

Current Topics

Bigotry and Church Attendance

At the large and representative Congress of the Australian Anglican Church held recently at Brisbane, Mr. L. V. Biggs, of the *Melbourne Age*, who is a prominent member of the Social Questions Committee of the Melbourne Anglican Synod, contributed an important paper on 'Australian Conditions as they affect Church Attendance.' Endeavouring to arrive at particularly Australian causes for the decline of church attendance, Mr. Biggs first enumerated some general causes; and then, under the heading of 'Special Australian Causes,' he included the following: 'The failure of the Church in some dioceses to dissociate her people from the suicidal "Orange v. Green" feud.' 'No Church,' said the writer, 'can be expected to introduce into her services and official organisations a local flavor or national elements which may seem to dissociate them from the Catholic Church; but we have gone to the extreme of Anglican insularity.' This is significant as showing that whatever members of the clergy may think on the matter capable and thoughtful laymen recognise that ill-considered attacks on 'Romanism' only serve to alienate the people from the Churches which indulge in them. Mr. Biggs's statement may also be taken to have more or less definite relation to a recent extraordinary controversial outburst on the part of the Anglican Bishop of Bathurst. That dignitary, it will be remembered, took occasion some short time ago to make a very objectionable and offensive attack on 'Papalists' and 'Papalism,' when he was answered and ignominiously routed by the Very Rev. M. J. O'Reilly, C.M., the learned and gifted President of St. Stanislaus College. And the only thanks which the Anglican prelate gets from his own co-religionists is to be told by a prominent layman that this sort of action is one of the things which is retarding the progress and destroying the effectiveness of his Church. It is to be hoped that the Bishop of Bathurst, who was present at the Congress, duly noted the point.

The 'N.Z. Tablet'

Something over a year ago it was decided, after much consideration, to reduce the price of the *N.Z. Tablet* by practically 50 per cent. so as to bring it well within the reach of the vast majority of our Catholic people. The change was made with some trepidation as such a step always involves an element of risk, all the more so from the fact that once taken it is practically irrevocable. It is an easy matter to reduce the price of a paper; but it is virtually impossible, once the reduction has been made, to ever successfully increase the price again. It was difficult to forecast exactly to what extent the subscribers' list would be increased by the reduction in the price of the paper; but it was considered that the utmost that could safely be allowed for—at least during the first year—was an increase of 50 per cent. in the then circulation. The *Tablet* year ends on September 30; and it is now possible for us to take stock and see how matters stand. On going into the figures we are able to make the highly satisfactory announcement that since 1st October last the circulation of the paper has increased by slightly more than 100 per cent.—in other words that our subscribers' list has rather more than doubled itself during the year. This is a deeply gratifying result; and we can only express, to clergy and people, our warm appreciation of the enthusiastic and loyal support which the paper has received. Writing a year ago on the then proposed reduction we said: 'The reduction of the price of the *Tablet* from 6d to 3d is a great act of faith on the part of those responsible for it—faith in the paper, faith in the staff, and faith, above all, in the Catholic people of New Zealand.' So far that faith has been, amply justified, in a manner far exceeding our most sanguine anticipations. Naturally this large increase in the number of papers to be printed and handled necessi-

tates an increase in our expenditure—an increase not only in our staff, but, what is still more urgent and important if the future working of the paper is to be placed on a permanently satisfactory basis, an increase in office accommodation and the installation of a larger and still more up-to-date printing equipment. It is probable that the erection of new premises and the introduction of a printing machine capable of more rapidly overtaking the heavy increase in the issue of the paper will be taken in hand in the not distant future. Meanwhile we sincerely thank our readers for the splendid support which they have accorded to the paper, and bespeak the same enthusiastic loyalty in the year to come.

The Government and Home Rule

Three points are made clear in Mr. Winston Churchill's important speech at Dundee which appears elsewhere in our columns, and which, according to the cable, is regarded as an official statement of the Government's attitude towards 'Ulster': (1) That the Government are fully seized of the fact that the real source and centre of the organised opposition to Home Rule is to be found not in Ireland, but in England, and that the ultra-Tory leaders who are engineering the movement are fighting, not for the good of Ireland, but to smash the Parliament Act and to thwart and nullify the Liberal legislation which has reduced the Lords to comparative impotency. They really care little or nothing about the government of Ireland; but they care a very great deal about the government of England and about their deprivation of the position of power and ascendancy which they have held so long. Consequently, as Mr. Winston Churchill puts it, 'their last substitute for a party majority is a civil and religious war in Ulster, accompanied by the mutiny of the army and the boycott of the Territorials.' (2) That the Government are determined not to yield an inch to intimidation or coercion, but are fully prepared, come what may, to see the Home Rule proposals through. 'The Government,' said Mr. Churchill, 'intended to stand firm against a bully's veto more arbitrary than the veto of the Crown, which was abolished 300 years ago. The elections of 1910 gave the Government the fullest authority, and it was intended to act on that mandate.' (3) That if Sir Edward Carson chooses to abandon his wickedly stupid and stupidly wicked intransigent attitude—that Home Rule is to be resisted even though twenty general elections ratified the measure—and to make any advance towards conference or conciliation a settlement by consent is not only possible, but, in Mr. Churchill's opinion, even extremely probable. On this point, until the lines of the suggested settlement have been definitely indicated, it is not possible at this distance to express any opinion. In all probability the friendly overtures will be rejected, and the effect of Mr. Churchill's speech will be to throw the whole onus of that rejection upon Sir Edward Carson and his party. Perhaps the most important sentence in the whole of the long cable about Mr. Churchill's speech was the simple statement that 'Mr. Churchill had a great reception at Dundee.' In view of Unionist activity throughout the country that statement, coupled with the result of the recent Chesterfield by-election, is deeply significant as showing that the Government is not losing ground, and that the bulk of the constituencies are still sound and solid on the Liberal programme and on Home Rule.

An Orange 'Loyalist'

Orangemen—at least those of the 'Ulster' brand—style themselves 'loyal' on the *lucus a non lucendo* principle, or on the same principle that the trembling coward Bob Acres called himself 'Fighting Bob.' Many of our readers can recall the angry outcry of the brethren against Queen Victoria during the Disestablishment agitation in Ireland in 1868 and 1869. Prominent Orangemen warned her that if she dared to exercise her constitutional right of signing the Disestablishment Bill she would have 'no longer a claim to the throne.' And the great watchword of the