

Our Curbstone Observer

ON FAMILY RECORDS

The other day I met a boy coming from catechism class, and he was exhibiting to a companion a very unique card. On one side was a holy picture, on the other were printed the rules for altar boys to observe, hours of the Masses, regulations concerning surplices and soutanes, the names of those whose turn it might be to serve in one capacity or another in the sanctuary. I was not able to examine the card carefully, but I gleaned enough to teach me the nature and purpose of it. As I passed on I found that this simple certificate or souvenir suggested a long series of reflections. My mind went back to a little framed picture that hung for years in the nursery of my father's house; it was my First Communion card. How many there are to-day who have once taken the pledge, and have no certificate to that effect; how many who would be glad to possess some reminder of events in their lives, such as Baptism, First Communion, Confirmation, and even marriage. For one reason or another they have no relics of the kind, and their children have nothing whereby to recall these periods of special importance in their parents' lives. Most of us have served Mass in our day, have been altar boys, have belonged to choirs; but few of us can turn up souvenirs such as the card that I saw in the hands of that young boy.

From the little picture, or tiny card that the boy or girl treasures as a memento of those important events that rise up from the years long gone, we can pass to the ordinary family records. I remember what awe I had for a large family Bible, with immense brass clasps, that rested upon a central table in the drawing room of my early home. I used to admire, above all, the figures of angels and the other ornamentations of certain pages at the back of the volume. Each page represented the front of a church, with three doors of equal size—over the first was written "Births," and the second "Marriages," over the third "Deaths." And down the panels were recorded the dates and the information generally required concerning each member of the family—birth or marriage or death. Then under all these were clippings of notices from the press. It was only in after years that I learned the value of this record. I once saw my father write something in the book, and I wondered how learned he must have been to be able to write in such a huge volume. The day came when it was my turn to complete one record by writing down the date of his death, and thus ending his inscription upon the face of one of these church doors. There was a melancholy pleasure in going over those old pages.

I knew a lady once who had a man—a some foolish people call it—for having portraits of her children. She had them taken every three months, during their first year, every six months during the second and third years, and every year after that until the age of twelve was reached. She presented each child on its twelfth birthday with a handsome album containing the whole series of its own photographs, from one month old up to twelve years. This was a peculiar idea, but I could fully appreciate the wisdom of it. In years to come, away down in the future, amidst changed scenes and new faces, the boy, grown old, could take up that volume and trace every little care that hands now dust had bestowed upon his tender years. I can imagine no more delightful souvenir of one's childhood than such an album. But few mothers think so much of the future.

A person very near and dear to me, one whose years of activity were consecrated to my happiness, once wrote some verses suggested by the famous years in Ireland. This was half a century or more ago; the lines were entitled the "Old Man," and the reflections I have just made bring back one stanza—

"I must be very old, I keep repeating o'er and o'er; Yet on the old Bible page, Where my good father wrote my age, My years are twenty-four."

Then we are told why the writer feels so old. "Have I not seen death strike so fast, That church-yards could not hold, Though torn into one yawning grave The remnant of the young, the brave, The bright-eyed and the bold? Ah! no, I feel my heart is cold, I must be very, very old, An old, old man!"

take much pains to dot down every little event in the lives of their children. Things are too electric to-day; men are too eager in their rush after money; there is no time for these little delights that used the domestic hearth.

Another practice, in this connection, that seems to be falling into disuse, is that of keeping the birth, marriage and death notices that appeared in the press. In fact, some people are not at all too anxious to have such notices published. Above all, do I remark the lack of them in the Catholic organ. As a rule the daily secular press is used for such purposes; but no person seems to ever think of inserting these most useful, and often very necessary notices in the columns of the Catholic newspaper. Yet that is exactly where they should be. Possibly people fear that they might be caught encouraging a Catholic organ by such means. Yet upon that same organ do they depend whenever their interests are at stake, their rights assailed, or their privileges curtailed. In all this there is a great lack of consistency. But I am not now dealing with this particular subject, which would admit of an endless development; I am simply referring to the utility of family records. The record of a family, is the history of that particular portion of the community, and it is the aggregate of such histories that constitutes the history of a country. Consequently the one who fills in a family record is actually adding to the annals of the nation.

