OUR CURBSTONE OBSERVER

ON POLITICAL INFLUENCE

When I undertake to dot down a few lines concerning politics I wish it to be thoroughly understood that I am not a politician; I am not a party man. I have long since passed the age of fiery ambition, of mad dreams of great achievements in the public arena, of applauding audiences and universal popularity. I have likewise reached that period when men—who observe—cannot fail to note that political partisanship is but "a mockery, a delusion," and a trap. Between the two great political parties in Canada to-day I fail to see any real line of demarcation. There may be ground for a preference of men; but not of principles or methods. As to principles, they are identical; with the honest and patriotic it is a question of improving the condition of the country; with the unscrupulous and self-seeking, it is a question of grab. As to methods, there is not a hair's weight of difference. The Opposition finds fault with the Government, in order to get into power, and invariably becomes guilty of the same faults the moment it assumes power. The Government boasts of all it has done for the people, and as soon as it is again in opposition, it blames the other Government for doing exactly what it would have done itself had it remained in power. Above all there is no mutual "give and take"; the business of the opposition seems to be the criticizing of the Government all along the line—never the assisting of the Government in any good measure. The business of the Government seems to be the crushing and grinding of the opposition—under all circumstances—in order to enfeeble the latter and retain the reins of state. Looking thus at the situation, I have no more faith in one party than in the other. And, as an Irish Catholic, I put no trust in any politician, or body of politicians.

I started out to say something about political influences; I don't mean that baneful system of Government which is based upon patronage and the exercise of political influence or strength. I refer to the influences that politics have upon those who tempt their fate by entering that arena. The man who early steps into that field must sooner or later feel the effects of the influences characteristic of political life in Canada. The first of these influences is "indifference." He gradually grows indifferent to everything except what is transpiring in the House of Commons. The first to feel the baneful effects of that influence is the family. Gradually drawn into the whirlpool of public life, the man (there are only a few rare exceptions) drifts away from the shores of domestic pleasures and duties, rushing faster and faster, until he is incapable of resisting the power which is destined finally to engulf him. The home is entirely neglected if his career be sufficiently long. The perpetual stimulant of popular excitement becomes as necessary for him as is the very air he breathes. This is not mere theory. I have long "observed" our public men and I have had exceptional opportunities of noting how swiftly they cut adrift from the bonds that unite man to the family hearth.

The next "indifference" that creeps in is one that is eventually equally injurious—it is an indiffernce to the ordinary obligations of life. The serious politician clings to his party, and is ready to sacrifice all and everything for the fiction of a name; for a so-called principle. Even though his children were starving he could bear the situation provided the political atmosphere were sufficiently charged with excitement to keep his attention fixed upon the struggle. Long absences, late hours, continued excitement, all combined, serve to obliterate the memories of "home and its darling divinities." The man, by degrees, becomes a stranger amongst his own relatives. The final outcome is poverty, and when "life's fitful dream" is over, come Death and Oblivion.

There is another "indifference" born of political life that is still more injurious than any I have mentioned; it is that influence exercised in matters of religion. I am not of those who pretend that a public man should be a hermit, or a saint. But I mean that the politician cannot escape—unless he be a most extraordinary man—falling into a certain indifference regarding the soul and its needs, the Church and her prescribed rules. There is no time for meditation in the great world of public turmoil; no time for the practice of religion because the country's interests—meaning the politician's personal interests—are at stake. This "indifference" grows almost imperceptibly upon the man, until he glides into a species of refined infidelity. The children have to suffer in consequence; and all this is due to the lack of obedience to the loud and powerful voice of the Church—heard but not sufficiently so to quell the tumult raised by the great political breakers. In a word, all, or nearly all, who have experienced a part of a life-time in public, died unsatisfied, unsatiated, poor in means and broken in spirit, after dearly paying for the experience that shows political honors to be

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NOTES OF IRISH NEWS.

