

## Our Curbstone Observer.

## ON "FORWARD" AND "HALT."

OME days ago I felt tired of tramping up and down the street, or standing on curbstones, and I sat down in my little nook to think, to read, to fall asleep and to dream. A volume of Tennyson was beside me and I opened it at random. The pages ceased turning at "Locksley Hall," and my eye was arrested by these lines:—

"Not in vain the distant beacons;  
forward, forward let us range;  
Let the great world spin forever  
down the ringing grooves of  
change."

For Tennyson change meant advancement. This was conceived and written when the poet was in his prime. The possibilities of the future, though dim, loomed up giant-like and all for good, for progress. I dozed off for a moment, and I had dreams of a most optimistic character. I saw visions of a world full of grand conceptions and mighty achievements, peopled with noble characters and sublime teachers, and high over all the spirit of universal Peace hovering in majestic circles. I was startled from my reverie; and, on looking at the book upon my knee, I found that the pages had turned over, and I was in presence of "Locksley Hall Sixty Years After." I read again, and this is what I read:—

"Gone the cry of 'Forward, Forward,' lost within a growing gloom,  
Lost or only heard in silence from  
the silence of a tomb."

And the one who had so exultantly cried "Forward" sixty years before, now, in the light of over half a century of experience, is forced to say:—

"Let us hush this cry of 'Forward'  
till ten thousand years are gone."

Sitting on the "great world's altar stairs," that "slope through darkness up to God," the poet feels that the pictures of perfection that his youthful imagination painted were too ideal for a common place world, and that the "Forward" march of mankind had better be stayed, otherwise it is liable to dash over a precipice, to fall into a social chaos, to stumble upon religious confusion—a confusion out of which naught but the Genius of Destruction can spring. I had read this far, and again I slumbered; and again I had dreams, but of the nightmare order. I saw the world—the human race—growing more and more refined in its profanity, more and more dazzling in the tinsel garments that hide its corruption. I saw man, the man of the hour, the man of ambition, of wealth, of power, of influence, of titles, of general success, drifting faster and faster away from the ideal, away from the spiritual, away from God.

## OBSERVATIONS NOT DREAMS.

As I continued to turn over in my mind these few snatches of verse, and to contemplate the different circumstances under which they had been written, I naturally summoned up some of my own unrecorded observations. Fifteen, twenty, twenty-five years ago I would have joyfully echoed that cry of "Forward;" my soul was young and I saw life in all the glitter and glory of a sunrise—full of promise and of possibilities; my vision was keen and I could detect far down the pathway of the years the noblest of achievements, the rushing onward of humanity towards the highest and most inspiring of goals. To-day, after having walked the common ways of men for so many years, and having carefully noted the general trend of society, I am inclined to agree with the poet's warning and to wish that the "Forward" cry of the past may be replaced by an imperative cry of "Halt."

## "FORWARD" AND DOWNWARD.

Doubtless the world has harkened to that great command, and has, with a fevered energy, rushed onward, blindly, madly, while the word "Forward" rang loud in its ears. There is no doubt that this dawning century beholds an advancing that defies description. Space is almost annihilated; time is scarcely of any consequence. The steam engine and the electric motor have effaced distances; the telegraph and the telephone have wiped out the half of time. Man is rushing around the

world, seeing in a few days that which would have taken years to visit one century ago. An event takes place in Europe at noon, before the lunch hour is over we know all its details. Vast continents are traversed, mighty rivers are bridged, gigantic mountains are scaled; no corner of earth is left unexplored; towers of Babel arise in profusion with electric elevators to run us to their summits; the ordinary office man rivals the cliff-dwellers in the elevation of their offices. Yes; the "Forward" rush is a perfect tornado in its strength and in its rapidity.