There is no end to the reflections that the simple card to which I referred in the beginning inspires. It would need many a column to hold all the thoughts that spring from that very insignificant source. But there is one phase of the question which I cannot omit. There is no end to the disputes, law-suits, family dissensions, domestic antagonisms, and the unhappy troubles that result from the absence of a properly kept record. Sometimes a baptismal or a marriage certificate may mean a fortune, or else a reverse, for the one who either possesses, or does not hold the same. Chance, accident, uncontrollable events, frequently cause the loss of these precious pieces of family evidence; but more often are they lacking on account of negligence. People do not take the trouble to provide for future contingencies, and the result is that they only feel and recognize the effects of their apathy, when it is too late to supply the remedy.

Examples of losses, in many ways, on account of the destruction of the non-family records, might be multiplied to an endless extent. But I will simply tell of one case. I once knew a man who had been for long years a practising barrister. When I knew him he was an old man and I was only a boy; but I still remember hearing him tell of the trouble he had to be admitted to the Bar. In the first place he could not produce his own baptismal certificate. His father was a factor of the Hudson Bay Company, and he was born at a post near Fort Garry—now Winnipeg—and had been baptized by a missionary who gave a certificate of the baptism to his parents. But that document had been lost years before. He was able, however, to procure a certificate of Confirmation. The name he had taken on that occasion was Ronald, while the certificate contained the name Donald. Evidently an error on the part of whoever made out the certificate. At all events it would not be accepted by the Council of the Bar. To get the certificates of birth and marriage of his parents was out of the question—for his father's birth he would have had to go to Scotland, for his mother's to Ireland, and for their marriage to the private records of a missionary that had been long since dead and the whereabouts of whose notes could not be ascertained. The only evidence he had as to who he was consisted of a record kept by his father in an old prayer-book, very detailed, very exact. The Council accepted the name in that old, time-worn prayer-book as the best available evidence as to the candidate's identity. And it was on the faith of that record that he got his diploma of barrister. It seems to me that this case needs no extensive comment to show its applicability, and the wisdom of families having their own records.

SEES FOR AMERICA.—The "Inter-Ocean" has a Roman correspondent who dispatches items of peculiar interest from time to time. His message of the 28th December last contains a number of exceedingly important statements—all given within a very narrow space. The only trouble is that we are at a loss to know how much of these small doses can be taken with safety; nor do we know whether they are all equally harmless or not. In that despatch we are told that the Pope expressed his intention of canonizing Joan of Arc during the year 1902, and that His Holiness is to issue an encyclical on Christian democracy, designed to check the disputes arisen lately in the Italian Catholic party. There may be some ground work for these pieces of information—and there may not. But the most important item is that in which it is stated that "Cardinal

Gibbons is to be appointed the president of an episcopal commission to submit to the Pope a list of new sees to be created in the United States in order to keep pace with the growth of the Catholic community." If it be true that any such commission is to be established, we have no doubt that Cardinal Gibbons would be appointed the president of the same. There is a semblance of exactness in the report, for it is obvious to all observers that the vast strides made of late years, by Catholicity in the United States, must sooner or later necessitate the creation of several new sees. Whether the time has come for a general action, affecting the whole country, in this regard or not, is a question that remains for the American Catholic hierarchy in conjunction with the authorities in Rome to decide.

RANDOM NOTES AND REMARKS

MARCONI.—Wireless telegraphy has won a name for Signor Marconi that will live with those of Edison and all the great inventors of modern days. Another Italian name is handed down in the annals of Ireland's story to be remembered wherever the events and men of the early and mid-nineteenth century are recalled. Charles Bianconi, the founder of the great lines of stage-coaches in Ireland, was of Italian origin, but none would ever know that aught but Celtic blood flowed in the veins of his gifted daughter, the talented Kate Bianconi—and his grand-children bear only the name that tells of their remote foreign origin. In like manner the name of the great inventor who is at present the object of so many a notice and such special attention in the press, and which, gives no indication of his Irish parentage and the Celtic nature that he possesses. It is no small satisfaction for us to feel that while Signor Marconi is being praised on all sides and that his inventive genius is receiving well-merited recognition, the larger share of that genius is Irish, and by education, sentiment, and blood, he is one of that unending phalanx of Irishmen that has shed lustre upon the two last centuries in almost every department.

