

It has been noticed of late years that the number of youthful criminals has increased in an alarming manner, and those who have studied the subject trace back this increase to the time when the crucifix was expelled from the schools and the devoted Christian Brothers and teaching Sisters were sent adrift.

Doing away with Baptism and First Communion.

If not so miserably sad, the pompous ceremonies invented by the Freemasons to replace Catholic Baptism and First Communion would provoke our laughter. They have instituted what they call the adoptions, where children of six and seven are presented to the assembled brethren. On their heads these poor infants wear black veils, on which are inscribed the words 'Misery, Ignorance, and Fanaticism.' These veils are torn from their heads with many emphatic speeches, in which allusions are made to the 'political and religious fanaticism' against which the youthful adepts must one day wage war. The ceremony is a long and complicated one. Flowers, cakes and wine are bestowed upon the 'adopted' children of the sect, but these apparently harmless rites are followed by bitter denunciation against 'religious congregations * * * * the so-called divine revelation and its inhuman precepts * * * * the odious precepts professed by St. Paul, St. Augustine, St. Thomas and Bossuet, who are stigmatized as curses of the human race—maux du genre humain.'

One of the chief objects that the French Freemasons have in view at the present moment is to enroll women in their ranks. Although the primary schools are now in the hands of lay teachers, who may be trusted to mould the minds of children according to their views, the influence of French mothers is, as a rule, a strong one. We are speaking here of the women of the people, who may be ignorant and indifferent, but who, as a rule, are not hostile to religion. Many a boy or girl in the Paris 'faubourgs' still finds in his or her home atmosphere the saving influence that keeps the faith alive in spite of outside temptations to disbelief and to blasphemy. The men who wish to 'crush God' are well aware of this. In a Masonic assembly, held at Besancon as far back as 1879, a deputy, B. Beauquier, declared that his party would not be victorious over superstition 'until women come to our assistance and fight at our side,' and in the congresses and assemblies that have been held since that date the same idea is repeated over and over again.

In the Masonic congress held only four years ago, in 1901, an account was given of the different means by which the sect endeavors to gain the women of France to its cause. To serve its purpose mixed meetings, where women as well as men are admitted, have been instituted in different towns. These meetings, called in Masonic language 'Tenues Blanches,' take the form of balls, concerts, and lectures, but their object is, to quote the words used in the congress of 1901, to make women acquainted with the aspirations and mission of Freemasonry, compared to the intentions and work of the Church.

Masonic Marriages.

The members of the sect also, 'in order to impress the imagination of women,' endeavor to give a certain pomp to the civil ceremonies, by which they seek to replace Christian baptism and marriage.

The first Masonic marriage was celebrated at the 'Grand Orient' in 1880. The head of the 'loge,' in his speech to the young couple, congratulated them for 'having shaken off the prejudices that are the strength of the black men, and for preferring to the blessing of a paid priest the respectful greetings of their Masonic friends.'

Since then similar ceremonies have been celebrated in different towns, their forms varying according to the fancy of the parties. Thus, at Toulouse, in 1881, the bride laid her bouquet at the feet of a statue of the Republic. In 1895, however, an official programme was drawn up, and is now applied to every Masonic marriage that takes place in the French temples of the sect. Its chief features, apart from a variety of complicated and grotesque ceremonies, are the virulent denunciations that are hurled at the Catholic doctrine of marriage. For instance, the bride and bridegroom are taught that, contrary to the 'doctrine liberticide' of the Church, their union 'may be legally and freely dissolved'; and to exemplify this a piece of crystal is broken in their presence by the brother who performs the ceremony.

Masonic funerals are, like Masonic weddings, regulated by a ritual that was drawn up for the purpose, and first put into execution in 1886. Its chief characteristics are the vagueness of the doctrines that are expounded, the utter hopelessness that underlies the empty

rhetorical forms by which the adepts of the sect seek to replace the soul-inspiring petitions of the Catholic liturgy.

Of later years, in order to strengthen their position, the French Masons have started a plan for admitting women to their meetings, not only as guests, but as fellow-workers. The subject was discussed in 1900, 1901, and 1902. The idea has been adopted in theory, but it has not so far been put into a practical form. B. Morel in 1902 declared that the general assembly of the sect 'having admitted the principle that it is necessary, in order to secure the progress of republican ideas and the ultimate defeat of clericalism, to attract the feminine element, in which the Church finds her strength,' commissioned the 'loges' that belong to its jurisdiction to study the ways and means that can best serve this purpose.

We know, however, on the authority of the members of the 'Association Antimaconique,' that so far the women of France show scant willingness to co-operate with the Freemasons in their evil task. Here and there a few 'strong-minded' sisters have responded to their appeal, but these are exceptions to the general indifference.

Openly Declare War Against God.

Strong in the support of a Government whose prominent members belong to the sect, they (the Freemasons) no longer conceal their real aims, and openly declare war not only against religious men and women, but against God Himself.

From the fact of the French Government being in the hands of Freemasons at the present day, it naturally follows that the safest, indeed, the only certain, way of obtaining preferment is to enter the sect. We speak here of the professions or careers that are more or less under Government control. Hence the extraordinary progress made by the brotherhood within the last few years. The members of the 'Association Antimaconique' have carefully drawn up a list of the French Freemasons, and so accurate is their information that their assertions on this head have never been contradicted. On these lists we find many names of employees in the different Government offices, prefets and sous prefets, some officers, a certain number of small tradesmen and shop-keepers, a large proportion of doctors and lawyers.

Pitiable instances might be related of the way in which, principally in small towns, the poor, the timid, and the weak are tyrannised over by the sect. We might give names of places where a Government employee, who happens to be a practical Catholic, knows as a certainty that if he goes to Mass on Sundays the small post that affords him his one means of supporting his family will be taken from him. His colleagues, who belong to the sect, are ever on the watch. By denouncing a 'clerical' they are certain to gain the good graces of the 'brethren.' That a similar system of secret denunciations was organised in the army was sufficiently proved last October by M. Guyot de Villeneuve's startling statements in the French Chambers.

If an outsider interested in the subject inquires from the members of the 'Association Antimaconique' what may have been, so far, the practical results of their campaign, they will reply that these results are difficult to put down in black and white. What is absolutely certain is that their work is carried on with unflagging perseverance; that they never allow their zeal to get the better of their prudence; that all their statements are carefully proved; that slowly, steadily, with unerring accuracy, they are endeavoring to show the deluded French people what are the true aims of the men into whose evil hands the Government of the country has been given up. The task is an arduous one. It implies long and continuous efforts, but its practical value at the present day is undoubted, and, with God's blessing, it will in time be crowned with success.

The W.A. 'Record' of December 15 says: Dividends paid for the expired 11 months of this year by Western Australian gold-mining companies amount to £1,905,033. Inclusive of December distribution, which already total £300,625, the aggregate for the year so far figures out at £2,205,058, and the total to date at £13,777,873.

The Rev. Father Jas. Dalton, who was for some time stationed at Kogarah, was entertained at St. Joseph's Hall, Rockdale, prior to his departure for Canterbury, which has recently been created a parish, to the charge of which Father Dalton has been appointed. Alderman J. F. Hegarty presided, and amongst those on the platform were Alderman D. O'Brien (Mayor of Kogarah), Rev. Fathers J. J. O'Driscoll, J. Whyte, and P. Walsh. The chairman presented the guest with an address and a purse of sovereigns.