ONWARD ALL OVER. —It is not alone in the domains of invention, of commerce, of exploration that the world is flying ahead. Men change their spheres of activity with the rapidity of a magician. And women keep pace with men, and in many instances surpass them in these lightning-like movements. I see the "Forward" rush every hour; it sweeps past my door; I gaze upon it from my window. There is an end to be attained; the shortest route to that goal must be taken. The end is wealth, or power, or honors—no matter,—the track is zig-zag; the changes are numerous and unexpected; the train is off. Ordinary business transaction will not carry you with sufficient swiftness; you marry—there is money, or influence, or social rank to be gained—and you use matrimony to propel you forward. It fails to supply the necessary fuel to keep up high pressure, and you get divorced; it is so easy to flung out the cinders when the coal has been burned, and it can be done without slacking speed. Another marriage may serve to complete the work, and you marry again; perfectly prepared to divorce again, if such will help to keep up the steam. And it is all so easy. The law is so liberal; the faith and teachings of the Christians of our day are so convenient. A magistrate, or a justice of the peace can unite you in marriage; a court can untie the knot just as quickly; an act of legislation can make legitimate that which the law of God makes illegitimate; a few extra dollars can purchase the dismemberment of a family, the smashing up of a cumbersome domestic unity, and can secure for an unoffending offspring a heritage of orphanage before death has claimed either parent. It is a "Forward" rush. I say; and we must all be in the running, or else we will fall behind, or be crushed under the electric wheels of social progress.

AT THE SWITCH.—Onward, on a down grade, with valves open, full pressure on, and with every ounce of ballast flung out, the social train sweeps ahead. You are at the throttle for the moment, and you are dizzy with the whirl of your flight. It is of no consequence if some poor wretch has fallen under your wheels; a heart crushed to pulp a soul blackened with dust and smoke; it matters not. You have your goal to reach, and you are reaching it at a speed that defies all obstacles. But yonder, far down the line, just beyond another curve, there is a switch. No signals, for there is no time for any; no warning, you have never headed any, being deaf to all cries save that of "Forward." A grim object stands at the switch, holding the crank in a fleshless hand; they call him Death. You see him not; more fuel is added to the fire, a still higher pressure is forced on, you sweep around that last curve—there is an agonizing cry of ruined innocence, but it dies off in the distance drowned by the clatter of the mad machinery—you near the switch; one moment, but it is already too late. You have not even time to leap from your engine; you have not time to cry out "Oh, God." A crash! a smash! a rolling down the dark embankment, into the fathomless abyss of the infinite! All is over! You have never ceased, during that brief flight, to obey the cry of "Forward," and you have come to the end so swiftly that you have not realized the inevitable, until your life's engine has plunged headlong, seeking with the signs of the havoc done, into the presence of God!

methinks Tennyson was right, and that we may well hush the "Forward" cry for a few thousand years; or better, we would be wise to cry "Halt," and let the bugle of self-preservation sound a "Retreat."

## An Impartial Observer.

The London "Standard" has a correspondent at Rouen, in France, who is a keen and certainly impartial observer. He is a Protestant, according to his own statement, but he is one who has formed a pretty just estimate of the mission of the Catholic Church in France and the degree of respect, or disrespect, that the Combes administration has earned.

In stating his opinion of the French Nationalists that writer says:—

"The question for Frenchmen to decide, and that in the immediate future, is whether the Republic or the French nation is to have the upper hand. If the French Nationalists win the day there will be no restoration, except one of public confidence; if the Republicans of M. Combes' stamp prevail, it is a very grave question whether the Concordat will survive; and if that be upset, there is no institution in France, however useful and however revered, that will not be shaken. This is the universal sentiment of the majority of well-educated Frenchmen of the middle and upper classes. To these bene natis, bene vestitis you must add every sincere Catholic in France, and the entire peasantry of Brittany. They form a minority important even in numbers, and overwhelming in point of intelligence and wealth. Yet, strange to say, the opinions of the French Nationalists have but little weight attached to them by the English press, and are apparently unpopular in England."

This explains, to a considerable degree how it comes that the bulk of the comments, upon the situation in France, which we read in the secular press, on this side of the Atlantic, is biased and false. The American and even Canadian press may be said to take the note of opinion from England, and according to this Englishman, who studies the situation on the ground, the English press is astray.

In another paragraph we read:—

"It is no exaggeration to say that the Republicans of the Brissot school speak of the Roman Catholic Church of France as M. Drumont writes of Jews. There is as much charity and regard for truth in the one as in the other. They are both fountains of lies and hate, but whereas M. Drumont is only the editor of one newspaper, M. Combes has at his back the entire forces, Parliamentary, military, and naval, of France. There can be no question that he intends to ask the Chamber to pass measures of additional severity against the clergy."