LEO XIII. AND DIVORCE.—We have filled many a column of the "True Witness" with the evidences of the Church's abhorrence of divorce, and of all that might tend to lower the high standard of Christian marriage. Pope after Pope has fulminated against the abuse of that sacrament, and council after council has upheld the sanctity and inviolability of that holy state. At present a new divorce bill is before the Italian Parliament, and the subject was selected by the Holy Father for one of the most important of his recent allocutions. According to the reports received by "Reuter's Telegram," the Sovereign Pontiff began by saying that, although he should have liked to speak of more joyous things, he was obliged to speak of the sorrows which had marked the last few years. The cause which troubled Catholicism were of various kinds, and they were not small ones. He did not propose to touch upon all of them, but would confine himself to speaking of a matter which tended to the detriment of morals and faith, and which ought not to be passed over in silence. He said that if old age gave authority, if faith in a common fatherland was worth anything, he addressed not only a warning, but an appeal to those who proposed to vote in favour of the Bill now drawn up, to desert from their intention in the name of all that they held sacred and dear. He exhorted them not to refuse to consider the conjugal bonds of Christians as bonds holy, indissoluble, and eternal in virtue of Divine right. No human law could ever abrogate such a right. His Holiness went on to expound at some length his ideas of the sanctity and indissolubility of religious marriage, and, after a detailed consideration of the relation with the civil law, urged upon his hearers the evil results, so far as the family and society were concerned, which divorce involved. The power of a State being closely allied with its morals and its laws, corruption meant its ruin, and the laxity it encouraged was not only a private calamity, for it contributed to the perversion of the people. His Holiness expressed the hope that those engaged in politics would not forget the lessons of their ancestors, that they were to keep upon their judgment, and would not relinquish that prudence that nature had given to Italians. Concluding, the Pope exhorted the Cardinals to pray to God to protect Italy in the present difficult times.

INTEMPERANCE.—Mr. T. B. Minahan has of late been filling a section of the New York press, especially the "Journal," with contributions on the subject of intemperance. His idea seems to be the reforming of the saloon system; that is to say, the abolition of the custom of "treating." We have grave doubts as to the results of which that gentleman appears to be so sanguine. It is quite possible that intemperance might be reduced somewhat by the effacing of the "treating" habit; but as long as the open saloon exists we do not see how it is to be accomplished. There may be methods of which we are not aware, and that the inventor of the new system has in his mind; but we cannot be made to believe that any number of reformers are able to prevent drinkers from "treating." We admit that if the intemperance that now prevails would be reduced by no small de-

gree. It is also apparent, of late years, that treating is going out of fashion in the world. It might die a natural death if sufficient time were given, and a generation were allowed to pass away. But we do not believe that you can coerce people into any such a restriction of their olden customs. In fact, we know of only two ways to prevent drinking—one is by force of moral and religious persuasion; the other is by men, of their own accord, coming to the determination to resist all temptations, and to not drink. As long as a man plays with the reptile he is certain, sooner or later, to be bitten—and the bite means moral death. Some can resist, on account of special physical powers, longer than others; but eventually all have to succumb. Of the two means the higher and the surer one is religion. Without that men cannot be expected to overcome their passions.

CIVIC AFFAIRS.—While the ordinary elector is indifferent to the fact that within the short space of three weeks the day of nomination of candidates for representation in the City Council, for the next two years, will be at hand, the busy company and franchise promoters, the brokers in our miniature "Wall Street," the big trusts and companies who now hold impotent franchises, the speculator, capitalist and a host of others associated with them, are maturing their plans to ensure the election of their friends so that when the time comes around to secure further concessions from the city in connection with their enterprises they will have their voice in the Council Chamber.

A QUEER POLICY.—We have noticed during years past that many of our Irish national societies, mutual benefit organizations, some of our parishes, and our educational institutions, freely use the Protestant daily press whenever they wish to advertise any particular undertaking and for which service they pay rates varying from 10 to 32 cents per line, less a discount for cash; while on the other hand, those societies, parishes or institutions expect the "True Witness" to perform a like service for them free. This is not reasonable, much less just. From week to week we are requested to publish all kinds of notices which are of no general public interest and which the Protestant press has refused publication time and again, unless the money was forthcoming.

