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Current Topics

AT HOME AND ABROAD.

MR. PURCELL
ON HIS
DEFENCE.

MR. E. S. PURCELL, whose "voluminous libel" on Cardinal Manning, called by courtesy a biography, has obtained for him a certain amount of notoriety, is making strenuous efforts to rehabilitate himself in the eyes of the literary world.

Immediately after his book appeared Mr. Purcell tried to stem the flood of indignant criticism which its publication called forth by publishing a series of articles by way of defence in the *Nineteenth Century*. Realising, no doubt, that that defence had proved utterly lame and ineffective, Mr. Purcell returns again to the charge and in the current number of the same magazine makes another feeble effort to whitewash himself. He entitles his article "The Ethics of Suppression in Biography," and the production may be fairly described as a clumsy attempt to twist and distort the point at issue between himself and his critics. He poses as the champion of truth and candour, and insinuates that his Catholic critics advocate a wholesale suppression of the truth in biography. "Are corrupt intrigues at the Vatican to be suppressed . . . or is the truth to be told? That," he says, "is the vital question raised in the controversy of the last few months." "The question has been taken up," he continues, "on both sides of the Atlantic: Is it a virtue to suppress historic truth or no?" That is a complete evasion of the real point at issue between Mr. Purcell and his critics. The critics have not questioned the soundness of the general principle that in biography a real and not an ideal portrait should be painted. What they do quarrel with is the wretched use which Mr. Purcell made of that principle. It is one thing to paint a real portrait: it is quite another thing to emphasise the faults of a character out of all proportion and multiply insinuations at every turn which a close examination of the evidence shows to be baseless. This latter is precisely what Mr. Purcell has done. There is nothing good or great about his Manning. It is, as one of the critics has said, a portrait of littleness and meanness. "The portrait is not the Manning of the Vatican Council or of the great strike in London, but the Manning of the bath tub, where greatness disappears in the healthful but ridiculous pastime of washing the human skin." At every episode in Manning's career the biographer is at hand with a malevolent suggestion of unworthy motives, and in cases where the candid reader, if left to himself, might imagine this or that move to spring from pure honesty, Mr. Purcell is careful to expose the particular wire the Cardinal was then pulling. Fortunately this sort of thing defeats itself and no one now takes Mr. Purcell's biography seriously. The ponderous volumes carry with them their own evidence of the author's incapacity for the work, and no one will be surprised at the announcement that a new biography is under way which will contain a true portrait of the great Cardinal, painted by a capable artist, as an effective offset to the odious caricature of Mr. Purcell.

THE IRISH
LANGUAGE
MOVEMENT.

THE Irish language movement which has spread with such phenomenal rapidity during the last few years is increasing in intensity and evoking fresh enthusiasm every day. Gaelic Leagues are established not only in Ireland but throughout the United

Kingdom, America, and the colonies. Gaelic papers are published as organs of the leagues, and classes are being everywhere established in which systematic instruction is given in the old tongue. For the first time in the history of the movement it has been formally endorsed by the Irish nation and made a plank in the National platform. At the great convention of the Irish race held recently the following resolution was unanimously adopted:—"We hail with satisfaction the successful efforts that are being made at Home and abroad to revive and extend interest in the preservation of the Gaelic tongue, and we urge upon all those who can further the interests of

this movement to give every help and encouragement to the preservation and study of our ancient Irish tongue by the children of the Gael. That the most strenuous efforts be made to create and foster a healthy national sentiment by disseminating the knowledge of Irish history, and by the cultivation of the Irish language, Irish literature, music, and games." This is only as it should be. In the Irish language are enshrined and reflected the thoughts and aspirations of the ancestors of the Irish race, and we know of nothing more calculated to bind Irishmen together and to foster a healthy national sentiment than an earnest and enthusiastic study of the mother tongue. In this connection a very sensible resolution was recently adopted by the Gaelic League of Boston, U.S.A. At a meeting held to consider the best method of extending a knowledge of the Gaelic language as a literary medium, it was decided that the best method was to adopt the modern Roman alphabet, instead of the old unfamiliar Celtic alphabet, in introducing the language and its literature to the public. It is to be hoped that this suggestion will be universally adopted. For one thing, it would make it much easier for the ordinary Press to assist in spreading Gaelic literature, and it would besides facilitate the study of the language. It is a great inducement to a beginner undertaking the study of a language to have a knowledge already of the character in which he is going to learn that language, and the universal adoption of the plain simple letter which everyone knows would induce thousands to participate in this glorious movement for reviving the good old mother tongue.

ANOTHER
ENGLISH
CARDINAL

IN connection with the future Consistory, about which a great deal of speculation has taken place a number of the Roman journals give publicity to the interesting rumour that another English Cardinal may be looked for ere long in the person of the Very Rev. Dom Aidan Gasquet, D.D., O.S.B. The *Catholic Times* throws some doubt upon the rumour, but there are a great many circumstances that point to its probable truth and it is accepted as trustworthy by all the leading Catholic journals. It is certain that the elevation would give very general satisfaction in England as being a high compliment to English Catholics, and it is no less certain that Dr. Gasquet would prove a worthy recipient of this great dignity. Dom Gasquet is an Englishman of good family and is one of the most distinguished members of the Benedictine Order in England. He is an able theologian and is the author of many learned, historical and antiquarian works. He has always been a *persona grata* at the Vatican, where his profound scholarship was fully appreciated, and only recently the Holy Father appointed him a member of the special Commission set up to inquire into the validity of Anglican Orders. Dr. Gasquet was, it may be remarked, the intimate friend and near connection of the late Cardinal Manning, and his brother was the physician who attended the Cardinal in his last hours.

THE CATHOLIC
TRUTH CON-
FERENCE.

THE Catholic Truth Society, which has done and is doing such splendid work for the Church, was first founded about thirty years ago. It was well organised and capably managed, but for some reason or other it did not "catch on," and after a while it ceased to exist. It was soon revived, however, and its history since that time has been one of yearly increasing interest and vitality, so that now it has come to be recognised as one of the most popular and important of Catholic institutions. Under its auspices a conference is held every year, which, though organised by the Catholic Truth Society, is in reality a general conference of representative Catholics, whether connected with the Catholic Truth Society or not. Subjects of general interest and the pressing problems of the day are discussed at these conferences, and the highest ability in the Church, clerical and lay, is brought to bear on the discussion. The annual gathering for 1896 has just taken place at Hanley, and proved in every way an unqualified success. The Most Rev. Dr. Hilsley, Bishop of Birmingham, presided, and the opening address was delivered by his Eminence Cardinal Vaughan, who took as his subject the Pope's Encyclical on the Reunion of Christendom and the more recent Bull on Anglican Orders. Papers

SMOKE "ROYAL COLORS" TOBACCO.

(IMPROVED AROMATIC.)