

Home-Rule Meetings in Australia.

THE Irishmen of Australia are determined not to let the question of Home-Rule for Ireland rest in abeyance, as they feel that now, as Senator O'Connor said at a preliminary meeting in Sydney a few weeks ago, 'at a time when the strain and stress of a great war leaves the English Parliament free to consider other affairs—now is the time when we in Australia, whose voice has been heard and whose aid has been sought and felt in the building up of the Empire, should be heard and felt when we seek to remove one of the plug-spots in the internal administration of the Empire.' As a result of the preliminary meeting held in the early part of last month, a great demonstration was held in the Town Hall, Sydney, on Monday night, at which the Mayor, Alderman Hughes presided. The brief cable message states that many public men were present, and the object of the gathering was to take practical action towards assisting the Irish Parliamentary party in the House of Commons. The meeting adopted by acclamation a resolution of deep sympathy with the King, and then carried resolutions in favor of Home Rule for Ireland, condemning the revival of coercion in that country, and asking Mr. John B. Redmond, the Nationalist leader in Parliament, to send a delegation to Australia. A Home Rule fund was started, £650 being subscribed at the meeting. It is understood that meetings with the same object will be held in other centres in New South Wales.

A Home Rule meeting was held last week in Melbourne at which resolutions were passed strongly condemning the policy of coercion, and urging the compulsory sale of land by landlords.

The time has arrived when the Irishmen of New Zealand and the friends of liberty and justice should unite and make their voices heard, not alone in favor of self-government for Ireland, but in vigorous protest against the reign of tyranny which has been recently inaugurated by the Government at the suggestion of some rack-renting landlords.

Catholics in the British Empire.

We speak and write of the British Empire as a Protestant Power (says an American Catholic exchange), and since the days of Elizabeth it has been so, indeed; but we must not forget that this world-embracing Empire upon whose dominions the sun never sets, has at work within it a leaven of Catholicity which increases as the years go by and whose influence is bound to affect Great Britain's imperial destiny.

The present King of Great Britain rules over a territory 11,043,692 miles in area, and his name is the symbol of civil authority to more than 380,000,000 of people—something like one-fourth the estimated present population of the globe. Of this number millions and millions are heathens and pagans, Buddhists, Mahomedans, Confucians, Parsees, etc. These far outnumber the Protestants of this Protestant empire. But it is the Catholics of whom we wish to speak particularly.

The Catholic subjects of King Edward VII. number, it is estimated, about 10,500,000—pretty nearly the same figures as those given by some authorities as representing the number of Catholics in the United States. These Catholics are distributed throughout the British Empire as follows. In the United Kingdom (England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland) there are about 5,250,000—namely, in England and Wales 1,500,000, in Scotland 433,000, and in Ireland 3,310,000. British America contains 2,600,000 Catholics and Australia, India, and the other wide-spread possessions of Britain contain the remainder.

The number of Catholic peers in Great Britain is 11; of Catholic baronets 51; of Catholic lords who are not peers, but bear courtesy titles, 16; of Catholic members of the King's Privy Council 9 (including those of Ireland 12); of Catholic members of the House of Lords 33; of Catholic members of the House of Commons 4 (including those of Ireland 77).

The ancient hierarchy of England ended with Thomas Goldwell, Bishop of St. Asaph's, who died in Rome in 1585, soon after the death in prison of Thomas Watson, Bishop of Lincoln. In 1598 the Catholics of England were placed under arch-priests, of whom there were several, until, in 1623, Pope Gregory XV. appointed a Vicar-Apostolic. From that date English Catholics were governed, in spiritual matters, by Vicars-Apostolic until 1850, when the hierarchy was restored by Pius IX. Many Catholics yet living can remember the storm of opposition which this step evoked from Protestants not only in England, but throughout the world. Happily this storm did not last long, and Catholics, though they may be called idolaters by the King, in his declaration, enjoy in England at present freedom and peace, and their increase is viewed with alarm only in extreme Protestant quarters.

The hierarchy of England now consists of one archbishop and 16 bishops; of Scotland, two archbishops and five bishops. The number of priests in Great Britain is 3500 (3018 in England and Wales, and 482 in Scotland). Churches, chapels, and stations in Great Britain number 1926—1572 in England and Wales, and 354 in Scotland.

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A Memorable Anniversary.