We claim that the "True Witness" in as far as Irish, English and Scotch Catholics are concerned, is equal, if not superior as an advertising medium, to the most widely circulated Protestant daily newspaper in Montreal and in this province, because it reaches every Catholic family whose members are the moving force in Catholic ranks to-day, that support the Church, that subscribe to charity, that patronize the public celebrations of our societies and are their live and active members, that make our benevolent and mutual insurance organizations a success, that are the mainstay of our schools and convents. These are the men and women who read the "True Witness," and welcome it to their fireside every week and read it, not in the perfunctory manner in which they read the daily press, but in a studied and careful way.

OUR SUBSCRIBERS.—The first letter we received for the year 1902 was from one of our esteemed French-Canadian subscribers in Dorchester County. It contained the sum of one dollar, in payment of one year's subscription in advance. This is an example for our fellow-countrymen, many of whom are very slow in their payments. On the following day we received several remittances from other parts of this province and from Ontario and New Brunswick, of two dollars, accompanied by letters of approval and encouragement, in payment of subscriptions until 1903.

Those subscribers in our estimation are the silent heroes that work in a practical and loyal manner for the cause of religion. Were we to follow these co-religionists, French-Canadian, Irish, Scotch and English, through life we have no hesitation in saying that their actions would prove them to be the mainstay in every good work associated with the temporal welfare of the Church. Every practical Catholic is interested in the success of Catholic journalism, because its success means his success in every walk of life.

IRISH PIONEERS.—Within recent years terrible has been the price which our race and creed has had to pay for their indifference in all public matters which concern them as citizens of Montreal. As we recall the memory of the public-spirited acts of the Irish pioneers of three decades ago, their courage, self-sacrifice and unflinching demands for equal rights whenever their privileges as citizens were in question, and draw a comparison with that period and the present, the full significance of the price of our lack of public spirit and many courage of conviction dawns upon us.

CATHOLIC PROGRESS.

We learn from the "Daily News" that the "Almanack" which forms part of the "Calendar of the English Church" sets down the number of Catholics amongst the Anglo-Saxons—by which, we suppose, is meant the British Empire—at fifteen million. We do not know how the compiler has secured his figures, but the estimate of Catholic authorities is about twelve millions—

the same as the number of Catholics in the United States. Unquestionably the Catholic Church, despite grave difficulties and very strong opposition, is making headway in the British Empire. And there is good reason to believe that it will in due time regain the German Empire, from which the great heresy came to Great Britain. The following are the official figures of the census of December 1, 1900, for the Kingdom of Prussia, according to religious denominations:—Protestant State Church, 21,817,577 (1895: 20,351,448); Catholics, 12,118,870 (1895: 10,999,505); other Christians, 139,125 (1895: 119,243); Jews, 892,322 (1895: 879,716); religion unknown, 9,813 (1895: 5,209). The Protestant (State Church) increase during the five years is 7.7 per cent, the Catholic 10 per cent, that of the Jews only 3.6 per cent. In what may be termed the home par excellence of Protestantism the Catholic Church is making rapid strides.—Catholic Times.

CATHOLIC YOUNG MEN AND CHARITABLE WORK.

The Archbishop of Dublin presided at the quarterly general meeting of the Dublin branches of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul in Dublin, recently.

In the course of an interesting address, His Grace said: You have still to regret—and allow me to say that for my part I regret it deeply, and for their own sake even more than for the sake of the Society—the comparative failure of every effort that has as yet been made by the Society to recruit its ranks from the more youthful section of our Catholic population. As to this, however, I should wish to make one remark. Whilst the passage of the report dealing with this one drawback was being read, it struck me that the way in which the subject was dealt with was more creditable to the honesty than to the ingenuity of whoever drew it up (laughter and applause). The report gives the figures for 1896 and the figures for 1900, and shows an increase of only 32. Whilst the figures were being read I was reminded of what is told of a schoolmaster in a certain part of this country. He published an advertisement glorifying his school, and claimed that it had a great success at the intermediate examinations, saying that it was enough to mention the striking fact that in the previous year he had increased by 100 per cent. the successes of the year before. Well, on inquiry it came out that in the first of the two years, only one of his boys had passed (laughter), so that what it all came to was that in the next year a second boy had succeeded in passing, two boys instead of one (laughter and applause). Yes, that made an increase of 100 per cent., and I think that if I had had the drawing up of this report I might have put the case precisely in that way, for that is what it comes to. There were 32 new members of the more youthful class in the year 1896, and 64 in the year 1900, just twice the number, an increase of 100 per cent. (applause and laughter). Now, looked at in that way, the increase, I think, is not one that we should regard as not giving some ground for satisfaction.

