From a Gaelic Outpost

Iodh de Blacam

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FROM A GAELIC :: OUTPOST

BY

AODH DE BLÁCAM.

> Hail Tirconaill, land of Donal!
> Hail, dear land of happy days,
> Fragrant turfreek, heather braes;
> Life with thee is my soul's breath
> Exile from thee, daily death—
> Land of Donal, dear Tirconaill.
>
> —FARAGAL FAAL

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24 UPPER O'CONNELL STREET.

MCMXXI.

RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED

TO THE

COARB OF S. EUNAN.

CONTENTS.

TO THE READER.

WHAT!—You were never in the Gaeltacht?—never in the still-Irish-speaking territory that fringes the Atlantic coast? Then for you this book is written.

Very enjoyable it is to witness the amazement and delighted enchantment that descend on the visitor from Dublin or Belfast or the anglicised counties, as he visits the Gaeltacht for the first time. It is, indeed, a wonderful experience. It is like plunging back through the centuries and awaking in the Ireland of Hugh O'Neill—heroic, Gaelic, unsubdued Ireland. The musical, racy Irish speech on every side of you brings to your mind a thrilling sense of the reality of Irish nationality, such as the dweller in the cities amid English speech and English papers, never feels. When you grow familiar with the language, and the lore it bears with it, you get so absorbed in the vision of Irish-Ireland that you feel in your very fibre the *wrongness* of anglicisation. When you go back to the Galldacht—the foreign-speaking land—the sound of the un-Irish speech grates on your ears, and the manners and customs which supplanted those of the Gael seem tawdry and unsatisfying.

The Gaeltacht is the living past. It has been spoken of as "an economic museum." Not all that it preserves is good. Its out-of-date methods in agriculture could be departed from with advantage. The curse that Father Mathew and his successors drove back over so large an area lingers still in these outlying mountainy places. Children are sent to work too young. But the speech,

the faith, the tradition of the old life, the songs, the music, the dances, live on unbroken. Until you have been there you cannot pretend to know the secret Ireland, which is the real Ireland, the Ireland submerged by the Penal Laws, but striving to-day to win back into its former place of sovereignty. The English-speaker who has never visited Gaelic Ireland, knows Ireland only, as it were, in a translated edition, or by hearsay.

If my praises in these letters from my Gaeltacht hermitage, of the life and manners of north-west Donegal are enthusiastic, if I betray love of the people I speak of, it is because to many of us these Gaelic fragments on the Atlantic coast are Ireland's Brittany. In latter years, devoted Brittany has been the fountain of France's regeneration, sending forth missionaries—priests and propagandist writers—to call France back to her old-time life and faith. Ireland is happy in needing no such missionaries of the Faith. Yet if Irish history of the future is to be a natural continuation of the proud inspiring story of the past, we cannot risk a break with tradition, and must seek to mould our social life on the wise, simple and earnest customs of old. I see, in my hopes, the whole of Ireland learning from the living units of the past such as this I have spoken of, the need to preserve intact the ideals and culture of the Gael: re-gaining from these examples, old Irish industry, frugality, refinement, self-sufficiency and love for simple and natural joys, the bond of happy individual life and national well-being. Students are coming hither—in increasing numbers—to learn the Gael's language and literature. Well for Ireland if they also learn from him lessons of life.

From A Gaelic Outpost.

LETTER I.—THE LIVING PAST.

§ 1.—"*Rural Slums.*"

THE little railwayless corners of the west and south coast, where the Irish language still holds its own as the primary language of the people, are living remnants of the Ireland that went down at Kinsale. Let us glance at the book history of the case.

Old Irish civilisation, ladies and gentlemen, has often been blamed for its lack of central political authority, to which its overthrow is attributed. To its vigorous local development, however, we must attribute its half-miraculous survival, and its prodigious vitality as a moving ideal down to the present day. Too much centralisation of authority has resulted in other countries, in the concentration of art, culture, and learning in an over-crowded capital, while the provinces have been drained of refining elements and left backward and gross. The national life of such countries depends on the political fortunes of the capital. Gaelic society was based on a different ideal. Every family was a self-supporting unit. The clan was a group of such units, having its own doctors, lawyers, bards, scholars, clergy, thus being a self-sufficient community. Like the Church itself, the Gaelic nation preserved its unity by unity of tradition, faith, custom and law, and even when broken into scattered units, could thus survive

in spiritual unity, ready for renewed material unity when the time should come. When the Gaelic nation lost its political independence, and even when Gaelic life was broken and divided by plantations, Gaelic national life continued to thrive in uninterrupted vigour wherever a little Gaelic-speaking community survived. Gaelic life in its prime of Hugh O'Neill's days had scarcely changed in the eighteenth century, when politically the Gael was "not supposed to exist."

