

Archbishop Redwood—An Appreciation

(By P. J. O'REGAN.)

Archbishop Redwood's long life extends over New Zealand's existence as a civilised country, and as Disraeli once wrote, if we would learn history we should read biography. In those delightful *Reminiscences* published by his Grace a few years since, we get a compendious picture of the pioneer settler's life in those far-off days when our country comprised only a few isolated settlements. Dr. Redwood tells us that his family came to New Zealand under the auspices of the New Zealand Company, and this reminds me that it was the desire of the Wakefields, who shaped the colonising policy of the company, to make the new nation, as far as possible, a replica of the United Kingdom. Doubtless it was in conformity with that policy that Catholics formed no inconsiderable number of the first colonists, for, whatever may have been the faults of the Wakefields, they were certainly free from anti-Catholic prejudices, though it must be owned that they deliberately excluded "the Milesian Irish," to use Edward Gibbon Wakefield's own phrase. There could be no more admirable portrayal of the life of the early settler than that presented by the Archbishop in his *Reminiscences*, a perusal of which will bring home to the reader the great changes which have come to pass in a life-time. We find the future Archbishop living in a tent, we see timber hurriedly improvised from the primeval forest, we see the tent superseded by a homely wooden house in the bush clearing, and we behold the settler and his family braving the hardships of a pioneer's life. It must be owned, however, that there was a pleasant side to that rough, simple, and lonely life, and many New Zealanders will join with the Archbishop in regretting that advancing civilisation has made irreparable havoc of our beautiful birds, that never again will it be possible for the settler or his sons to replenish the family larder by an incursion into the forest where abounded the wild pigeons. Verily, we who remember all this have seen a New Zealand which has gone irrevocably!

EARLY DAYS OF COLONISATION.

Notwithstanding the Arcadian simplicity of life at the inception of colonisation, however, we would not expect it to be fruitful in vocations for the priesthood, particularly when we bear in mind that the Catholic settler lived amidst neighbors of whom the great majority were Protestant. Nevertheless, we learn from the *Reminiscences* that young Redwood's aspirations for the priesthood were early discovered to Father Garin, a devoted French priest whose memory is green in the Nelson district to-day. Once the choice had been made the youth acted on it with unflinching fidelity, and soon we find him giving up father and mother to follow Him who said: "My kingdom is not of this world." His fine mental gifts must have impressed his superiors, for we find him a Bishop at the early age of thirty-five, and surely it was fitting that he should have been assigned to New Zealand. Notwithstanding the fact that the earlier promoters of colonisation had discouraged the immigration of Irishmen, circumstances arose later involving a considerable influx of Irish Catholic settlers. I allude, of course, to the gold discoveries, made when the New Zealand Company was no more. To a much greater extent than is usually realised the goldfields were responsible for the large influx of Irish immigrants both to Australia and New Zealand, and thus was the deliberate omission in both countries more than repaired. Accordingly when Francis Redwood became Bishop of Wellington the vast majority of his flock were Irish. Here, let me state that, in my opinion, the success which has attended his Episcopate, is largely due to the fact that from the outset he gained the complete confidence of Irishmen. We know that there are English Catholics who entertain towards Ireland and Irishmen that sentiment of hostility and coldness which, though comprehensible and excusable in Protestant Englishmen, can scarcely be reconciled with Catholic principles. Doubtless this sentiment has its roots deep in that tradition, so flattering to Imperialist pride, that Ireland is a conquered country and its people an

inferior race. "I am a Roman citizen," was a boast born of the conqueror's pride, but the Empire that inspired it has long since ceased to be, while from the conquered "hostes" have sprung great and free notions!

IRISH CHARACTERISTICS.

As for the people of Ireland, it is no more than truth to say that they have never cherished feelings of ill-will against the people of England, that they have always been ready to give their confidence and good-will to any Englishman who sympathised with their national aspirations. If Ireland has remained Catholic in spite of the terrible upheaval of the 16th century, it remains none the less a fact that the people of England never abandoned the ancient Faith. They were robbed of it by regal tyrants, by Court pandars, by a few faithless ecclesiastics, but never with their own free consent. Moreover, the history of the period covered by the reigns of Henry VIII. and Elizabeth is studded with the names of men who cheerfully faced death for the Faith, even as their spiritual ancestors did in the days of Nero and Diocletian. We may not recall all this sufficiently often, but it is true none the less that the people of Ireland have never been unmindful that, no matter what their quarrel may be with official England, they cannot regard their neighbors across the Channel other than as friends, since they participate with them in the great heritage of Christendom. I repeat that it is mainly because he has ever evinced the deepest sympathy for Ireland that the Archbishop of Wellington has long since won the hearts of his Catholic flock who own the patronage of St. Patrick. Speaking recently in Wellington, the Archbishop of Melbourne paid an appropriate compliment to our beloved Metropolitan. "When Ireland had few friends," he said, "Archbishop Redwood was one of them," and their applause showed that the audience fully appreciated the tribute.

RECOLLECTIONS OF THE ARCHBISHOP

My own recollections of the Archbishop go back to the early days of the West Coast, where practically the entire Catholic community was Irish, as indeed it is to this day. Nothing could exceed the cordiality and affection with which the miners—we called them diggers in those days—greeted their spiritual chief, and any Englishman, even a Bishop, were more than human if he could repress a secret pride that he gained so completely the sympathy and affections of an Irish community. Never has his Grace missed an opportunity of manifesting his sympathy with Ireland. Thus he was at pains to be consecrated a Bishop on St. Patrick's Day. When in the fulness of time he was able to found an institution for the higher education of Catholic youth, he named it after St. Patrick, and I recall the fact that, preaching in St. Mary's Cathedral in Sydney long ago, he paid a warm tribute to the work done in Australia and New Zealand by the children of Ireland for the Catholic faith. Not a few readers of the *Tablet* will remember that when William Redmond visited this country in 1883, he was assailed with the most truculent and unreasonable hostility. On that occasion not a few of the friends of Ireland quailed before the storm, but not so the Bishop of Wellington. In the face of a public opinion made hostile by unscrupulous cable and press propaganda, he allowed his clergy the fullest liberty to cooperate with their countrymen in welcoming their representative visitor.

OTHER EMINENT CHURCHMEN.

In one of his delightful volumes, the late Mr. Wilfrid Blunt describes a visit he paid to Cardinal Manning in 1885. He found the Cardinal alone, and calmly, even cheerfully, contemplating his approaching end, and he tells us that the impression made upon him was that there is nothing more edifying than the old age of a religious. In every age and in every country since the Christian era the Catholic Church has afforded numerous illustrations of this truth, and in spite of itself, as it were, an unfriendly world has been impelled to bear witness to the respect inspired by old age when made more conspicuous by the bright light of a selfless and exemplary life. Leo XIII., a frail old man of ninety, admonished the world, and the world hushed its clamor to listen. When Cardinal Gibbons died at the age of ninety-three, Americans of all parties united in testifying to his great influence for good in the