STORM IN KERRY. — A violent thunderstorm broke over Kerry district on Saturday night. There were frequent and vivid flashes of forked lightning. No damage was done in the town, but in the western districts injury to life and property is reported. At Derrymore a peasant's house was struck and a pig and goat killed. In the next house a man named Sullivan and his son while in bed were struck by the electric fluid. The boy's arm is paralyzed, and his father's left side suffered similarly. Houses and trees were struck in other places.

INTEMPERANCE CRUSADE. —The Very Rev. Father Tierney, C.SS.R., director of the Archconfraternity of the Holy Family, Limerick, is starting a crusade for the suppression of intemperance in the city on Sundays. At a recent meeting of the archconfraternity the very rev. gentleman delivered an eloquent address on the evil effects of intemperance, and announced his intention of attending the next licensing sessions, to be held in October, to oppose the renewal of the licences of a certain number of city publicans who, it appears, have adopted the practice of selling drink on Sundays during prohibited hours.

LAID TO REST.—On Saturday, a week ago, the remains of the late Right Rev. Mgr. Murphy, P.P., V.G., St. Peter's Drogheda, were interred in the Oliver Plunkett Memorial Church. His Eminence Cardinal Logue presided at the obsequies, and there was a very large attendance of clergy.

BELFAST BIGOTS.—That strange sect known to Belfast as the Rechabites held a demonstration recently in a field behind Oldpark. An unprovoked attack on the Catholic houses seemed in the order of the day's proceedings, and not until several houses had been wrecked could the rowdies be checked by the police. Subsequently a disgraceful attack was made on the Church of the Sacred Heart, many beautiful stained-glass windows being destroyed.

INDUSTRIAL WORK. — The following interesting paragraph in reference to the Foxford Mills, which are conducted by the Sisters of Charity, appears in the report of the Congested Districts Board: "In 1893 our Board made a large loan to assist the Sisters of Charity in fitting up a woollen factory at Foxford, where a fall of about six feet on the River Moy affords ample water-power for such an undertaking. Suitable buildings were erected, and a complete equipment of the best machinery was purchased. As might be expected in the case of any new industry, some years passed before a profit was realized, but now two travellers are employed—one in England and one in Ireland, and such a ready market has been obtained, owing to the superior quality of the goods, that the demand exceeds the output of the factory. About 4,000 yards of various stuffs—tweeds, serges, flannels, blankets, etc.,—are turned out weekly. Including the hosiery business, over one hundred hands are employed all the year round at good wages, and about £3,000 a year is spent in the purchase of wool from local growers, while £4,000 a year is paid for fine yarns imported."

IRISH LANGUAGE.—At the distribution of prizes in Laurel Hill Convent, Limerick, on Wednesday week, the Most Rev. Dr. O'Dwyer dwelt at length on the movement for the revival of the Irish language. He said he was absolutely in sympathy with those who desired to maintain our old language and prevent it from becoming utterly extinct in the country. The number of Irish-speaking people had been decreasing at a painful rate in recent years, and there was no manner of doubt that exceptional responsibilities rested with the Commissioners of National education for the fact. The Board was peculiarly constituted. They were nominees of the Lord Lieutenant, and represented nobody, and the question of religious equality was observed by having an equal number of Catholics and Protestants on the Board; so, while there were 700,000 or 800,000 Catholic children on the register of National schools, and from 200,000 to 300,000 Protestants, it was considered equal and just treatment to have the Board thus composed half of Catholics and half of Protestants. That Board so constituted had done more than any agency in Ireland to kill the Irish language. It should submit to criticism, and its actions should be under the control of public opinion in Ireland.