These little communities were sadly thinned by the Famine, and to-day they are few. Yet such as they are, they are the living Ireland of Seaghan Clarach and MacConmara and Mac Cuirtin; and just as those Jacobite poets, in their days, felt themselves to be living in an unchanged Ireland since the ancient days of 16th century independence, so to-day, in our observations, we may look back through the centuries to those distant and glamorous times.

When you go to Donegal—or Tirconaill, as we call it now, reviving the historic name of the little kingdom—you will find the railways are of a specially narrow gauge and the carriages hitched tight together. You are going mountaineering. You are not long in the train when the Angelus bell sounds, and every man there uncovers. Look at your fellow passengers. Each face is remarkable. When some great artist rises to paint Irish history, he will find his models among these people. Yonder old woman has the proud Celtic features of Lady Rose O'Byrne of old or the Inghean Dubh. This young man (a harvester returning) has just the grey eyes, strong face and fiery hair of Red Hugh O'Donnell—to whose clan perhaps he belongs.

These people begin to talk, and you hear the same musical Gaelic which sounded "like a silver trumpet," as the chronicle says, on Red Hugh's lips.

When the acrobatic train twists itself down the steep incline into the cathedral town of Letterkenny, you enter the Irish-speaking country, the Gaeltacht. You have still some twenty-five miles to fare through chaotic rocky country, vast bulwark against the Atlantic. You will wind between giant ranges, wondering how life—save that of the majestic heather—can hold on in this wilderness of the Inorganic. But at last you find a fan of fertile land between two arms of mountain and the sea: this is Cloughaneely, at the foot of Arrigal, that Titan pyramid.

What strikes you first is an impression of awful congestion. Farms and fields are small; houses are planted as closely almost as in a "Garden Suburb." The Congested Districts round the coast, with their population of half a million, roughly correspond with the Gaeltacht, or Irish speaking areas. In Munster there are extensive Irish-speaking territories which are more prosperous, and to this fact, perhaps, may be attributed Munster's lead in the language cause. [A certain modicum of prosperity is needed before a people can interest itself in an intellectual movement.] The Congested Districts of Connacht and Donegal are described by a French author as "rural slums"—a terrible and suggestive phrase. The universal marks of poverty are depressing: grass-roofed hovels up the barren mountain sheltering large families, children of the tenderest age herding cattle along the roads, if roads these ill-hewn passes may be named. You are wit-

nessing in the 20th century, the degraded cottier life under which the Catholic masses lived in the 18th century, and now as then, it is these poorest of our people who are the living vehicles of national tradition.

The dense population, you observe, has crept up the mountain slopes, and has reclaimed and occupied every available inch of soil between the hills and the sea. Observe how some of the hillside fields are broken by jutting rocks, the cultivation being a mere lacework of square yards of soil. See where a winding path runs up the precipitous mountain-side to a solitary patch of green, a perch or two in area. On this scant and sloping space, oats, the only grain grown in this climate, has been sown, and the farmer must be an athlete to reap this little crop with his sickle. Down by the water you will notice that the sheltered side of the little island-rocks is also tilled and reaped of a few square yards of produce. Other rocks, too exposed for tilling, are used for grazing. The cattle are driven over the sands to crop the sparse vegetation in the hours between tides. Not a blade of grass may here be wasted. In this we see one of Irish history's most interesting hieroglyphs. It spells for us the story of the banished Catholic after the Plantations. The ancestors of the people around us once dwelt in spacious land, now planted by people of different faith, or given over to the grazing bullock. All through Ireland you may read this story, in the cramped and laborious circumstances of the old race. In Co. Monaghan you will find the clan-name of Oriel, McMahon, and others of the kind borne by the denizens of little rocky, remote farms, the soil of which bears the unmistakable signs of wild land

reclaimed by long years of desperate toil. Thus did the Catholic refugee, lurking in bogs or on the mountain-side, perform almost the impossible in subduing his circumstances to the needs of existence.

