

Current Topics

Without Comment

We publish without comment the following Press Association message which appeared in the daily press last week:—

SUDDEN DEATH.

London, May 5.

Mr. George Whale, when presiding at a Rationalist dinner in connection with the Huxley centenary, fell dead after delivering a speech in which he attacked Christianity. Mr. Whale's sallies caused much laughter among the seventeen guests, but a few moments after he had finished only hushed whispers were heard, for he collapsed in his chair. Artificial respiration was tried, but it failed to restore him.—A. and N.Z. Cable.

[Mr. Whale was the hon. chairman of the Rationalist Press Association.]

The French Persecution

At the close of their annual Lenten meeting in Paris the French Cardinals and Archbishops issued a joint message to the Catholics of France in their Declaration against the so-called "Lay Laws," which were resurrected by the Grand Orient's French agents masquerading as a French Government. It is true that the Herriot Ministry, who made the resurrection of the "Lay Laws" one of its first official acts, has been displaced since the Declaration was issued; but the fact that the traitor Cailiaux, whose perfidy was too nauseating to permit even the daily newspapers to give him a coat of whitewash sufficiently thick to conceal his true character, is a power in the new Ministry leaves us no room to doubt the identity of its masters. The fall of the Herriot Ministry did not mean that France had chosen new rulers: it meant only that the Freemasons had chosen new servants. The Declaration of the French Cardinals and Archbishops is spoken of as the most important document issued by the French Hierarchy during fifty years. It points to the iniquity of these "Lay Laws," which involve the Law of Separation with its breach with religion; the godless education law; the laws of divorce and the laicisation of the hospitals, depriving the sick and dying of the consolations of religion. Such laws are not "laws" in the true sense of the word. They are what St. Thomas calls acts of violence rather than laws. The Declaration goes on to discuss the means which Catholics ought to employ in the abolition of "laicism" and its principles. It enumerates the means under three heads: (1) Action on public opinion; (2) Action on the legislators; (3) Action on the Government. Under the first head Catholics are urged to propagate truth by public lectures and meetings, conversations, the press, and any other legitimate avenue which may be opened for this purpose. Action on the legislators is to be carried on by forcing the matter on the attention of individual members of the Chamber and the Senate, by correspondence and by addresses and protests from organised bodies of Catholics. Similar action is to be brought to bear on members

of the Government and the administration, prefects, mayors, councillors, and the rest. The Catholics are already organised to make this persistent agitation effective. "Public opinion," says the Declaration, "takes the part of those who make a good fight. It is those who throw up their own abandoned those in case."

Catholic Organisation in France

The Declaration of the Cardinals and Archbishops is not a mere collection of words issued on principle as a futile protest against overwhelming opposition. There exists to-day in France a Catholic organisation capable of translating into deeds every suggestion contained in the Declaration. As soon as M. Herriot announced his anti-Catholic policy General de Castelnau, one of the famous soldiers of the Great War, called on the Catholics of France to organise a "National Federation" for the protection of their rights. The response to the General's appeal has been so loud and daring that the daily press outside France has seen fit to enter into a conspiracy of silence regarding it. The Federation movement is almost exclusively in the hands of laymen. Meetings are being held all over France, in city, town, and village. There have been many gatherings and parades of 50,000, 60,000, and even 80,000 men, and in all these vast gatherings thousands of war veterans wearing their decorations held a prominent place. The organisation was founded chiefly upon four points—the pledges given to Alsace-Lorraine, including their right to religious freedom and schools in which religion would be taught, must be observed; the maintenance of the French Embassy at the Vatican, not only because so many French people are Catholics, but because the Vatican is a centre of world-wide influence, where even Protestant and non-Christian States consider that they must be officially represented; the right of association, recognised in common law, must protect the existence of the religious Orders in France on the mere grounds of justice quite apart from claims based upon their services to the nation; freedom of education, enabling Catholics to have their children educated in the faith they profess and secured from the godless education of the secular schools. The organisation is independent of all party ties and traditions. This latter is a wise provision. In the past many Catholic Frenchmen believed in the policy of letting sleeping dogs lie; they did not care to agitate for the repeal of repressive laws so long as those in power were not disposed to put the said laws into operation. Recent history, however, has shown that the dogs may wake up at any old time and proceed to mischief. The Herriot Government, for example, would have found it much more difficult to introduce new anti-Catholic laws than to resurrect those already in existence. The Federation, therefore, was wise in deciding that its members should not be tied to any political group but should stand on their feet as Catholics, claiming their rights as citi-

zens of the French Republic, asking for no special privileges, but insisting that they suffer no disabilities on account of the fact that they were true to their faith. A Paris journalist, usually unfriendly to Catholics, contrasted the militant spirit shown by French Catholics to-day with their passivity during the persecutions of Combes and Briand more than twenty years ago: "The Catholics since the war," he wrote, "are not just what they were in pre-war times. When men have fought for their country without counting risk or cost, and when they feel that they have been amongst the best soldiers of the war, they are not so ready in times of peace to submit to being harassed and ill-treated on account of their religious beliefs. There is a psychological element to be counted with here that is both imprudent and unjust to disregard."

The Cloven Hoof

The atheistic Government in France is determined to fasten secularism upon Alsace. That it meets the strenuous opposition of Alsacians with a crafty compromise is not a sign of wavering on its part, but only an indication that it has decided to adopt a more insidious method to gain its end. Quite recently M. Herriot opened at Colmar what he described as an interdenominational school. Pupils of various religious beliefs are invited to attend with the reassurance that facilities will be given to religious teachers from outside to give religious instruction to classes of Catholics, Protestants, and Jews. It was also announced that similar establishments would be opened in other towns after Easter. Mgr. Ruch, the intrepid Bishop of Strasbourg, is not deceived by the Government's gesture. He has declared that Catholics must not attend these schools, the purpose of which is to pave the way for the aggressively anti-Christian education which is a marked feature of the secular schools of France. The compromise, however, shows the dangerous character of the Government. No doubt the Ministry felt that Alsace was an extremely delicate problem to handle. The militant spirit of the Alsacians made it almost impossible for the Government to establish the lay schools successfully by arbitrary means. Moreover, a quarrel in Alsace might be attended by unpleasant effects upon other interests of the Government quite apart from education. By offering to admit religious instructors to the schools the Government sought to disarm opposition by appearing fair and reasonable. A reputation for tolerance would be useful if the Grand Orient later decided to suppress the religious schools by force. The Catholic leaders, of course, were not deceived by the guile of M. Herriot. They know that an hour's religious instruction per day would be a poor antidote for five hours spent in an atmosphere hostile to religion. Religion is not a subject like geography which has little to do with arithmetic. It is a subject which must permeate the whole system of secular instruction.

Christianising the Drama

The Paris correspondent of the *Catholic Times* tells that while the anti-clerical Government of France are busy paganising the

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