26 per 1000; in the private schools the increase was 28 per 1000. In La Vendée the State primary schools have lost 8780 pupils in four years; the private Catholic schools in the Department have gained in that period 3129 pupils. In one year the State schools of Loire Inferieure lost over 1000 pupils; in the Côtes du Nord and Loire more than 2000 each; in Mayenne 3000 children have been lost by the public schools in four years. 'It goes without saying,' remarks an English Anglican paper commenting on these figures, 'that the gains of the Catholic schools in those regions were even greater than the losses suffered by the Government schools.'

### Socialism and Religion

Our Socialist correspondent, in a respectful letter, writes to deny 'that Socialism is atheistic, or that Socialists are opposed to marriage.' 'Some Socialists,' he says, 'are atheists; so are some Liberals and Conservatives. And you cannot say that all Socialists are atheistic in their views any more than you could say that all Liberals or Conservatives were atheistic. Socialists hold various opinions on religion and marriage. These are subjects outside of Socialism, and have nothing more to do with Socialism than with Conservatism.' We had ourselves, in the articles under discussion, been careful to point out that not all who call themselves Socialists are atheists; and we willingly give space to our correspondent's disclaimer, which we believe applies to a large number of New Zealand Socialists. Our reply to the disclaimer is (1) That those well-meaning people who, carried away by the glittering promises and attractive ideals of Socialism, fondly imagine that it has nothing to do with religion or marriage, do not know what real Socialism is, and are not out-and-out Socialists though they call themselves by the name. The economic evolution, or revolution—in the direction of the public ownership of the means of production, distribution, and exchange—is merely the immediate programme of Socialism. That programme is based on a body of underlying fundamental principles, which will continue to operate long after the economic ideals are realised, and which indicate the final objective of Socialism. These principles have a definite relation and attitude towards religion and marriage, towards this world and the other world. Let our correspondent read a little more deeply on the subject. Let him get beyond *Merrie England*, *Britain for the British*, and the Fabian tracts, and go to fountain-head authorities, and to the real founders of modern Socialism, and he will be left under no illusions as to what Socialism has to say on the subject of religion. (2) The circumstance that some who call themselves Socialists do not hold atheistic views in no way alters the fact—and in no way affects its significance—that the great present-day leaders of Socialism, the chief authors, both past and present, on Socialism, and the

most influential and representative Socialist newspapers, all strenuously and unanimously oppose Christianity, and oppose it in the name of Socialism. This we have proved to the hilt by copious quotations from these authorities. On the one hand we have the personal view of individuals of the rank and file, such as our well-meaning correspondent from the Wairarapa; on the other, we have the authoritative teaching of leaders such as Bebel (Germany), Jaurès (France), Blatchford (England), and Herron (America); of authors of the standing of Marx and Engels, Gronlund and Belfort Bax; and of Socialist papers with such world-wide influence and circulation as the *Clarion* (England), the *Vorwärts* (Germany), the *New York Call*, and the *Appeal to Reason* (America). There can be no two opinions as to the side on which the overwhelming weight of evidence lies. If Liberal leaders in England, Germany, France, and America all strongly opposed Christianity, and did so in the name of Liberalism; if the principal Liberal authors did the same; and if the leading and most influential Liberal newspapers took identically the same position—then the attitude of Liberalism to religion would assuredly and rightly become suspect. That is precisely the position in regard to Socialism.

### The Political Situation

Will Sir Joseph Ward resign? Will there be another election within the year? These are the questions which everyone has been asking or answering during the last few days. With regard to the first, it may safely be taken for granted that Sir Joseph will not resign until there has been a trial of strength in the House and he is constitutionally compelled to give place to Mr. Massey. To hand in his resignation at the present juncture would be like throwing in the towel, not only before a blow has been struck, but before the combatants have even got into the ring. As to the possibility of a fresh election during the coming year, local members of Parliament—even on the Government side—appear to regard this as, on the whole, not a likely contingency. What they anticipate will happen is something like this: There will be a trial of strength in the House between Sir Joseph Ward and Mr. Massey, and Mr. Massey will possibly, and even probably, win. In view of the number of sitting members who went under in the recent election, members on both sides of the House will be keenly anxious to avoid any fresh contests, and there will be a general disposition to give Mr. Massey a chance, and see what kind of job he makes of things. That is the anticipation—but if there is one thing more than another that has been emphasised by the late election it is the unreliableness of political prophecy.

In referring, a fortnight ago, to the circumstances which have brought about the Government reverse, we pointed to the gift of a Dreadnought, followed by the acceptance of a baronetcy by Sir Joseph Ward, as the principal factor. We expressed that view both as the result of our own observation, and also after conversation with members of the House of Representatives and of the Legislative Council, and with journalists and others who have their finger constantly and closely on the pulse of public feeling. We still believe that that was the determining factor, and that if there had been no baronetcy, and no knighthood for Sir John Findlay, there would have been no such *débacle* as that which has occurred. We learn, however, from entirely reliable sources, that in addition to the circumstances we have mentioned, the religious question was made a factor in the recent contests, in a way hitherto unknown in any New Zealand election. In Sir Joseph Ward's own electorate, in particular, the sectarian spirit was invoked with a bitterness and virulence beyond parallel, and something in the nature of a house-to-house vilification of the Premier, because he is a Catholic, was carried out. As a non-political paper, we hold no special brief for Sir Joseph Ward; and we do not feel called upon to defend, or even to palliate, any serious political mistakes which he may make. But that only strengthens