Strong as this is, coming from such a source, it is tame beside the lashing given to Combes and the splendid appreciation of the Catholic Church in France, that we find in the following passage:—

"M. Waldeck-Rousseau and M. Combes are endeavoring to make amends to the Socialists for any desire that they may still possess to be fair to the moneyed classes by going to all lengths against the Gallican Church. . . . M. Combes has stepped into his shoes, but, like Cromwell's Generals, he will probably find them far too large for his intellectual proportions. His only conception of statesmanship seems to be to defer the settlement of social questions by plunging the country into a war with 'clericalism,' as he is pleased to call the Gallican Church. Those of us (and I write as a Protestant) who regard the Catholic Church of France as God's chief instrument for working the regeneration of France must condemn the policy of M. Combes—not only as unjust to the clergy, but pernicious to the best interests of the nation. Are the Nationalists, therefore, to be blamed by fair-minded Englishmen—whether Protestant or Roman Catholic—if they rally to the rescue of a Church which, with all its limitations, is the only form of Christianity for which the French mind is ripe? The Church of France still has its Fenelons; it no longer has its Fleurets. The heads of this Church combine with personal holiness an energy for the public good which the Church under the Grand Monarque did not possess."

And mark this statement regarding the Church:—

"It concerns itself little with public, and much with private life. To overthrow such a community will weaken Christian faith in France for a generation."

It is refreshing to find the Protestant correspondent of one of England's great dailies thus revealing the exact situation. We have contended, time and again, that whosoever sides with infidelity against the Catholic Church in France

is an enemy of Christianity—no matter what his professions may be. This is exactly the idea expressed by the foregoing correspondent when he writes:—

"It must be borne in mind that the Church is attached, not because it is Roman Catholic, but because it is Christian. Were this Church an ass of Issachar, bowing his shoulder to bear, and becoming 'a servant unto tribute,' the doctrinaires who now nominally govern France would be more disposed to leave her undisturbed. But she is an energetic Church, a hive of industry, active in every good work, and therefore she has been marked out for renewed attack."

Again and again the same has been proclaimed by impartial voices and pens, and we are pleased to learn that the "Standard" has a representative on the Continent who has the keen judgment and the fair and evenly balanced mind to represent the situation in its true colors. It even demands a certain courage for one of that writer's faith to inform the Protestant world that any crusade against the Catholic Church and her institutions in France is a menace to Christianity the world over.

## Catholic Federation Movement in Ireland

The social and official ostracism from which Catholics in Ireland have so long been suffering at the hands of an intolerant minority has at last provoked organized action. The subject was forcibly dealt with by the Rev. Father Corbett at a recent meeting of the Catholic Young Men's Society in Queenstown, presided over by the Bishop Browne, of Cloyne. Among the most glaring of the instances of Protestant exclusiveness dealt with by Father Corbett was the case of the Great Southern and Western Railway Company. In this large corporation, whose line runs through a Catholic district, and who derive nearly all their profits from Catholic passengers and business men and Catholic consumers generally, the secretary and his chief assistant, the traffic manager and his deputy, all his clerks, the superintendent of the line, and most of his staff, the goods manager, his chief assistant, the whole staff (except two junior clerks), the heads of the transfer and audit office, and the most of their staffs, two of the three district auditors, the chief cashier and his assistants, the district superintendents and their assistants, the goods superintendent at Kingsbridge and his two principal assistants, the head of the ticket office, of the signalling department, the paymaster and his assistants, the managers of the company's hotels, the cottage inspectors, and virtually the whole engineer's staff are non-Catholics. The case of the Midland railway is almost as bad. In the overwhelming Catholic city of Cork, Father Corbett stated that "there are business houses managed on the same hateful principle, and even in Queenstown there are men who would look agnash if a Catholic aspired to enter their shops for any other purpose than to spend money."

The remedy which Father Corbett proposed, and which has been adopted, is a federation of Catholic societies having for its aim the protection of Catholic interests. This idea was heartily indorsed by the Bishop of Cloyne, who strongly denounced the exclusion of Catholics from positions which by their intelligence, their business capacity, and their moral rectitude, they were eminently qualified to fill on account of their religion. "You have the remedy in your own hands," he said. "Apply it without delay."

