

CORRESPONDENCE

[We do not hold ourselves responsible for opinions expressed by our correspondents.]

THE DUTY OF VOTING.

TO THE EDITOR.

Sir,—In the *Tablet* of January 28 I notice you present under this heading an epitome of the views expressed by Dr. John A. Ryan, of the Catholic University of America, and with your permission would offer a few comments thereon. Doubtless few people will dissent from Dr. Ryan's advice that the citizen should vote for "honest and competent candidates." The difficulty, however, is that Dr. Ryan's counsel is quite impracticable without a proper electoral system. America is pre-eminently the country of "machine" politics. There the voter usually has no option but to support "a ticket" adopted either by the Democratic or Republican party, and it is hardly necessary to add that the personality of the candidates usually counts for nothing. Moreover, should a candidate of independent views offer himself for election it is notorious that the Bosses of both factions will combine to crush him. As for honest and competent candidates, men of enlightened views find the party shackle so odious that politics have become a by-word, and men representative of the intellect of the community prefer accordingly to leave politics to the party Bosses and their backs. If any of your readers should think this an exaggerated picture he need only consult *The American Commonwealth*, a scholarly work by the late Lord Bryce, who was a sympathetic critic of American institutions. The learned author lays the whole vicious system bare, and he frankly admits that the Americans have yet to learn how to govern cities! If the government of cities has broken down one can hardly expect a better state of affairs in Federal or State politics. With all due respect to Dr. Ryan, therefore, it seems of little use counselling electors how to vote when they are the victims of an electoral system in which individual electors are powerless. As a matter of fact, however, things are very little better elsewhere. Mr. Jerome K. Jerome's satire on the electoral system of England, which you reproduce, is really an accurate representation of the position, and, with very little modification, is applicable to New Zealand. Here is the position in this country: Two or three officials, who are supposed to be independent of party politics, meet in an office in Wellington, and divide the country up into electorates once every five years. The elector has no voice in the fixing of the boundaries, but is boxed into whatever district the Representation Commissioners think fit, and very frequently he is quite unaware of the electoral district in which he is to vote until the approach of the next ensuing election. When the election comes along, he finds the nominees of two or perhaps three parties offering themselves. He has had no voice whatever in selecting the candidates, and very often he is not in sympathy with any of them. Among the candidates, there may be one for whom he can vote conscientiously, but, inasmuch as that candidate has no chance of election, he feels no enthusiasm to work for him, and

if he votes at all does so in a half-hearted kind of way. In face of all these facts he is still called a free and independent elector, and he is periodically admonished about the duty of voting! This is an accurate representation of the state of affairs obtaining under the present electoral system—if it can be called a system—and I submit that as long as it continues it is idle to expect either an intelligent interest in public affairs or a satisfactory system of government.

Fortunately there is a remedy for this state of affairs. In spite of the tacit opposition of machine politicians of all parties there is a growing current of opinion, even in America, in favor of proportional representation. In connection with that system let me point out the following facts:—

(1) The system implies large electoral districts, each returning a group of representatives;

(2) No candidate requires a majority of the votes cast, but every candidate will be elected who polls the electoral quota;

(3) The electoral quota necessary to secure the election of a representative is found by dividing the number of votes cast by one more than the number of representatives for each district. Supposing, for example, that 20,000 votes have been cast and five members are to be elected, the electoral quota will be 5001, and hence a minority of 5000 electors is sure of having one representative;

(4) As a group of representatives have to be returned, the elector will have a large choice of candidates, and accordingly there are certain to be some whom every voter can give his hearty support.

The system is simplicity itself, and anyone who will give it the consideration it deserves will realise that the system offers a complete solution of the problem of Election and Representation. When such a system has been realised in practice it will be found that most of the evils inseparable from the present state of affairs will disappear, inasmuch as the power of machine politicians will be broken, and men of independent views will be able to assert themselves. In the absence of such a system it is futile to admonish the electors, except to counsel them to bend their energies towards its realisation. I am, etc.,

P. J. O'REGAN.

Wellington.

February 12.

SAD DROWNING FATALITY AT OAMARU

A sad drowning fatality occurred at Friendly Bay, Oamaru, on the 14th inst., when Miss Ellen Magee, of Eden Street, Oamaru, lost her life in the Oamaru harbor. At about 9 a.m. that day, Miss Magee left her home in Eden Street, apparently in her usual health, with the intention of having a swim at Friendly Bay. It is surmised that the deceased, who was a fair swimmer, was attacked by cramp, as the body was found floating face downwards in about three feet of water, and quite close to the shore. Dr. Smith-Morton was summoned, but after efforts at artificial respiration had been carried on for some considerable time, could only pronounce life extinct. The deceased, who was 35 years of age, resided

with her widowed mother and family in Eden Street, to whom the sympathy of a wide circle of friends is extended. At the early Mass on Sunday at the Basilica, reference was made to the sad occurrence by Rev. Father Penelon, who spoke of the exemplary life led by the deceased. To use the words of the preacher, "Little did she think when she received her Lord in Holy Communion that morning at Holy Mass that she had received Him as her Viaticum. He reminded his hearers of the uncertainty of death, and asked them as they had taken a lesson from her exemplary life, to also take one from her sudden death. He asked the prayers of the congregation for the repose of the deceased's soul and for the bereaved relatives. At devotions in the evening, the organist played the "Dead March" while the congregation stood as a tribute to the memory of the deceased.

Requiem Mass was celebrated at the Basilica yesterday morning, and the remains of the deceased were conveyed to their last resting place in the Oamaru Cemetery in the afternoon.—R.I.P.

AN APPRECIATION.

(Contributed.)

"Arise, my beautiful one, and come! The winter is now past, the rain is over and gone. Arise and come."

In loving words such as these, we can imagine Our Divine Lord welcoming to His eternal Home the soul of His faithful servant and friend, Nellie Magee. This favored child of grace received her early education at the Dominican Convent, Oamaru. During this period of her life she was ever a docile, generous pupil and gentle, kind companion. At a very early age she showed that remarkable devotion to Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament which was to become her characteristic virtue in later years. Throughout her short earthly career her greatest delight was to spend her leisure hours gathering and arranging for His Throne the fairest flowers of Oamaru. No labor was too great, no task too strenuous in accomplishing this duty of love. On Exposition days how often, during many long hours, we saw her gentle form passing to and fro in the sanctuary. Hers, too, was the privilege of keeping the light constantly burning before the Blessed Sacrament, and how faithfully she discharged that office her Silent Friend in the Tabernacle alone could tell, for gently and sweetly, unobserved by human eyes, she came and went. Never did she fail to be present at daily Mass. Summer and Winter, in the wet and in the cold, lovingly she came to receive her Lord in Holy Communion. Only a few short hours before her death she knelt in the Basilica in sacred converse with Him Who was so soon to be her Judge. Well can we imagine how that sweet intercourse was changed into that more perfect communion where, the veils of earth being lifted, she met her God and Friend face to face in His divine beauty and glory. She has gone to her eternal reward, but her example will remain as a guiding star to direct others in the ways of righteousness.

"Thrice blest whose lives are faithful prayers,
Whose loves in higher Love endure;

What souls possess themselves so pure,
Or is there blessedness like theirs?"

Joseph Howard



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