But, as you know, I have always proclaimed it here, and what, I think, was more to the purpose at the time—I took the opportunity of saying it to the public from the platform of your meeting at Glasnevin Orphanage, that the one chance of success in this vitally important matter lies in the work being taken up by the heads of our Catholic colleges. It is no harm to ask the question, are they doing their duty in this respect? I should be slow to say that they are not. But, with the exception of two of them—the two that you have already heard mentioned here to-day—I cannot take the responsibility of saying that they are. You know the two exceptions to which I refer—Blackrock College—where a conference has already been established, and University College here, where, as we have heard to-day, a conference is to be established without delay. All this is very gratifying to me. As to the Pioneer College in this matter, Blackrock, well, the college itself is not a member of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, so I am breaking no rule of the society in mentioning its name. I have made some inquiries as to how far the good work that has already been begun there may have led to the one practical result that I, for my part, have had in view from the first—that is, the bringing in a practical form before the mind of a Catholic young man on his leaving his school or college, and entering upon his work in the world, that it would be but natural for him, as a Catholic, to become a member of the local conference of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul.

I have had, as you know, something to do with the pressing forward of this idea of the establishment of conferences, organized on suitable lines—in our Catholic colleges in this diocese, in so far as this may be found practicable. So I have naturally been desirous of seeing what had come of it in the instance in which the practical trial of the idea had been made. I think it may be no harm to have it made known to the students who have formed that Blackrock College Conference, that so much interest is taken in the progress and results of their good work by some of us who are outside their college walls. I felt indeed that it was hardly fair to look for such results so soon. But I have had inquiries made, and, so even before it was announced by your hon. secretary here to-day, I had become aware that those members of your first College Conference at Blackrock who have already gone out from it have verified all that was expected to come from the establishment of a conference in their

colleges. Wherever they have gone, they have, as a rule, become members of the local conferences of the society. I felt, indeed, that it was too soon to expect that any such results could have been realized, but as I was coming here to-day I thought it only right to ascertain the facts of the case. I do not know that I need add anything to what I have now said, beyond expressing the hope, the very confident hope which I entertain, that when I next have the opportunity of addressing you—and I trust it may not be so long as it has been since I last met you here. I shall have the pleasure of congratulating you upon a large increase in the number of your college conferences, and upon its more and necessary result of that increase, a proportionately large increase in the number of your active members, not only in this diocese of Dublin, but throughout all Ireland.

FIVE MINUTES SERMON.

For centuries the children of Israel had suffered the bondage of Egypt, and our Divine Saviour also passed several years of His childhood in exile in the same country, when the impious Herod sought His life. At last, however, God had compassion on His people, and they received the consoling message to go into the land of Canaan, which is the land of Israel, that glorious land which flows with milk and honey. The same cheering command was given to St. Joseph, the foster-father of Jesus, by the angel in the gospel teaching: "Go into the land of Israel."

To-day a similar command is given to you by the angel's voice through my mouth: Go ye into the glorious land of Israel, that glorious land, however, I mean the kingdom of God, the Catholic Church. You will perhaps exclaim: What a singular exhortation, as if we had not entered that Church at the sacrament of baptism! I know that you consider yourselves born children of the holy Church, but are you true, living members? Are you, according to the Apostle St. Paul, "fellow-citizens with the saints, and domestics of God?" This is an important question, the answer of which will one day decide our eternal salvation. Let us answer it to-day before Him, who will then be our Judge.

The true Christian does not make himself known, merely by his baptismal certificate, but by his fidelity in keeping his faith. With unshaken loyalty he adheres to the doctrines of the Church, and courageously professes his faith by word and deed before God and men. Well, then, my dear Christians, do you cling steadfastly to the faith of the Church? The Catholic Church, as you know, is the teacher of mankind, appointed by God. She is guided by the Holy Ghost, founded upon a rock, against which the gates of hell shall never prevail. The Church is, according to St. Paul, the pillar and ground of truth. She is the beacon on the sea of life, to show us through mist and darkness the way to the haven of eternal happiness. Examine well, my dear Christians, if you are attached to this Church, to her doctrine, with unswerving fidelity? Do you believe in her mysteries with entire submission of the intellect, because God has revealed them, and because they are taught by the Church?

