

SECTARIAN EDUCATION.

ANTI-PUBLIC SCHOOL CRUSADE.

AGGRESSIVE ATTITUDE OF THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CLERGY—THE TERRORS OF THE CHURCH THREATENED.

The movement inaugurated among the Roman Catholic clergymen in this City for the establishment of sectarian schools in opposition to the public school system, is being vigorously pushed forward by its supporters, and from all that can be learned on the subject the success of the undertaking is being looked forward to with the most intense solicitude in Roman Catholic circles. The first step taken in the matter was the action of Father O'Farrel, pastor of St. Peter's Church, in establishing a new parochial school for the First Ward. For this purpose a large six-story brick building was purchased in Church street, between Cedar and Thames, and contracts were entered into for fitting it up as a school. Workmen have been busy on the building during the Summer, and it is expected that the school will be open for the reception of pupils on the 1st of September. The basement and top floor will be set apart for the recreation of the pupils during the hours set apart for that purpose. The first floor will be made into one large class-room, and the second, third, and fourth floors will contain two class-rooms each. The new building is intended for the accommodation of 500 male scholars, the old parochial school in the basement of St. Peter's Church being still kept open for the use of female scholars. It is intended, as soon as the new school is firmly established, and the fund increased, to enlarge the building in Church street for the accommodation of double the number of pupils, and abolish the old school in Barclay street, which has been found inadequate to the wants of the parish. The new school will be in close proximity to Public School No. 29, in Greenwich street.

A TIMES reporter visited Father O'Farrel yesterday and conversed with him on the subject of the new school. The reverend gentleman expressed himself entirely satisfied with the progress of the work, and states that he has not the slightest doubt of the ultimate success of the movement. It is an error, he says, to suppose that the idea of the new school originated with him, the fact being that although he is heart and soul in the movement—the subject was ventilated years ago by his predecessor, Father Quinn, who may be said to have been the founder of the project. Father O'Farrel also states that the movement for the new school did not emanate from him; but was commenced after hundreds of his parishioners had come and begged of him, in the name of the Almighty, to provide some schools where their children could be taught religion in addition to secular instruction. These people stated that they were too poor and illiterate to get their children a religious education, and wished to send them to a school where their spiritual welfare would be attended to. Such pressure as this, Father O'Farrel says, he could not withstand, and being himself strongly in favor of providing a suitable parochial school, at once called a meeting of the congregation to take action in the matter. The parishioners expressed themselves entirely in unison with the project, and the necessary funds for purchasing a site were promptly subscribed. A suitable site could not, however, be obtained at the time, and the matter lay in abeyance for some months, when, as Father O'Farrel states, the present building presented itself, and was at once purchased by the parish. The cost of the building and school-fittings will be about \$90,000 in all, of which a sufficient sum has been subscribed by the pew-holders to carry on the movement with success. The remainder, the clergy state, will be forthcoming at the proper time.

Father O'Farrel says he cannot but look on the enterprise with the utmost favor, combining, as it will, secular and religious instruction, and training the youth of his flock so that they may become good Catholics and citizens. With Roman Catholics, he says, the schools are but the stepping-stones to the Church, and the two should, therefore, be indissolubly united. He had no doubt that the Catholics in the First Ward numbered fully if not over three-fourths of the inhabitants, and it was only fair that they should be enabled to send their children to a school where they could be instructed in the tenets of their religion. In answer to several other questions, Father O'Farrel stated that the school would be under the care of the Christian Brothers, who were excellent teachers, and he believed that when the new school was opened, on the 1st of September, it would be overcrowded with scholars. Being asked whether the movement in this parish was his own individual act, not sanctioned by the Archbishop, and at variance with the opinions of a great number of Roman Catholic laity and clergy, Father O'Farrel stated that the movement was entirely in harmony with the views of all classes of Roman Catholics in the City, and had the full sanction of the Archbishop.

Referring to the assertion that the movement in St. Peter's Parish, if found to be successful, would be followed by similar movements in every parish in the City, Father O'Farrel did not deny the probability of it, and said it was only natural that the other clergymen in the City should follow his example if he succeeded, and provide schools for the children of their own denomination. The reverend gentleman was then asked whether it was not the intention of the Roman Catholics, in case the parochial school system became a success, to apply to the Legislature for appropriations for their support. He replied that he could not see why schools which would have a larger attendance than the public schools should not in fairness receive appropriations, if they imparted equal if not superior secular education, as well as religious instruction. It did not matter to the Legislature, he said, who taught the schools so long as the children were well educated, and presented as creditable a record as the children of the public schools. In conclusion, Father O'Farrel again stated that he had the greatest confidence in the success of the movement, and predicted that the new parochial school in the First Ward would become one of the most flourishing institutions in the City.

Public School No. 29, in Greenwich street, which must, of course, be materially affected by the opening of the Roman Catholic school, and nothing less than the abolition of which, it is asserted, will satisfy the promoters of the new parochial school, consists of a male grammar school, with an average attendance of 300; a female grammar school, with an attendance of 230, and a primary school, having an attendance of about 600 children. Of these numbers fully two-thirds were born in this country of Irish Catholic parents, the remaining portion being principally of German parentage. The record of this school for the past few years has been very satisfactory, the attendance in the male school having increased from 171 to 300. On three different occasions the cadetships offered for competition among all the public and parochial schools in the Congressional district were won by pupils of the First Ward School, the names of the successful competitors being Keeffe, Barry, and Fitzsimons. The school happens to be, remarkably enough, one of the most essentially Roman Catholic schools in the City, the principals, with one exception, being all Roman Catholics, and, out of forty-four teachers, at least thirty-six are of the same religion. A number of the more intelligent Roman Catholic residents in the ward say that they have been solicited time after time by the priests to withdraw their children from the public schools and send them to the parish school. Nor have they stopped at solicitation, as the Roman Catholics themselves say that when the clergymen found appeals were of no avail they had recourse to coercion, and plainly informed the parents that they would not administer to them the rites of the Church while they persisted in sending their children to the public schools. This course of conduct, as might be expected, had the effect of frightening numbers of parents into sending their children to the parochial school, and a considerable falling off might be noticed in the attendance at the public schools. After a little time, however, the majority of the children again came to the public school, there parents feeling satisfied that a better education was imparted there.

A number of Roman Catholics, with whom the public school system has grown very popular, positively refuse to withdraw their children from the public schools, and pay no attention to the solicitations of the priests, stating that they are themselves quite competent to judge as to what education they shall provide for their children. Since the appropriations from the Legislature to parochial schools have been discontinued, the Roman Catholic clergymen have laid very heavy burdens on their parishioners for the support of their schools, levying assessments on each family in the parish, beside collecting subscriptions. It is also stated that they have obtained the names of all the Roman Catholic families in the ward, with the number of children, and threaten to announce from the altar the names of those who do not send their children to the new school. Mr. P. G. Duffy, the Principal of Public School No. 29, states that he does not anticipate any considerable diminution in the attendance of pupils at his school from the opening of Father O'Farrel's school. He states that he believes the benefits of the public school education are so thoroughly understood among the residents of the ward that parents will not, for the gratification of any particular class of persons, withdraw their children from a school in which a superior standard of education is taught.

Such are the facts in connection with the new departure in school instruction, and the developments

of the next few months will be looked forward to with intense anxiety by all who are interested in upholding the admirable system of public school education which has been brought to such perfection in this City.