

Our Curbstone Observer ON NEW YEAR'S CALLS.

INCE my comments in last issue, on Christmas Boxes, appeared, I have heard the remark passed that "there is a lot of sense in that fellow's ideas." If it is not of the most elegant at least it is of the complimentary class of criticism. As I was a little outspoken regarding the subject of Christmas Boxes, I may as well have my say in the matter of New Year's calls. That the olden custom of visiting friends, acquaintances, and even semi-strangers, on the first day of the year, is dying out to a great extent, still it is one of those traditional practices that survive even the most pronounced changes in the fashions of the world. It had its good points and it was often open to criticism; but like every other social custom it had, for a period, become universal; and when the day of its decline arrived, the going down of its sun was rapid. Let it not be imagined that I am writing the obituary of that ancient custom; it is not dead; but it has been subjected to so many radical changes that it is scarcely recognizable at present. I will try to give the readers an idea of what I am trying to explain.

THE CARD SYSTEM.—Let us commence with the modern idea of "calling" on New Year's Day. The gentleman provides himself with a pack of visiting cards, sometimes bearing, besides his name "A Happy New Year," or "The Compliments of the Season," or "with the compliments of Mr. —," or, as the general rule the name only. It matters little; he sets off with his vest pocket full of these tiny pieces of pasteboard and rings the door-bells at the various place where he intends to make his calls. The servant comes to the door, presents him with a silver tray, or plate, somewhat as would a collector in a church, and receives his card. This is placed before the lady of the house, and she considers that the gentleman has "called." Then there are cases in which the lady actually does receive the caller; certain formalities in the shape of bows, handshakes, questions and answers concerning the weather, and probably the coal prospect, and the whole ceremony is over. This may be very necessary in order to keep the social wheel turning, but for the life of me I could never make out in what the friendship, or even interest, consisted. But it is not a very fruitful occupation, nor is it accompanied by as many objectionable features as were, at one time, associated with the New Year's call. Still the card system is doing away very perceptibly with the old-time regular calling, or visiting.

ANOTHER OBSTACLE.—I am not going to complain about the other obstacle that has loomed up of late years and has been very instrumental in deterring the customary New Year's Day caller from going abroad on that occasion. I refer to the "coffee" that has been introduced, as a general rule, as a substitute for wine, and for even something stronger. There is no doubt that the old custom of having the accompanying piece of cake, had much to do with drawing out a vast number of callers. Even yet the custom exists; but luckily it has seen its day, and is rapidly becoming "out of style." Many is the young man who could trace his failure in after life, his intemperate habits, and perhaps his ruin, both in body and soul, to the glass of wine on New Year's Day. At first sight it does not appear such a terrible thing to offer one glass to a caller; but when you consider that the guest in question may have al-

ready called at a dozen places (and taken a dozen glasses), and may call at another dozen before night, (and take a second dozen glasses), the matter begins to assume formidable proportions. Many of the readers will recall scenes enacted, especially towards evening, on former New Year's days, when the belated callers were winding up their rounds of social amusement. Personally, I have a vivid recollection of some of those scenes. I remember one, in particular; I was still very young; we had concluded the day's ordeal of receiving, and were about to adjourn for supper, when a large sleigh-load of lively gentlemen arrived. It was long after eight o'clock when they left. They had called all day, from house to house, and it is quite possible that not one of them remembered, next day, how many and what places he had visited. When I now look back at that evening, and I summon up the familiar features of all those jovial fellows, I am bewildered to find that not one of them is now in the land of the living. What a number of New Year's days they have all passed in the profound silence of the grave; and how seldom, if ever, any of their names have been mentioned on such occasions. There is, in truth, a splendid illustration of the "vanitas vanitatum" of A-Kempis, and a wonderful lesson for whoever feels inclined to study and retain it.