## THE EVILS OF DRINK.

It is easy to sum up and to deliver to a jury, consisting of all manhood and womanhood, a charge against the tempter, the betrayer, the home-destroyer, the disease-producer, the soul-destroyer, blighting, milderew, ruining whenever it obtains power; the fiend that negatives all prosperity, that baulks the teachings of virtue, the guidance of religion, the revealed and natural, faith in hereafter. The curse of drunkenness is the overwhelming curse of our country—of England, Ireland, Scotland, and Wales. It fills our poorhouses, insane asylums and gaols. It is the fertile source of crime; almost the only source. There is not a judge, a coroner, a magistrate, who will not tell us it gives him nine-tenths of the work he has to do. There is not a physician who has not testified to the misery it induces, and for which he has no cure. It is the existing, but it is also the hereditary curse. The children of the drunkard are recognized by emaciated forms, diseased constitutions, and predisposition to crime!—S. E. Hall.

## Catholic Library Problem.

How Catholics may best be encouraged to read improving literature is a question which is engaging the thought of many clerical and lay leaders.

That American Catholics are reading more than ever before was proved in the most conclusive way last month when D. Appleton & Company, who earlier in the year had sent the Republic, on request, a circular statement saying that it would be impracticable to revise the Catholic history in their Universal Encyclopedia, made a complete change of front, inviting Archbishop Keane to name an editor to undertake revision, and asking one of his nominees to do the work. Publishers do not guess about Catholic influence in the book-buying world; they find out from the retail dealers. That influence must be real.

In view of these facts and of the increased use of public libraries by all classes, including, of course, the Catholics, measures have been proposed for intelligently directing Catholic taste. The public libraries are, or ought to be, great storehouses of miscellaneous books, maintained for the preservation of all books except trash, and having in view the needs of posterity, and of students as well as untrained readers. Restrictions are placed upon many books which the librarians believe should not circulate indiscriminately, but judgments differ, and the spiritual promoter would restrict many books which the librarian would not; some on moral, some on sectarian grounds.

To meet this situation in New York city a great Cathedral Library has been established. A writer in a recent number of Donohoe's Magazine describes that institution and advocates "free Catholic libraries" for other cities. We have seen in the press no general endorsement of this plan, and there is nothing which commends itself more favorably on practical grounds.

The scheme is to create a great supervised Catholic catalogue of the public library in each city and thus erect a library within the library. The Catholic Alumni Society of Boston is about to publish a list of about thirty-five hundred titles of books by Catholic authors in the Boston Public Library, the cataloguing done under Mr. William A. Walsh now public librarian in Lawrence. This list will be placed in the hands of general readers in Boston, but its main utility will be as a reference list for librarians throughout the country.

Many public library administrations are only too glad to learn of the titles of books which they ought to have and an idea can be got of the usefulness of such a list from the fact that in process of his cataloguing Mr. Walsh caused several hundred volumes to be added to the Boston Library. Catholic trustees and Catholic citizens of influence may use the list as a basis for making or soliciting gifts to the library or of suggesting purchases to the trustees.

This list is, of course, not intended primarily as a general reading catalogue. The Alumni Sodality would hardly wish to cut off his friends from all the books in the world not written by Catholics. The "Catholic list habit" would be the kind of in-breeding which stunts rather than expands the mind. A catalogue is wanted, not of books by Catholic authors only, but of books which all men prize and to which there is no objection on Catholic grounds. Such a list, we presume, is the catalogue of the New York Cathedral Library.

That very catalogue, possibly, merged with the Alumni Sodality list, might be the most easily obtained basis for a first edition, which would grow richer with the years. It could easily be translated from Bostonian into Philadelphian or New Bedfordese by changing the shelf numbers to fit the local public library.

This would advertise standard literature in a permanent way, provide for effective supervision, and really establish a "free Catholic library" without taxing Catholics twice. — Boston Republic.

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## HELP FOR THE HOLY

The religious order called of the Holy Souls" was founded in 1856 by Eugene Truet. As a child she had a special love for souls, and as she grew up to help them became stronger. After advising with her, Cure d'Ars her hopes finally stated in 1856 when she founded called "Helpers of Souls in Purgatory." The money to build houses, enough to furnish the food, furniture and clothing good work went on because God's work. He enlightened minds, and touched their hearts guided them over the rou-