

DEATH

McGIRR.—On December 27, 1912, at the residence of her daughter, Mrs. M. J. Burgess, Peter street West, Anne McGirr, relict of Francis McGirr, South Dunedin; in her eightieth year.—R.I.P.

CONVENT OF THE SACRED HEART, REMUERA AUCKLAND.

The ANNUAL RETREAT given by a Jesuit Father will begin on MONDAY EVENING, JANUARY 20, and end on Saturday morning, January 25.

The ladies wishing to attend should apply as soon as possible.

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MESSAGE OF POPE LEO XIII. TO THE N.Z. TABLET

Pergant Directores et Scriptores New Zealand Tablet, Apostolica Benedictione confortati, Religionis et Justitiae causam promovere per vias Veritatis et Pacis.

Die 4 Aprilis, 1900.

LEO XIII., P.M.



THURSDAY, JANUARY 2, 1913.

THE GAELIC LEAGUE



HERE are few more pathetic meetings recorded in history than a certain encounter of two ships on the coast of Ireland in 1847, the great famine year. An outward-bound emigrant ship bore hundreds of Irish exiles away from the stricken country which could no longer support them; and in mid-harbor it passed the vessel which carried the dead body of O'Connell back to his native land. From the decks of their

ship the kneeling Irishwomen saluted with wailing the remains of the Liberator; and well they might, for this meeting typified the material and spiritual ruin

which had fallen in one year upon their unhappy country. Stricken thus in body and spirit; deprived of her staple food and of the master-mind who for close on twenty years had guided her fortunes, the future of Ireland looked dark indeed.

That is between sixty and seventy years ago, well within the memory of the present generation. And to-day Ireland, so far from being on her deathbed, appears younger and more vigorous than she has been for the past hundred years. What has worked this marvellous change? The Repeal agitation died with O'Connell; indeed, it may almost be said to have predeceased him. For twenty years Ireland was without a movement of national importance. Then in 1870 came the founding of the Home Rule Association, and the formation of that brave and sturdy band of fighters—the Irish Parliamentary Party. But in the very nature of this constitutional agitation, it must be confided to trained and specialised champions. Beyond voting for the Nationalist candidate once every few years, and subscribing towards the party funds, there is little or nothing that the mass of the Irish people can do to help on the good work. Home Rule, once attained, will be an immense benefit to the Irish people; but as a national movement, it is too much confined to a Parliamentary sphere of action to be of use in developing the thews and sinews of Irishmen. But there is an Irish movement of later origin, which, though not aiming at such solid and practical benefit as the Home Rule agitation, has already done splendid work in binding together the different factions in Ireland; bringing back Irishmen to their true national ideals, and developing a united national spirit. In 1891 the Gaelic League was founded; a society having for its objects the preservation of the ancient literature of Ireland, the propagation of the Irish language, and the fostering of a national literature in the Irish tongue. The practical results of this movement have so far been little short of marvellous. In 1891—the year of the league's foundation—there were only 60,000 Irish speakers in the whole of Ireland; less than there had been in Connaught alone thirty years before. Last year Dublin had ten thousand Irish speakers instead of her dozen or so of fifteen years back, and the league had 964 branches in Ireland, as well as many in America. And in 1911 over 20,000 Gaelic books and pamphlets were sold in Ireland.

Nor is this movement a mere antiquarian fad, pursued by the studios in their hours of leisure. 'The students,' writes a daughter of one of the 'Young Ireland' leaders, 'are most often people who have to work all day, and they come to classes at night and make wonderful strides. Many of the teachers, too, have their trades or office-work and give their services free, for the sake of the language.' And she goes on to describe the Dublin girls' school in which she is a teacher of Irish. 'Some of the elder girls have just started an Irish debating society, and hope to become fairly fluent speakers before the end of the school year.' A more unprejudiced and impartial witness to the strength and enthusiasm of the Gaelic League is a recent visitor to Ireland, M. Paul Dubois. In his very interesting book, *Contemporary Ireland*, published last year, he speaks most sympathetically and appreciatively of the work of the league. He, too, describes the Gaelic evening classes in the poor quarters of Dublin, or even of London, and the 'serious, deep, and infectious enthusiasm of the crowd, young and old, clerks and artisans for the most part, who, after their day's work, sit here with shining eyes and strained looks, greedily listening to the lesson, following with their lips, *con amore*, the soft speech of their teacher.' The whole of his chapter on the league is exceedingly interesting, showing, as it does, what a deep hold this somewhat severe study has taken upon all classes of the Irish people. And he quotes as an expression of the general experience of those Irishmen who undertake the study of their hereditary tongue, the following words of an Irishwoman, which, indeed, are everywhere endorsed by Gaelic League students: 'When I began to learn Irish, I felt as though the words were not unfamiliar to me, and my mind went out naturally to

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