

GENERAL BOOTH'S PROPOSAL.



We have referred elsewhere to the condemnation made in certain quarters of General Booth's proposal to supplement the measures he recommends as an adequate scheme of relief for the misery that abounds in England by forming special settlements in these colonies. It would seem that the spirit of brotherhood existing among us, and of which we sometimes hear a good deal spoken, is, after all, somewhat exclusive and narrow in its sympathies.

The General's appeal is one, nevertheless, that has no ordinary claims on everyone boasting his connection with English associations, and one indeed which right-minded men of every country must treat with due consideration. General Booth's book reveals a state of things as alarming as it is piteous and terrible. There are, he tells us, some three millions of people, or about one-tenth of the population of Great Britain, who are only able to live even for a single week by the aid they receive from charity of one kind or another, or from the proceeds of crime and vice. "To many," he says, "the world is all slum, with the workhouse as an intermediate purgatory before the grave."—The unfortunate people General Booth regards as, in their present condition, beyond the reach of hope.

With the General in his character of a religious leader we necessarily have nothing to do. It is as a social reformer we are interested in him. But we can understand the view he takes of the state of things referred to :

"What is the use," he asks, "of preaching the Gospel to men whose whole attention is concentrated upon a mad desperate struggle to keep themselves alive? You might as well give a tract to a shipwrecked sailor who is battling with the surf which has drowned his comrades, and threatens to drown him. He will not listen to you. Nay, he cannot hear you any more than a man whose head is under water can hear a sermon. The first thing to do is to get him at least a footing on firm ground, and to give him room to live. Then you may have a chance. At present you have none. And you will have the better opportunity to find a way to his heart, if he comes to know it was you who pulled him out of the horrible pit and miry clay in which he was sinking to perdition."

As things are, moreover, the evil, instead of diminishing, is on the way to increase. The very measure on which the firmest reliance as remedial in its nature and tending to promote the national prosperity has been placed, seems, on the contrary, a force of an opposite kind :

"It will be said," writes the General, "the child of to-day has the inestimable advantage of education. No, he has not. Educated the children are not. They are pressed through 'standards,' which exact a certain acquaintance with ABC and po'books and figures, but educated they are not in the sense of the development of their latent capacities so as to make them capable for the discharge of their duties in life. The new generation can read, no doubt. Otherwise where would be the sale of 'Sixteen String Jack,' 'Dick Turpin,' and the like. But take the girls. Who can pretend that the girls whom our schools are now turning out are half as well educated for the work of life as their grandmothers were at the same age? . . . And even the schooling, such as it is, at what an expense is it often imparted! The rakings of the human cesspool are brought into the schoolroom and mixed up with your children. Your little ones, who never heard a foul word, and who are not only innocent, but ignorant, of all the horrors of vice and sin, sit for hours side by side with little ones whose parents are habitually drunk, and play with others whose ideas of merriment are gained from the familiar spectacle of the nightly debauch by which their mothers earn their bread. It is good, no doubt, to learn the ABC, but it is not so good that in acquiring these indispensable rudiments your children should also acquire the vocabulary of the harlot and the corner-boy. I speak only of what I know, and of that which has been brought home to me as a matter of repeated complaint by my officers, when I say that the obscenity of the talk of many of the children of some of our public schools could hardly be outdone even in Sodom and Gomorrah. Childish innocence is very beautiful; but the bloom is soon destroyed, and it is a cruel awakening for a mother to discover that her tenderly-nurtured boy, or her carefully-guarded daughter, has been initiated by a companion into the mysteries of abomination."

Piteous and terrible, then, as we have said, is the condition of things already existing,—and the prospect that it must increase and grow, rather than suffer a check, is alarming in the extreme. When the colonies, therefore, are appealed to to take their part in measures proposed to remedy this terrible state of things, to rescue these people condemned to a world that is all slum—with the workhouse for their earthly purgatory,—shall we gather up our garments tight about us and exclaim against the defiling contact? Rest assured that, with the Old Country already in such a condition and growing worse from day to day, we must suffer defilement whether we will or not, and even our own per-

sonal interests call on us to give all the aid we can in carrying out a remedy.