SIXTY-TWO years on Friday last—on the 4th of July, 1840—the little wooden paddle-wheel steamer *Britannia* (says the *Melbourne Advertiser*) left Liverpool for Boston, which she safely reached a fortnight later. She was the first steamer that ever crossed the Atlantic Ocean, and she was the first of that great Cunard line which for more than a generation was able to make the proud boast that it had never lost a passenger's life. What manner of boat she was is amusingly described by Charles Dickens in the first chapter of his 'American Notes.' He started on the 3rd January, 1842, and he tells his readers: 'I shall never forget the amazement with which I opened the door of the state-room on board the *Britannia* packet, 1200 tons burden—reserved, as I saw by the card, for Charles Dickens and lady.' He hits off in a very few words the fittings of this 'preposterous box,' as he calls it, 'the thin mattress' on 'an inaccessible shelf,' and the door that would not have admitted their two portmanteaux even if there had been anywhere to put them when they were inside. Steadily and swiftly the Cunard line crept on, now leading the way with the best and biggest passenger ships afloat, now stimulating rival companies to out-do its latest achievement, but always holding its own eminent station, until now it calmly faces the great Pierpont Morgan combination, with which it will have no connection whatever. As an earnest of the class of competition to which it will subject that organisation, it has contracted for the building of two more Atlantic liners, which will be equipped with turbine engines of 47,000 and 50,000 horse-power, and made 24 knots an hour contract time. As the speed of the *Britannia* was 8½ knots per hour, as nearly as possible ten English miles, and her engines only indicated 74 horse-power, the advance made by the pioneer company is easily estimated. The Cunard Steamship Company has long had notable competitors. The White Star Line, the Hamburg-American, and the North German Lloyd's dispute with her for pre-eminence in size of ships, in the number of passengers accommodated, and in the speed with which passages are made. The traveller who is kept a week on shipboard in the Atlantic now considers himself ill-used; and no wonder, since a few hours over five days has come to be recognised as the correct thing. The length of the vessels employed has increased from the 215 feet of the *Britannia* to the 706 feet of the *Kaiser Wilhelm II.*, the tonnage has risen to 18,000 tons, and the number of passengers accommodated from the 90 carried by the 'packet' that took Charles Dickens and 'young Lord Mulgrave'—afterwards the Marquis of Northampton—among them to the 2859 which the Celtic of the White Star line accommodates. But the growth of the traffic is not greater after all than the growth of the population it serves. In 1840 the United Kingdom contained about 28 millions of people, the United States less, and all Germany not so many. Now Germany has 58 millions, the United States 76 millions, and Great Britain 40 still left, after sending away vast populations to America, Canada, and Australia. And partly because of that increase in population, and partly by the development of the instinct of travel which has followed upon its progress in speed and in safety, people think less of a journey between London and Boston or New York than they formerly did of a trip to the north or Edinburgh. Indeed when it is recollected that while the British coasting trade was still dependent upon sailing vessels, a fortnight's detention in Yarmouth roads was not an infrequent concomitant of a sea journey from London to Leith, the wonder is that anyone ever tried to travel at all, and certainly a great deal of courage and endurance were required of the voyager.

Varieties of Stealing.

If there is one of God's commandments of which Catholics of ordinary uprightness and honor are apt to think themselves particularly observant, it is the seventh—Thou shalt not steal. In examining his conscience preparatory to going to confession, the average penitent (says the *Are Maria*) probably spends very few minutes in reflecting upon his possible transgressions of the elementary law of justice, and practically skips that portion of the 'table of sins' which deals with the various methods in which the commandment may be, and very frequently is, violated.

It is quite possible, nevertheless, that his gratitude is premature, that his self-conceit is deceiving him somewhat; and that, as an undoubted matter of fact, he has been guilty more than once of actual stealing. He has not, perhaps, committed theft in its technical sense—the secret purloining of another man's goods contrary to the rational will of their owner; but technical theft is not the only way in which the Seventh Commandment may be broken. What concerns the penitent is the theological definition of stealing, and that is: 'The unjust taking or keeping of the goods of another against his will, when he rightly wishes not to be deprived of them.'

The non-payment of legitimate debts is obviously a kind of stealing, and is unfortunately all too common even among the class known as good practical Christians. Not many of these, perhaps, delude themselves as to the degree of sinfulness involved in refusing to pay their servants, work people, or tradesmen; but very many contract debts about the timely payment of which they are the reverse of scrupulous. Their doctor's bill, for instance, is a burden that in no way inconveniences them; its liquidation is cheerfully postponed to an indefinitely remote by-and-by. Their dues to the Church, their debts to their pastor, to whose support they are in strict justice bound to contribute, are allowed to accumulate for months, even years, without perceptibly disturbing the serenity of their conscience. And as for subscriptions to papers or magazines—

There is more stealing in the world than is recorded in the police courts, or even avowed in the confessional.