REFLECTIONS.—All these little observations of mine are calculated to make one reflect. Reflect upon the customs that are so changeable and so changed; upon the spirit that is coming over the dreams of men in our modern days; upon the disappearance of many an abuse that marked the "good old times;" upon the appearance of social methods that are scarcely calculated to increase the warmth of friendship amongst men. This is a colder, harsher, and more formal age than any of the past. The "Dollar" seems to be the all-absorbing aim of humanity. Nor is it the mere gathering together, by incessant labor, of the elements of a reasonable fortune, but it is the attaining of immense wealth by leaps and bounds. In former times the miser was a noted character and was spoken of with a certain degree of horror, to-day it is very different, for almost all men are misers, hoarders of money, graspers after wealth. The one who is most remarkable is the man who is content with a reasonable share of the world's goods. Formerly there was a "give and take" that made life most pleasant. Then men trusted their fellowmen and their trust was rarely betrayed. Now each one looks upon his neighbor with suspicion, as he would on a burglar or a thief, and each one imagines that his friends are combined to do him out of what he possesses and that each individual has a set purpose to use him for some selfish end. The result is an antagonism between men that, if not open, or expressed, is, at least, implied in all their relations with each other. Are we, then, to grieve for the "good old times," or to rejoice in the great changes that have taken place? After all, the question is not easy to answer, for humanity has not changed—it is the same in its nature, in all its attributes, in its passions, virtues, and vices, as it ever was from the very beginning. "The times change and we change with them" sang Horace, in the golden days of Roman splendor; and since then the times have changed in a million ways, and men have changed with them, in order to correspond to their requirements; but humanity has remained the same—a battle field whereon contend the forces of good and evil, of Error and Truth.

are all old people, most of them fathers and mothers, many of them, even grandparents. We know that too many of these fathers and mothers are unhappy, because they feel the shame of being subjects of public charity, and because their old hearts are stung by that serpent of filial neglect. And when we realize these things we are particularly grateful to the public official who appreciates them too, and who

shows an eagerness to provide greater physical comforts—which is the most he can do—for those who are thus put under his care. And 'tis this why a new plan which Mr. Homer Folks, commissioner of public charities for New York, has adopted deserves special commendation.

Mr. Folks has set aside a cottage on Blackwell's Island for old couples who are now inmates of the almshouse. Here husband and wife

will live together, each pair having its own private room. The aged couples will all dine together at a large table in the general dining-room of the cottage, and then they may retire, each husband and wife to their own room, to sit together unmolested, as they wish. In a great public almshouse there are hundreds, of course, who are at best undesirable companions. There are scores of old men and women whose intellects have faded as their years have increased; there are many others whose physical infirmities have made them fretful, complaining, and most undomesticable, and there are others, too, who have wasted the best years of their life, who have been low and dissolute and who have sunk into a degraded old age. The best must of necessity be herded with the worst, and in this is another source of unhappiness for those of finer fibre. Among the 2,400 poor on Blackwell's Island are twenty aged men and women who are happier because of the new plan of Commissioner Folks, for they will have an opportunity now to retire from the great herd of men and women with whom they have hitherto been forced to associate, to comfort and console each other in private.

The cottage which has been dedicated to aged couples has been occupied for some time by the nurses of the almshouse. A new nurses' home has been prepared for them and their present quarters are being remodelled. When the repairing is completed there will be sixteen individual rooms in the aged couples' cottage, enough to accommodate thirty-two persons. The kitchen and dining-room will be entirely separate from the general almshouse, so that the old couples will be in a colony by themselves. When any of them wishes to retire from the great crowd of inmates the little chamber in the cottage will be ready. Under conditions such as have always existed this would be impossible. In one great dormitory all of the women sleep. They eat in a tremendous common dining room, on plain board tables, and from dishes of tin. It is the same with the old men, who are in number about equal to the women.

The plan of Commissioner Folks is, as far as the commissioner knows, unique in the United States. There are many private institutions for aged couples supported by charitable contributions or societies throughout the country, but, according to Mr. Folks' information, no public ones. The same plan has, however, been adopted in some European almshouses, particularly in England, where it has been shown to greatly promote the happiness of the inmates.—Boston Pilot.

Diamond Harbor Chapel

Under the heading "A Beautiful Chapel," the Quebec "Daily Telegraph" says:—

We must congratulate our Irish Catholic friends of Diamond Harbor and their devoted spiritual director, Rev. Father McCarthy, C.S.S.R., upon the fine appearance of their beautiful little chapel of Our Lady of Perpetual Help. In this city of churches, there are many stately edifices dedicated to the worship of the Most High, but in none has a greater wealth of zeal and good taste been lavished upon the work of embellishment or was the golden festival of Christmas more fitly or strikingly honored. It will be remembered that some months ago on the memorable occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of Father McCarthy's consecration to the priesthood, the rev. gentleman, among other marks of their love and admiration, was presented by his flock with a handsome purse to gratify the dearest wish of his heart, which was the beautifying of the humble temple in which he has so long ministered to their spiritual wants. The result of the judicious outlay of this money upon the illumination of the altar and chapel was witnessed recently for the first time, and was the object of general admiration. During the holy sacrifice, the altar was one blaze of light shining forth from several hundred tiny electric lamps or electric candles arranged around the statues or hidden away among the foliage of the ornamental plants and other decorations, while the body of the chapel was brilliantly illuminated by a hundred more. Altogether, the effect was magnificent, and as already said, the good people of Diamond Harbor can now be congratulated upon having one of the prettiest little chapels in the city.