Besides, it is not proposed to turn loose upon us a mob of criminals unreformed and untried. General Booth's plan is to test his emigrants. They would come to him first as casual inmates of a city depot, where, if found suitable, they would be draughted to a Farm Colony in the country, and, finally, having been fully proved and trained, they would be sent to the settlements beyond the seas.

We have said that with General Booth as a religious leader we have nothing to do. We have no expectation, in short, respecting the sect founded by him but that it must suffer the fate of all the sects that have preceded it and separate into divisions—more or less grotesque. As a social reformer, nevertheless, the General seems to us to have practical notions and talents of considerable value, and it would be a waste of qualities sadly wanted and not often forthcoming, were he not to be given a fair field for their exercise.—It is to be hoped the colonies will not gain the evil distinction of repelling the General's proposal, through any nervous and groundless fear of defilement, or without a due and favourable consideration of it.

THE Most Rev. Dr. Moran left Dunedin on Friday for Queens-town. His Lordship will open a Dominican convent at Milton on Sunday next, returning on Monday to Dunedin.

THE Rev. Father Golden left Dunedin on Friday, *en route* for Auckland. The rev. gentleman's departure from this city has caused much regret, as, during his stay here, he had become extremely and most deservedly popular among the Catholic community.

THE Rev. Michael Kelly, S.J., of Richmond, Victoria, arrived in Dunedin from Melbourne on Wednesday, *en route* for the hot springs.

THE Rev. Father Burke, who has been engaged during the past week in conducting a retreat of the Dominican nuns, preached in St. Joseph's Cathedral, Dunedin, on Sunday evening. The Rev. preacher took for his subject, mortal sin, and delivered a most eloquent sermon, listened to with wrapt attention by a crowded congregation.

A RECEPTION of postulants and profession of novices took place at the Dominican convent, Dunedin, on the afternoon of Christmas Day. The young ladies received were the Misses McIntyre, Arrowtown, (in religion Sister Mary Bonaventure); Quilter, Waitabuna, (in religion Sister Mary Reginald), and O'Connor, Gore, a lay sister, (in religion Sister Mary John Baptist). Those professed were the Misses Ralph, Auckland (in religion Sister Mary Ignatius), and O'Neill, Ireland, a lay sister (in religion Sister Mary Malachi. The ceremonies, at which his Lordship the Bishop officiated, were performed privately.

THE first days of the year were not particularly favourable to the *fête* of the Caledonian Society of Otago at Kensington. New Year's Day was wet—an unrelenting down-pour—and on the succeeding days there was something like a gale of wind blowing. The sports, however, were carried out with spirit—and the great popularity to which they have attained was testified to by the large attendance, which, notwithstanding all the difficulties of the weather, was present.

THE *Irish Catholic* of November 15 gives some passages from an interview between a representative of the *Univers* and the Archbishop of Cashel, which took place as his Grace was passing through Paris on his return journey from Rome to Ireland. The following is particularly interesting:—"Monsignor Croke has informed us that he has been enchanted with his journey. Leo XIII. granted him a long and affectionate audience. Monsignor Croke found the Holy Father in perfect health, and fully conversant with Irish affairs. The Pope knows that the Bishops of Ireland will not fail to put the Irish Catholics on their guard against every agitation which might be contrary to morals. And Catholic Ireland knows that the Holy Father will not abandon his children in the midst of the crisis through which they are now passing. On our speaking to the eminent prelate of the reports circulated by certain journals in London, Monsignor Croke answered:—"I say decidedly that these are not correct. There is no difficulty for the Bishops of Ireland in the situation; there are nothing but the best relations of confidence and affection between the clergy and people of Ireland and His Holiness Pope Leo XIII."

IT seems to be as the result of some misunderstanding that the honour conferred on Mr. John Roberts has fallen short of knight-hood. There can, of course, have been no intention of offering a slight