Father Theobald Mathew in the United States.

At this time, when the Prohibition sentiment is rapidly gaining ground, it is of interest to recall the days in the middle of the last century, when the agitation for total abstinence was crystalizing. Originally the movement was for temperance in the use of alcoholic liquors. It did not aim to induce men to entirely discontinue their use, its purpose being only to stop the prevalent drunkenness. Total abstinence was the child of a later day. When it came it brought into life, The Washingtonian Temperance Society, The Sons of Temperance, The Temple of Honor and Temperance, The Independent Order of Good Templars, and other less known organizations. But no single person did as much in the cause of total abstinence as the Irish Roman Catholic priest, Father Theobald Mathew. He became known as "The Apostle of Temperance." After being responsible for a large reduction in the sale of liquors in Ireland and England, Father Mathew, in 1849, came to the United States, and met with even greater success than in Europe. The following graphic description of the priest and his method was written by J. Richard Beste (* ) an English traveler who was in Cincinnati in June, 1851, during Father Mathew's sojourn there.

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, apparently about fifty-five years of age, with black hair sprinkled with grey, and a ruddy countenance. His manner was remarkably cold; courteous, but without polish. His enunciation was 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 thor-

oughly 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 book. 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 there 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 teetotallers 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 traveled 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 for your finding even standing room. But come through this house; and my housekeeper 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 smallest sacristan or chorister boy was there in surplice, to intimate that what was to follow was part of the service of the church, or that the clergy sanctioned it. The lights were extinguished and the altar was
Father Theobald Mathew

left bare. Father Mathew came forward before it, and began his discourse. His utterance was impeded, as I had observed before; he spoke of the illness he had endured and from which he still suffered, and which, he feared, would prevent him addressing them. He told what he had done in other countries; what he had done in America. I cannot say that his manner warmed, but it became more deeply earnest—almost painfully so. He compared his labours to those of St. Paul; and spoke of himself as an apostle sent, expressly, to preach temperance, on the value of which and on the evils of the contrary vice, he, of course, enlarged. He regretted that his ill-health would not permit him to speak longer; but he had caught it while laboring in the cause, and, therefore, would he glory in his infirmity.

All this was very painful. It was painful to see the labouring of that heaving chest—almost the throbbing of that apparently-overcharged brain; and to hear the words so slowly enunciated, yet with that fearful earnestness. I expected to see him every moment smitten where he stood, and fall in another fit. But he concluded without accident, inviting those who wished to take the pledge to come forward to the rails at the foot of the altar. There was then a rush!—a crowd-rush of whom three-fourths were females. Women, hardworking women, half of whom had babies in their arms, knelt down and repeated the oath for themselves and their babies; boys and girls of all ages pushed forward and took the pledge. Many, very many men, also took it. I know not the number, but very many hundreds must have bound themselves that day. I did not like it; it was a most solemn promise uttered by Father Mathew and repeated by each one; then he signed the cross over each, exclaiming: "Carry this sign of the cross unstained by any breach of the pledge, until we meet again at the great judgment seat of God."

There has always been a difference of opinion amongst the Catholic clergy of all countries in which the pledge has been administered, as to the light in which it ought to be considered. Though asserted not to be an oath, and that it might be broken without sin, it was delivered and im-
pressed upon the people in a manner suited only to the most solemn oath. And though declared to be only a promise, yet was the breach of it declared to be a "reserved case" in Ireland. It was not an oath, but the people, in fact, took it as if it were one; and children and babies, men and women, even in a state of maudlin intoxication and unknowing what they did, were permitted to pledge themselves in a manner which those even who administered the ceremonial could hardly define or understand.

"Now, Paddy, my good friend," said an American Catholic bishop to an emigrant who was about to take the pledge, "will you understand what it is you are going to do? You are going to make a solemn promise to God, and you ought not to break your promise; but it is a promise, it is not an oath; understand that it is not an oath."

"Oh, no, your reverence," replied Paddy; "sure I understand that it is ten million times more binding nor any oath."