CATHOLIC JURORS. — Mr. W. O'Brien at a great meeting held in Cork recently, referred to the shameless packing of the jurors empanelled at the recent assizes to try an unfortunate man charged with murder. Over sixty Catholic jurors were insolently ordered to "stand by" as persons unworthy of credence on their oaths. Many of these jurors came long distances at great inconvenience and expense in obedience to a peremptory summons to attend. Instead of being thanked for their attendance they were insulted in a public court and in the presence of a number of people. It is high time to make an effectual protest against the conduct of the authorities in this matter. Even at the risk of imprisonment for contempt of court, if the jurors thus insulted had vigorously protested on the spot against the shameless insult levelled at them and through them at the Catholic religion, the protest thus made would be almost certain to have some effect. At any rate an association of Catholic jurors should be formed, and united action of some kind taken in view of a similar insult being offered in the future. That over sixty Catholic jurors should tamely submit to treatment of this kind is not as it should be, to say the least of it. The injustice done to an unfortunate Catholic prisoner by being tried by a jury composed of Protestants and Freemasons is apparent to everyone, and should be shown up in the press and in Parliament.

FOR THE FARMER. — The Agricultural Department intends taking definite steps towards improving Irish horses. It is proposed to arrange a scheme, which will be carried out systematically for the whole country, and applicable to the conditions of various localities. For the purpose of working out such a scheme, the department has resolved to appoint two special committees, one to deal with live stock, exclusive of horses, and the other to deal with horse breeding. These committees will be competent to proceed at once to the framing of a practical scheme, for the administration of which the department will be in a position to supply the necessary funds. It is the intention of the department to invite agricultural societies through the country to co-operate, so far as may be possible in carrying the scheme into effect, and aid which may be given to shows promoted by societies willing to co-operate, must be applied in such a manner as to fulfil the requirements of the scheme.

GHASTLY RELICS.—At the meeting of the Athy No. 1 District Council a report was read from Dr. Danby, Monasterevan, stating that fourteen or fifteen human skeletons had been taken out of a gravel pit opened in March last on the lands of Denis Fitzpatrick at Rickardstown. The skeletons were found in a space of about two square perches, and the bones were only from 14 to 18 inches below the surface of the earth. A man named Patrick Byrne, who works in the pit, states that it contains many more skeletons. The belief in the district is that the bodies were hurriedly buried in the pit after some of the '98 battles.

FAMOUS GOUGANE BARRA.—The solemn ceremony of blessing and laying the foundation stone of the new church to be erected in the island of Gougane Barra, so celebrated as the monastic retreat of St. Finn Barre, took place recently, in the presence of a large congregation. Rev. Father Hurley, P.P., Inchigeela, officiated, assisted by the Rev. Father Bready, Dunmanway. The foundation stone consisted of a concrete block, in which was enclosed a leaden casket containing medals of St. Finn Barre, under whose spiritual jurisdiction the ancient monastery on the island sprang up and flourished. Two medals of the present Pope were also placed in the casket, as well as some coins of the present reigns, some relics from the Holy Land, and a parchment bearing the name of the generous donor who has provided Father Hurley with the means of erecting the church.

COMMERCIAL EDUCATION.

The remarkable extension which the foreign trade of the Kingdom has taken in recent years has brought home to merchants and manufacturers the importance of the role which a sound commercial education plays in the development of the national prosperity, says a Belgian correspondent. Until a few years ago there were but three institutions in the country where a higher commercial training was imparted—the commercial institute at Antwerp, under State direction, the establishment conducted by the Jesuit Fathers in the same city, and the Josephite College at Melle, near Ghent. There is now a flourishing commercial college at La Louviere, founded by Catholics and under clerical management; at Liege there is another important school, besides similar institutions elsewhere; and for the past three or four years, thanks to the Government, a course of advanced commercial studies has been in existence at the State universities of Ghent and Liege. The Catholic University has not lagged behind. Its commercial course has a large attendance, and the results of the third year's examinations in this branch of its work, published a day or two ago, are in every respect gratifying. At the Melle College, the instruction has been put on a new footing. A Royal decree, which has been lately issued, authorizes the college to confer the degree of licentiate in commercial and consular sciences on those of its students who pass the examination in the prescribed subjects, and with this diploma the young men will be admitted to pursue the higher studies at the State universities. Commercial instruction has long been a specialty with the Josephite Fathers at Melle, and that their establishment may be on a level with the best of the kind, their curriculum of studies will henceforward be on precisely the same lines as that of the Government commercial institute at Antwerp.