Catholicity In the Twentieth Century.

(By a Regular Contributor.)

A recently published volume by Ehrhardt, of Vienna, on "The Catholic Church in the Twentieth Century," has given rise, especially among learned Protestants, to a very interesting discussion. In Germany, above all, has this subject been treated fully and minutely by Protestant writers of reputation. One of the best known literary men of that country, H. S. Chamberlain, foretells that the Catholic Church, unless there is a thorough change within herself, will close this century with less than one-third of the Christians of the globe in her fold. A still more eminent Protestant writer and scholar is the church historian, Dr. Kolde, of Erlangen, who declares that Chamberlain's estimate is only based on a superficial appreciation of the strength of traditional religious principles. In placing before his readers his own estimate of the power of the Catholic Church, in this century, Dr. Kolde says:—

"Few people, and only those who study modern facts in the light of church history, have any appreciation of the phenomenal advance made by the Catholic Church during the last decades, especially as a power in the political world and in the conquests of new spheres of thought and life. It is by no means a pleasant thing for Protestants to contemplate; but it is an undeniable fact that not since the days of Innocent III. has the papal system unfolded such splendor and power as in the present time. Not the Catholic princes, but rather the Protestant rulers are the ones who are trying to surpass each other in honoring the shrewd sage now occupying the throne in the Vatican, although it is this same sage who has repeatedly called the Reformation a 'pest.'"

He adds that "in other respects the Catholic Church has grown phenomenally." After giving proof of the constant augmentation in numbers and influence of her religious orders, he points out that the Catholics control the balance of power in the Parliaments of the world. He then points to "the assigning of the position of judge on international difficulties to the Pope"—which, he adds, "has been first voluntarily yielded to the Vatican by the leading Protestant powers of Europe, Prussia and Germany, the former of these also having been the first to recognize the Curia as a political power on equal footing with other powers by sending an ambassador to the Vatican."

Concluding his theme the learned author says that "humanly speaking the Catholic Church is destined to achieve still more notable conquests in the twentieth century."

It will be observed, especially by the Catholic student of our Church history, that all these eminent non-Catholic writers view the Church, and her wonderful development and achievements, from the purely human standpoint and consider her merely as a government or human institution. And even as such, the career of the Church is a puzzle for them, nor are they able to assign any positive cause for the marvelous history that her annals present. It never strikes them that no other organization on earth has weathered the tempests of twenty centuries, and is more powerful and more full of vitality to-day than at any period in the past. What then, is there within that Church which has carried her triumphantly down the vast space of centuries and has preserved her to become the most potent factor in the world's affairs to-day? As a human institution it is "humanly speaking" a moral impossibility that the Church could have succeeded in resisting all the floods of adversity and antagonism, from the Roman arena to the Reformation, and from that period down to our own day. Were she a purely human institution she would have, long since, gone the way of all the Empire's, Kingdoms and Republics that she beheld in their infancy, knew in their zenith of power, and beheld go down to the grave that time dug for them amidst the ruins of a once glorious strength. Were she a mere political organization, she would have followed all the religious systems, social institutions, and national bodies that have vanished from the

earth on which they once played conspicuous parts. How strange that these fearless men are never inspired to consider the Church as a purely Divine establishment, nor to associate with her mysterious successes and victories, her perpetuity and immutability, the promise that Christ gave on that day when He said that He would be with that Church until the end of time.

We cannot expect that, without the gift of Faith, such men as Dr. Kolde, should recognize in the Catholic Church something more wonderful than mere human ingenuity and wisdom; yet we do not know how to explain their appreciation of the Church's progress and of her positive vigor in the twentieth century, while ignoring aught of Divine in her composition, or in her foundation. The same mystery hangs over Macaulay's famous tribute to her. It is evident that the word of Christ has been proven to be true, and no more positive proof thereof than the very existence to-day, not to speak of the increased strength of the Catholic Church. That olden Church stands there as a perpetual testimonial of her own sacred and spiritual greatness. Her very survival during all those long years and centuries is, to our mind, sufficient proof that she could not possibly have had any purely human origin. To suppose such a thing would be the very height of absurdity. And still these educated and liberal-minded men cannot grasp the true reason of Catholic unchangeableness and perpetuity. It is only to be hoped that the day may dawn when they will be enabled to see the Church, as she is, not a political engine of cunning workmanship, but as the spouse of Christ.

