

New Zealand Gazette

NINETEENTH YEAR OF PUBLICATION.

VOL. XIX.—No. 5.

DUNEDIN: FRIDAY, OCTOBER 31,

1890. PRICE 6D.

Current Topics

AT HOME AND ABROAD.

WE see with some little amazement, and some little amusement forsooth, that a claim is made to the effect that Socialism is not suspicious from a religious point of view. Verily there are short memories amongst us now-a-days, and whatever is convenient seems easy of belief. Socialism, as a matter of fact, is remarkable for nothing more than its association from the very beginning with religion. Surely Saint-Simon has not so long passed away from among the living that he should be wholly forgotten, and surely the doings of the Saint-Simonians were sufficiently recent to be still within the recollection of many with whom they were contemporaneous. The father of Socialism although the pupil of D'Alembert was nothing if not religious, though his religion was of a very different nature from that inculcated by any branch of Christianity, however wishered and separated from the parent stem, and, above all, was it widely separated from the Catholic Church, to which its heresiarch had from his boyhood been violently opposed. So precocious was he in his rebellion that, when a boy of thirteen, he resisted with success the efforts made by his father to have him prepared for his first communion. But, though he was the inaugurator of a levelling system and the professed friend of the masses, with a strange inconsistency, he remained proud of the name of Saint-Simon and of the blood of the Counts of Vermandois, an inconsistency, we may remark, that becomes very apparent in contrast with the enmity against the privileges of birth declared by his successors. In a proclamation, for example, posted by them on the walls of Paris in the year 1830, the following passage occurs: "Feudalism will be finally extinguished, when all the privileges of birth are, without exception, abolished, and when everyone shall be placed according to his capacity and rewarded according to his works. And when this new religion shall have realised upon earth the reign of God, the reign of peace, and of liberty, which the Christians have placed in Heaven alone, then the Catholic Church will have lost its power, it will have ceased to exist." As to the creed of Saint-Simon, it was a fantastic one, capable, as it proved, of still more fantastic developments among his followers and successors, spread abroad, moreover, through France by a very active and devoted propaganda and owing at one time a considerable number of adherents. As to its morality it was dubious and even more than dubious. Saint-Simon himself was accused and truly accused of frequenting haunts of infamy, but he explained that he did so in the interests of science, claiming that a man who acted on such motives must, through such associations, attain to the highest summit of virtue. His definition, however, of the virtues by which the chosen of God were to be distinguished is very suggestive, at least as to his frame of mind. These, he said, will no longer be the insignificant matters of chastity and continence. They will be talents, the highest degree of talents. But Saint-Simon insisted on the necessity of definite doctrine. The formation of doctrine, he wrote, to serve as the base of the industrial system, as the former doctrine served as the base of the fental system, is altogether an urgent necessity. The religious system, as we have said, was further developed by Saint-Simon's followers, and especially under the succeeding apostle, *Enfantin*, an apostle whose conduct vacillated between libertinism and asceticism and who, in fact, served a sentence of a year's imprisonment, under the popular government of King Louis Philippe, for having outraged public morality. The toleration, meantime, to be permitted by Saint Simon may be gathered from the fact that into his designs there entered the publication of a catechism framed on the Encyclopedia in a perfect form, and whose teaching would replace that of the Catholic theology.—The study of this catechism would be compulsory, no other religious teaching would be permitted, and no one who had not passed an examination in it would be admitted to the rights of a citizen. There is nothing on which Saint-Simon more emphatically insists than on the necessity for interfering with the religious institutions already in existence. "The sole object," he wrote "that a thinker can propose to him-

self to-day, is to work at the reorganisation of the moral system, the religious system, the political system, in a word the system of ideas under whatever aspect they may be regarded." "It is evident," he wrote again, "that after the construction of the new scientific system there will be a reorganisation of the systems of religion, general politics, morals and public instruction, and that, consequently, the clergy will be reorganised!" He had, indeed, very strict notions as to what the clergy should be—but into which their qualifications as theologians hardly entered. As we have seen, his intention was that theology should give place to the system set forth in the catechism he proposed to frame on the teaching of the Encyclopedia. If, therefore, it has amazed, and also a little amused, us to find it assumed and asserted that Socialism was, and must necessarily be, in its very essence disassociated from religion, and a system recognising the right of every creed to equal treatment, we may reasonably claim to be held excused. At the same time, we see no reason why Socialism, as a political system, should necessarily interfere with religion, or why if it were found otherwise practical and useful it could not exist side by side with it. What we do see, and see with perfect clearness is, that, in attempting to introduce among us a system which in its initiation was associated with a hostility to the Christian religion, and whose propagators and adherents have ever since been largely identified with every attack made in Europe on religion and the Catholic Church, men should be careful to prove that they have no irreligious sympathies, and no intention also to adopt the sinister course that has brought the system into suspicion—and obtained for it the reputation of being the determined and relentless foe of Christianity. It is much to be regretted, therefore, that gentlemen who have come forward as candidates for Parliamentary representation seem inclined to furnish us with no such proof, but, on the contrary, give us reason to fear that the Socialism of which they declare themselves advocates, must prove identical with the system which, even if it be otherwise capable of producing good results, cannot fail to be vitiated and rendered venomous and destructive by its enmity to religion. This is certainly the only light in which we can interpret the expressed determination of these gentlemen to force Catholics still to support the godless schools—also planned by Saint-Simon, thus punishing them severely for their fidelity to the precepts of their Church, and their undying and indestructible attachment to their religion.

OUR contemporary the *Wellington Press* is didactic, and even dogmatic. Nay, he is a secular Pope, against whose infallible utterances no one must protest. With what an air of authority does not our contemporary lay down the law as to secularism. "There is nothing," he tells us, for example, "in the teachings to undermine whatever faith their (the children's) parents or the Sunday schools instil into their minds, and a great deal of desultory teaching of a moral character is scattered throughout the lessons. All that is wanted is to systematise this, and the objection of those who decry the absence of all religious teaching would vanish." Our authoritative contemporary notwithstanding, we venture to doubt as to whether the systematising of even a great deal of desultory teaching of a moral character would really satisfy the conscientious scruples of people desirous of religious teaching. Opinions, in fact, are too widely divided as to the effects of mere moral teaching to allow people of any prudence, even apart from all considerations of religion, to accept as conclusive the decision of the most dogmatic editor.—Let us take, for instance, the conclusions to which his experience has led a certain eminent Frenchman, Dr. Rochard, a member of the French Academy of Medicine—himself an ex-pupil of the secular system, and who has educated his sons in a similar manner. Dr. Rochard disclaims all predilections for religious schools, still in a book, entitled "*L'Education de nos Fils*," and recently published by him, he speaks as follows:—"I affirm that the greater part of the pupils only see in the study of morality a course to follow, additional phrases to retain. I am convinced that there is not one pupil in a hundred into whose mind the thought enters that these notions are given to him in order that he may conform his conduct to them. This teaching is absolutely sterile: it goes for nothing in forming souls and characters. Practical morality is the continuous lesson, the good example. It is