

CHAPTER VIII.

THE PLEDGE.

Father Mathew. — Another pledge. — The cathedral. — Mrs. Trollope. — Incendiarism. — Jesuits. — Cardinals. — American Catholics. — Irish emigrants. — The Maine liquor law. — Forward!

THE celebrated and rev. Father Mathew, the Irish Apostle of Temperance, was in Cincinnati when I arrived there; and the walls were placarded with handbills announcing that he would preach and deliver the Pledge at the cathedral on the following Sunday. He was a guest at the archbishop's residence; and I had been introduced to him on my first visit. One day I called on the Rev. Mr. Purcell and, not finding him at home, was shown into a parlour, to await his return: there I found Father Mathew sitting near the window, and his secretary at a desk on the other side of the room. He was a middle-sized man, of apparently about fifty-five years of age, with black hair sprinkled with grey, and a ruddy counte-

nance. His manner was remarkably cold; courteous, but without polish. His enunciation very measured and slow. He was still suffering from the remains of a paralytic seizure that had affected him in one of the Southern States. This might have hindered, in some degree, his enunciation; but could not have produced that remarkable coldness of manner, so devoid of all the enthusiasm which one had expected to find in him. Yet it was thoroughly earnest. While we sat there, several persons came in to take the pledge: he spoke to them all kindly, gravely, but with chilling earnestness, if the expression can be allowed.

“Intoxicating drink is at the bottom of almost every sin and evil.”

“Youth is the season of good resolutions.”

These and similar phrases, he repeated to all, intermingled with a few words of inquiry. Most of those who came in, were Americans; most of them, Protestants. One party of three or four American Protestant young men, who seemed to be of a superior class, called in amongst others. All took the pledge, and the secretary

inscribed the names of all in his books. Some begged to have medals; and, to these, the secretary handed them at cost price. Father Mathew was said to have spent his all in medals and papers which he distributed gratis as long as he had the means of procuring them: he was now obliged to make his pledged ones pay for them; but they were not offered to any who did not ask for them.

I and my wife had to sit here long, waiting for Mr. Purcell; and we kept up a desultory conversation broken by these applicants to the reverend gentleman. He said that he had enrolled nearly three millions of teatotallers since he had been in the United States, and hoped to complete that number before he returned to Europe. His secretary talked more than he did; and seemed rather to make light of his patron's earnestness.

"Father Mathew," I exclaimed at length, "you and we shall all lose our characters!"

"How so, sir?" he solemnly inquired.

"Every one will know that we have been sitting with you for an hour; and they will say that your reverence needed all that time before

we could persuade my wife to take the temperance pledge."

Not a muscle of his face moved as she laughingly added, "How should I get back to Europe, if I did? Brandy and water was the only thing that checked sea sickness on my voyage out."

"There is one pledge, Father Mathew," I said in the hope of rousing him; "there is one pledge that I wish you could get American women to take."

"What is that, sir?" he asked with some slight look of supercilious interest.

"I wish you could make them pledge themselves not to spend more in dress than their fathers or husbands could afford."

"A matter of quite minor importance!" he exclaimed scornfully.

"Do you think so?" I said. "You cannot have travelled through the United States without noticing, as I have, the extravagant, expensive dresses of all the females:—I do not speak of the free negresses, in their white muslin dresses, white satin shoes, and green silk parasols to preserve their complexions;—let

them dress on Sundays as they will, for the present: but you must be aware that every American woman, whatever be her position in life, spends two or three times as much on her dress as one in the same station would spend in England. Do not you see the long train of evil which must follow from this rage for the vanities of dress?"

"Not to be compared to the evils of drink," he insisted.

Mr. Purcell came in, and I asked him what seats we could have in the cathedral where we might see and hear Father Mathew.

"Seats!" he exclaimed: "the church only holds five thousand sittings. There is not a chance of your finding even standing room. But come through this house; and my house-keeper will lead you to a private gallery."

We did so on the following morning, and were excellently well placed. The mighty organ pealed: the congregation seemed most devotional: the usual holy service was performed with decorum and solemnity. When it was over, the whole body of the clergy left the building: nor did they return. Not the