WITH OUR READERS.

"I herewith enclose stamps for two numbers of 'True Witness,' issued 20th of this month. I wish I could get subscribers to that lovely paper. I send them around to my different friends, many of them Protestants. They admire the papers, and tell me they read every word of them which I am sure they do."

Yours respectfully,

E. M. L.

I send you here enclosed the sum of one dollar for the renewal of my subscription to the "True Witness." I sincerely congratulate you on the improvements which you have made to the "True Witness." It is more interesting and instructive than ever it was.

Wishing you continued success, I remain, sincerely yours, J. H.

Irish Lead in Longevity

According to the report of the bureau of vital statistics of the United States census, the Irish lead all other foreign races in this country in the matter of longevity. Of the foreign born centenarians in the United States, the census man sets down 45 per cent. as Irish, 16.4 per cent. as German, 8.4 per cent. as Canadian, 6.6 per cent. as English, 2 per cent. as Japanese and 1 per cent. as Chinese. In 1900 there were 3,536 persons in the United States who were 100 years of age, or upward. This may not seem particularly impressive as an indication of growing vitality when it is placed beside the item that puts our population at 76,000,000, but it means something altogether different when one is told that it gives us twice as many centenarians as there are in Germany, England, France, Scotland and Servia, with a combined population of 135,250,000. Almost two-thirds of our centenarians are women. One of the most important facts that is deduced from the comprehensive figures is that which proves that there are more centenarians accumulating in this country during every decade, and the natural corollary that the average length of life within our boundaries is appreciably increasing.

ST. BRIDGET'S NIGHT REFUGE.

Report for week ending Sunday, 28th Dec., 1902.—Males 285, females 85. Irish 161, French 92, English 10, Scotch and other nationalities 7. Total 270.

If a man is not greater than the things he does, the less said about him and them the better.

A Refinement of Public Charity.

The average age of the 2,400 men and women who are in the great New York almshouse on Blackwell's Island is sixty-five years, says a writer in "Lealie's Weekly." So they

INCE the week's a very special guest comes that I cannot ignore. It will be closing the glean verses, I quoted that of Martin McDermott "Exiles far away asked to give the name of that unique production. It is of pleasure that I quest. But, as space at my disposal will take advantage than I have been to face the poem by a I consider pertinent.

The name of Martin McDermott is well known to-day much known to the was one of the sweetest "young Ireland" the forties, produced write much, but who bears the unmistakable genius. It was in his productions appreciated. Consequently years have passed wrote. We can realize that he was then, a years of age, if not would leave him, if eighty years of life, alive." For I do not he is still in the land or not. About ten member reading in a paper, I now forget who Mr. Martin McDermott poet, was ill in Boston piece of news was a I had long before come amongst the departed dead or alive, it is published only a few and the few that he to Irish literature was parison with anything English language during tenth century.

In order to understand that McDermott's name somewhat neglected in Irish poetry of modern must consider the circle which he wrote. O'Connell had won and the giant of Irish nearing the sunset of new spirit had come in aggressive and educated the advent of the poetry there was a flood all genuine and inspiring note was given by Deane all sides came bards, whom would have sufficed a decade of nature. Duffy, Mangan, McHarris, Lady Wilde, Ed Dr. Waller, Supple, John Norton, McGee, John ray, Rev. Dr. Murray, nock, Rev. C. Meehan, Dr. Maginn, Mary "Mary of the Nation gan, T. Irwin, John Ferguson, Lady Dufferin, nan, Bartholomew Down De Vere, Francis Davin fast Man," Crofton Cro Callanan, Col. Blacker, John Banim; not to still vibrating songs of Griffin; add to this ver list the scores of exiles who wrote over names as "Eva," "Concensilla," "Una," "Miro," "Carroll Malone," "Polo," "Feardana," "T. Duach," "Eirie," and others, and you may of how very slight a cl was for a half dozen of ten over an adopted sign widely known. If I am en, Martin McDermott's word "Sieve-gullion" his poems. This, also, ved to hide the name quently curtail the dearer writer.

I will now reproduce the Exiles in full, and with another sample of a bard of his beautiful and tender feeling should not be neglected; and I fied, for his sake, when the few lines quoted last made a sufficient impression, to induce him to entire poem.