Do you believe the Catholic faith as the only true faith revealed by God, and hold any other doctrine deviating from this faith as error, human invention, and, as such, incapable of leading to eternal happiness? Or, are you shaken by every breath of doubt? Do you count yourselves among the so-called liberals, who disdain to receive any instruction from the priests, the ministers of God's Church, who seek their knowledge from an infidel press, who remain, as the Protestant or anything else is immaterial, provided one leads a respectable life? Ah! woe to you if you are believers in such doctrines. Your names then may, indeed, be written in the Catholic baptismal register, but they are not inscribed in the book of life. Woe to you, for you have not yet entered into the land of Israel, but you remain in the darkness of Egypt.

The true Christian does not show his Catholicity merely by professing his faith, but by leading a life according to the spirit of the Church, that is, by taking part in the religious services, and in the celebration of the divine mysteries. Let me put this question plainly to you: Is the house of God your favorite resort? Do you hasten there with joyful anticipation on Sundays and holy days of obligation, to participate in the holy sacrifice of the Mass, and to refresh your mind by hearing the word of God? Do you often approach the sacraments, those fountains of grace, in order to purify and sanctify your soul? Or, do you belong to that class of lukewarm Catholics who, occasionally, perhaps on some great feast, repair to the house of God? Do you belong to that number who, by omitting their Easter confession and communion, place themselves in the ranks of the heathen and public sinners, and who, in case of sudden death, compel the priest to deny them Christian burial? Ah! my dear brother, if this should be your condition, then I am forced to tell you with sorrow: You have not yet entered into the land of promise, you are still a stranger in Israel.

ST BUDGET'S NIGHT REFUGE

Report for week ending Sunday, 5th January, 1902.—Males 829, females 70. Irish 195, French 166, English 9, Scotch and other nationalities 23. Total 892. These had night's lodging and breakfast.

LORD

The country has had time to estimate the worth of Lord Rosebery's speech at the Congress of the Liberal League. The speech was very meaningful. To be a prelude to a public entrance into public life, with a view to impressing the minds of the Liberal disaffiliates of Tory "Times" calls it "unpractical," the "Guardian" bluntly "frosts." Most other more or less uttered regard to it. They see what it means, do not discover what self intends to do, put himself at the nation; but appears in no hurry to be dismissed. It is a definite programme to a politician who is party-hardly, indeed himself. For on that which everything in any Liberal administration Lord Rosebery is a own Scotch hills. With regard to Ireland to that question, hope or despair for as on a pivot. His question Lord Rose to understand as the Irish Party, he on its alliance with need therefore take consideration about the repeat Lord Rosebery he hoisted the Union; because he had country and held that was no further troubled by the accepted from the B. unless they come to agreement with the they will cut down sentation to fifty; mean a hundred on what party can sap power for injury which fifty determined? Do the Libe returned to office by ity as was granted Government? Are they ever be, so ur, and all accept Lord miership—a premier which must be exer for he could not per own party in the C possible that all th als, men like Mr. J.

Profes

BY

In the Church of Soho, London, a recently sung his first which occasion a sp preached by Rev. D. "Dignity of the Priest" to state that received a treatment to impress every page of a sublime idea of rogatives as well as responsibilities of the received the sacraments and who ascend God." However, the point in the sermon from the published London press, which such importance, an such explained to us that we deem it well in a special manner said: "Men outside Church were apt to priesthood as a good profession; but the a profession. It is calling, a divine vocation said to His Apostle to every priest who altar: You have no I have chosen you, you and appointed me, bring forth fruit."

This declaration of a preacher in regard to the priesthood is of once than might at ent. A profession is whereby a livelihood the attainment of w of special studies. T of law, by means studies the lawyer of a member of the erices, or practis mainly, to gain a ally, he has certain such as that of be some day; but the for which he soug the profession was a living. On the priesthood is a voc man does not enter