AN UNCHRISTIAN SPEECH.

Not being in Germany we have no dread of suppression should we deem it well to criticize the language of the sublime Emperor. When the German troops were leaving Bremerhaven for China, in the course of his lengthy speech, the Emperor is reported to have said:—

"If you close with the enemy remember this: spare nobody. Make no prisoners. Use your weapons so that for a thousand years hence no Chinaman will dare look askance at any German. Open the way for civilization once for all."

Commenting upon this, the "Ave Maria" very appropriately says:—

"Could anything be more savage and unchristian than this? But it is generally regarded as 'a blazing indiscretion'; and in diplomatic circles, where men speak cautiously, it is only said that 'the Emperor went beyond necessity or prudence.' But it is easy to judge what will be the effect of that horrible speech on the infuriated Chinese. It will inevitably confirm the inflammatory averment of the Boxers that the plan of Europeans is to massacre all Chinamen and take away their nation. If an extra amount of foreign blood should be shed before Peking falls, Emperor William ought to feel that he will be in some measure responsible for it."

Needless to say that we are in perfect harmony with our learned contemporary. Emperors, as well as ordinary men, sometimes make grave mistakes—and surely this is one.

THE INVENTOR'S HELP.

A revised and enlarged edition of this valuable book has just been printed by Messrs. Marion & Marion, the well known patent attorneys, of Montreal and Washington. It is a complet expose of patent law, giving the cost of patents in every country and how successful inventors have made money. The work concludes with "a word of warning to patentees," "hints on the sale of patents;" the pitfalls into which an unwary inventor would stumble are pointed out. It is a trustworthy guide to inventors, and our readers would do well to secure a copy of the book, which is sent by mail for the nominal sum of ten cents.

ABOUT THE BOXERS. — A man who was formerly in the Chinese missionary field says of the class who are now in that country:

"The significance of the name Boxers is misconstrued. The idea prevails quite largely that a Boxer is a Chinaman who is mittened and pugilistic, with fencing as his specialty, and sparring as his distinction. He is pictured in the comic papers with large mittens and a scowl on his face. Now, the fact of the matter is, that, though boxing is a European and American pastime, it is not such in China, and never has been.

* * * * * * *

"What then is a Boxer? We are assured that that is the correct English word, and so it is. But it has no reference to any sport. Instead, it should be defined as one who boxes, or makes boxes. That is, nothing else than wooden boxes. A Boxer is a north Chinaman who makes wooden boxes for a livelihood, or who is guilded with those who do. He is a carpenter-shop workman, and a member of an ancient and highly honorable craft.

The Boxer is a skilled laborer. Boxes are used even more generally than with us, and the work is always done by Chinamen, never by coolie labor. The masters command high wages—on an average $3 per week—while the workmen receive on an average $1 a week. The boxes, for whatever purpose; for teas, cotton, agricultural products, household uses, joss, coffins, jewelry, and others have always been made, from time immemorial, by 'our own' hands—that is, by Chinamen, and largely by North Chinese. Then, in addition, they have always been made of woods from the native forests, so that a box, whatever the description, has always been supposed to be made of native woods by native labor. There is a matter of pride in the manufacture and in the manufacturing.

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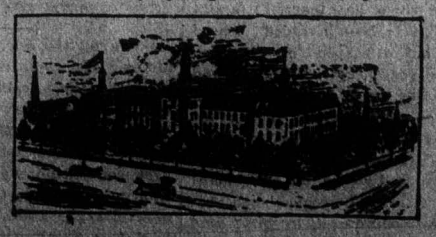

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