

Current Topics

Bergson

Henri Louis Bergson, whose Modernistic works have, according to Thursday's cables, been condemned by the Pope as embodying false theories and seeking to undermine fundamental truths, is 53 years old and at present Professor of Philosophy at the College of France. Among his books, which have given rise to much discussion, are *Matter and Memory*, *Laughter*, and an analysis of Evolution. Bergson has just returned from a lecturing tour in the United States; but his vague and nebulous theories do not seem to have exactly taken America by storm. One western paper declared, with brutal bluntness, that the philosophy propounded by Bergson might be summed up in the line of the song, 'I don't know where I am going but I'm on my way.'

Proportional Representation

Our esteemed and usually well-informed contemporary, the London *Universe*, in its issue of July 18 has the following: 'While the House of Commons in England is tinkering with the electorate, New Zealand has made one more advance towards a stable and equitable method of exact proportional representation. It tried the second ballot in 1908, but that system of bare majority representation has not proved satisfactory. It has now adopted the system of Proportional Representation, which Tasmania has proved to be admirably effective in giving a true and complete reflex in election of the mind of the country.'

We are sorry to say that our contemporary's announcement is premature. Provision for a modified form of proportional representation in the election of members of the Legislative Council has indeed been included in the new Bill for making our Upper House elective, which is now before Parliament; but there is at present little prospect of the Bill becoming law. Regarding proportional representation as a settled feature of our whole electoral system, New Zealand has, like many other countries, been talking very seriously about it; but considering the overwhelming weight of evidence in favor of the reform the progress made by the movement is surprisingly slow.

The Federation and Politics

As the outcome of Father O'Reilly's remarks at Bathurst, considerable discussion is taking place in Catholic circles in New South Wales as to the relation of the Catholic Federation to politics; and it is just as well, when the matter is on the tapis, that it should be thoroughly threshed out and be done with. In the course of the discussion an exceedingly good point is made by a Mr. James Bilsborrow—who is, we understand, a well-known citizen of Bathurst—in a letter addressed to the Sydney *Freeman's Journal*. After referring to the provisions of the Federation constitution on the subject, Mr. Bilsborrow continues: 'I would maintain that the statement in the constitution as published should stand. Our objection to the education system is not political. It is something quite outside the pale of politics. To require the children of the country to be educated up to a certain standard of secular knowledge is undoubtedly the province of the Government and of politicians; but when they require the education to be of a certain religious or irreligious type they are going beyond their authority and are trespassing on the domain of religion and conscience. And if we Catholics, as a protest against this trespass, choose to set aside our political views and vote against a candidate who is in favor of a continuance of this usurpation of authority, our action cannot be described as political, for it is the very opposite. We are refraining from politics for conscience sake. It has been said that if we go to the Government for help for our schools or institutions we thereby make the Federation political. If this argument were sound, then those country hos-

pitals and Schools of Arts whose Government subsidies have been withheld or reduced, and whose committees are working to obtain these subsidies, are political organisations. *Quod est absurdum.*'

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The point that in making a stand on a question of religion and conscience Catholics, so far from making their organisation a political one, are deliberately abstaining from politics for conscience sake, is well taken. It will be noted that Mr. Bilsborrow takes the attitude, already adopted in these columns, that the position of the Federation is correctly expressed in the constitution.

More 'Garlandism'

Canon Garland does not improve upon further and closer acquaintance. He has now been almost twelve months in this country and the early impression formed by many as to his want of straightforwardness, and lack of the spirit of fairness and of manly courtesy which is desirable in the leader of an ostensibly religious movement has been more and more confirmed. The latest New Zealand citizen to find out by painful personal experience what manner of man the imported League organiser is is Mr. A. R. Atkinson, of Wellington; and he has set forth his estimate of Canon Garland and his methods with a plainness and vigor that are calculated to make even the most pachydermatous squirm. Mr. Atkinson's experience arose out of a misreport in one of the Wellington papers of an utterance made by him as head of a recent deputation to the Premier on the Bible-in-schools question. He had said: 'The application of the cry, "Trust the people," to the right of a majority to oppress a minority in matters of religion involves a strange combination of politician cant and religious dogma'; and two out of the three Wellington papers had reported him with substantial correctness. The third, however—the *Dominion*—misreported the speaker as saying, 'It is singular that the forces working for the Bible-in-schools movement are a mixture of religious bigotry and political cant.' A week later—but without in the interval taking the trouble to so much as give Mr. Atkinson a ring on the telephone to ascertain whether he had been rightly reported or to ask which version of his remarks was the correct one—Canon Garland seized upon the report in only one paper as against that given in the other two, and proceeded to denounce Mr. Atkinson from the pulpit as imputing 'superstitious hypocrisy' to the members of the Bible in State Schools League, and as using against the League 'exactly the same language as was used by the (British) slave-owners who were defending slavery in attacking those who were against it.' Mr. Atkinson promptly wrote to the press explaining that he had never made such a statement as that attributed to him, either to the Prime Minister or to anybody else, and that it did not represent anything that had ever entered his thoughts. Bishop Sprott, who had also commented on Mr. Atkinson's supposed utterance, at once accepted that gentleman's disclaimer. But not so Canon Garland—that does not happen to be Canon Garland's way.

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After waiting some days to give the League organiser the opportunity to do the obviously honorable thing, Mr. Atkinson addressed to the press 'An Open Letter to Canon Garland,' in which, without any beating about the bush, he states exactly what he thinks about that gentleman's action and methods. We print the whole of the letter elsewhere in this issue, but we may fittingly reproduce the passage in which he sums up his estimate—and, as he suggests, the estimate of the people of Wellington generally—of 'Garlandism.' 'But the cup,' he writes, 'is not yet full. The last and crowning act in your glorious triumph of Christian strategy has still to be told. It was on Monday that the reports which you supplied to the papers enabled me to know what was laid to my charge, and the *Post* allowed me to blow it to pieces that evening. On the same day, Bishop Sprott was generous enough to say that he accepted my contradiction, yet four days have