

But there still remain certain conditions previous to success. Without them the best-meant efforts of cleric or layman would be tolerably sure, sooner or later, to 'gang alee.' These conditions chiefly regard the Society itself. We are deeply convinced that a strong, judicious, and well-sustained effort to still further and ever further popularise the H.A.C.B.S. would result in increasing its numerical strength and consequent usefulness. Practically what is needed is a keener consciousness on the part of the Executive of the increasing strain of competition to which the Society is being subjected. (1) Subject to correction we venture to suggest a greater flexibility in certain details of payments and benefits—with a watchful eye for new departures in other similar organisations. (2) We fear that sufficient attention has not been paid to the formation and spread of Juvenile Branches. These, if well managed, would form rich recruiting grounds for the Society. We have taken the liberty of suggesting, in connection with the juveniles, a scheme of reduced medical and funeral benefits, coupled with the payment of a sum of money on their twenty-first birthday, to financial survivors as a means of supplying to youthful members the wherewithal for a modest start in life. (3) It seems to us that the future well-being of the Society depends in a considerable measure on its Branches becoming, as far as possible, centres or foci of Catholic social intercourse. Such a programme lies fairly within the scope of the H.A.C.B.S. It is, moreover, forced upon it by the fact that rival associations are already in the field in the same direction, and the friendly and pleasant social gatherings that form the fixed item in their policy have had much to do with their success in attracting to their ranks Catholic young men whose proper place is within the safer portals of the H.A.C.B.S. This is no mere untried suggestion. It has been followed up with the happiest results elsewhere. We need only instance Bendigo (Victoria), where interesting reunions, lectures, socials, entertainments, etc., take place regularly at 8.30 p.m. at the close of the meetings of the local branch, form a pleasing feature in the Catholic social life of the Golden City, and have made the Hibernian Society the most popular, and, numerically, the strongest association in the place. This pleasant social intercourse, coupled with a bonus of 2s 6d for the introduction of each new member, has resulted in rapidly augmenting the ranks of the branch till its membership stands at over 600. It is, in fact, one of the most flourishing Branches—perhaps the most flourishing—of the Society within the seas that wash the shores of Australasia. Its example might, we think, be advantageously followed throughout New Zealand. By the exercise of a little judicious management other existing Catholic societies, clubs, confraternities, etc., might also be brought within the sphere of the social influence of the H.A.C.B.S. and made contributory to its further spread and usefulness.

(4) Two years ago we urged upon the Executive 'a more energetic and systematic canvassing crusade.' Writing upon this point we said: 'We cannot help thinking that much good might be effected by an active, energetic organising secretary of good manners and address, thoroughly posted in his subject and supplied with suitable leaflets, etc., for distribution among possible members and their friends. Such a man, properly deputed by the Executive, would undoubtedly have the cordial co-operation of the clergy everywhere, would strengthen existing Branches, and found new Branches in many centres of population where the green sash has never yet appeared. But mere spasmodic effort is not enough. If eternal vigilance is the price of liberty, perpetual energy is the price of success in the organisation of such bodies as the Hibernian-Australasian Catholic Benefit Society.'

#### NOTICE TO SUBSCRIBERS.

Subscribers are entreated to forward the amounts due by them at the earliest possible moment. The amounts due by individual subscribers are not considerable, but taken together they amount to a very large sum. The many calls that we have to meet make it imperative on us to greatly reduce the amount of indebtedness of our subscribers. We therefore ask those who have received accounts to wipe off their indebtedness to us before the close of the dying century. This will be a suitable mode of celebrating the parting of the nineteenth, and the beginning of the twentieth century.

#### A STUPID CALUMNY.

WE are unable to determine whether the cat-o'-nine-tails or the strait-waistcoat is the proper 'application' for the cable demon who is responsible for the following message which appeared in yesterday's morning, and Tuesday's evening, papers:—

'London, February 25.—Fresh opposition is being shown to the Jesuits in Spain and Portugal owing to the detention of several heiresses in the convents of that Order.'

In our last issue (p. 2) we showed that, after the revolution of 1868, the Jesuits were, as a consequence of political and anti-religious intrigues, driven finally and completely out of the Spanish peninsula. There is not now in Spain, nor has there been at any time since 1868, any Jesuit 'convent,' house, college, or any other institution whatsoever. Neither is there in the country any resident Jesuit, nor even a 'Jesuit in disguise.' The whole story of the 'detention of heiresses' is a brutal and clumsy fabrication, unfit for the columns of any decent paper, and at home only at a Slattery meeting or within the portals of an Orange lodge.

The Jesuits were expelled from Portugal in 1834. They are now permitted to live in the country, and their establishment in Lisbon is one of the highest centres of culture and refinement in Southern Europe. They have been, however, made from time to time the object of the ferocious and active hate with which the Order is viewed by the oath-bound fraternity of the Freemasons on the whole of Continental Europe. In August, 1895, a peculiarly contemptible, but happily unsuccessful, attempt was made to discredit the sons of St. Ignatius in the minds of the populace of Lisbon. The *Correio Nacional*—the leading newspaper in the city—stated that the disorders arising out of the attacks on the Jesuits were entirely the work of the Masonic lodges. Men dressed as priests were (said the *Correio*) sent out by them to steal, or feign to steal, children, and in order to render the Jesuits objects of popular execration, the calumny was industriously circulated that they killed the little ones to make human oil! The grotesque story was not, of course, believed by any person of education, and the Catholic and many of the less extreme 'Liberal' or anti-clerical papers defied the Jacobin organs to name any priest who had given the shadow of foundation for so monstrous a charge. The public of Lisbon waxed very indignant over the contemptible trick, and addresses of protest were extensively signed and presented to the King. The cause of religion, so far from being discredited, was served by the infamous imposture, and the disgrace recoiled on the head of its authors. The cable-message published in yesterday's morning papers is evidently a fresh attempt by the sectaries to hound up a feeling against the sons of St. Ignatius.

#### A MATTER OF BOOKS.

##### A WEST COAST CONTROVERSY.

UNDER the pen-name of 'Catholic' a writer has contributed to recent issues of the *Westport Times* a few trenchant letters on a topic of vital public interest—namely, the responsibility of the Book Committees of our public and circulating libraries in the matter of the selection of literary pabulum to be placed before their subscribers. The question is one of the gravest import, and 'Catholic' deserves the thanks of the community for his courage in having brought it up for definite discussion. 'Be as careful of the books you read,' says Paxton Hood, 'as of the company you keep; for your habits and character will be as much influenced by the former as the latter.' 'Catholic' very properly objected to the presence, on the shelves of the local Athenæum, of a recent novel by the hysterical Marie Corelli—a book which is not merely a gross and direct attack upon the Catholic Church, but upon every form of Christian belief, and which is notorious for its blasphemously incongruous blending of the Most Sacred with the most profane.

'Catholic's' protest in the *Westport Times* aroused a lively little hum of controversy which is still proceeding. He wields a vigorous and facile pen and impales his rivals as fast as they can come on. The local Athenæum, he retorts to one, 'is certainly for all people. It is also supported by all people—by Catholics amongst others; and all we ask in return is that our money shall not go towards obtaining books which slander and degrade our religion and which so distort our most sacred principles as to directly impugn the personal honor of those who adopt and live by them. A recent law case in an Australian colony has proved that this latter is no fanciful grievance.' Here are some samples of 'Catholic's' 'retort courteous' and 'quip modest': To one who said that Miss Corelli's works are widely read: 'This is quite a gratuitous piece of information. So are the *Adventures of Buffalo Bill* and *Deadeye Dick*; but that is no reason why they should