But though we have here in the country the same phenomenon of overcrowding as in the city slums, we have, happily, as yet no trace of the slum phenomenon of degeneracy. Nothing is more remarkable in Irish history than the superb virility preserved by the least favoured class. Nowhere in Ireland are there finer potentialities than among the Gaeltacht people. The very old men, who have never learnt English, are magnificent types. When their grey beards are hidden from you, you think their lithe figures to be those of youths. They leap into their carts, and drive their horses down the rocky passes, maintaining their stand like Laegh or Cuchulain driving a war-chariot. Their houses and holdings are full of eloquent signs of resource and craftsmanship: clothing, bedding, furniture, the house itself, are all home-made, and all excellent. Intellectually, they are alert and vigorous; in social graces they are more royal than kings. It is noticeable that where the language passes violently as it has recently done in some of the Gaeltacht villages, the grandchildren of these grand old men are mentally and physically completely the reverse of their forbears.

§ 2.—*The Life of the People.*

As you arrive, the whole family is on the doorstep waiting to shake hands and say "Failte," "Se do bheatha," and "Goide mar ata tu?"—Welcome; May He be thy life; and How are you? The handshaking

is as cordial as if you were a long-lost member of the family returning. You are taken indoors, and find yourself in a spacious and spotlessly clean kitchen, with refreshments being heated for you over the turf-fire. Near the fire is a sort of enormous box with the large side draped with blue-print curtains. It is the fear-a-tighe or man-of-the-house's bed. Your own bedroom opens from the kitchen, and has been made cosy for you with another blazing fire.

On the far wall, above the fireplace, there is a full gallery of religious pictures, while the chimney-piece is loaded with relics of missions. In the middle is a cabinet in which a picture of the Last Supper conceals a receptacle for a crucifix, cloths, tray and candles, intended for use on the occasion of the coming Anointing for each member of the household.

If the morning is Sunday, you will hear a brief, but impressive, sermon delivered in Irish at Mass, and the priest will open letters on the altar reading out the names of the dead for whom prayers are requested, while the large congregation will respond in sonorous Gaelic. The sun being well up, the barren mountain sides are now aflame with colour, while the sky rivals the sea in the deepness of its blue. As we walk, the scene continually changes, for owing to the undulating character of the land, our point of view is always shifting and giving us fresh vistas and aspects. The hill which loomed over us just now is now concealed, and now re-appears in so altered an aspect that it seems to have sprung and crouched. This mysterious phenomenon of Irish scenery makes the Psalmist's verse about the leaping of the little hills quite natural a piece of description. It is, by the way, curiously paralleled in

Merriman's "Midnight Court," when he describes the Kerry hills :—

Ag bagairt a gcinn thar dhruim a chéile.

[Beckoning their heads over one another's backs.]

While we are admiring the magnificence of this ever-changing scenery, we may pause to wonder what happy fate decreed that the Celt should always dwell amid natural beauties. The Highlander, the Welshman, the Cornishman, the Breton and the Gael all have inherited the fairest works of nature. Or maybe it is scenery that makes the Celt, not blood! Perhaps you remark that the Gael inherits more commonplace scenery in the interior of Ireland, and you quote the saying that Ireland is a plain picture in a splendid frame. Just now, you observe, we are admiring the beautiful coastal frame. I reply that nature denotes the beautiful west as the Gael's stronghold. From Lough Swilly in the north, round Sligo, Ballina, Westport, Galway, Clare, Cork and Waterford, the mighty ports, capacious enough for navies, open Ireland to Europe and America. These ports once were thronged with ships. To-day the economic strength of Ireland is all in the east, and her population tends to flock to eastern cities, which were founded as settlements, and only attracted Irish settlers when Ireland's economic and intellectual commerce with Europe ceased and her trade was absorbed by a single market. A glance at the map shows that Ireland's natural aspect is on the Atlantic, and a glance at history shows us that when the Gael counted for most, his trade and his missions fared through his Atlantic ports. Hence the beautiful west-coast country is his natural capital, and the plainer east his hinterland.

By the way, as everyone we pass is greeting you, I hope you brushed up your O'Growney's Easy Lessons in Irish before you came here. The Ulsterisms may make it hard for you to understand the people at first. One visitor here asked me "what they were garrooing about," not recognising the expression, "la garbh" (a rough day), with which he was saluted by one and all. His Irish was book-Irish only, and he remarked that the natives here "seemed to have Irish fluently, but pronounced it so strangely that it could hardly be understood." He was surprised to hear that Mark Twain had made a similar observation after trying his book-French on the Parisians. The Donegal people's greetings, except you are a friend to whom they wish to be specially cordial, always take the form of comments on the weather. You are therefore always safe if you reply "Sha, gu deeragh"—yes, indeed. In the house at which you stay they will use more personal expressions, mainly "Se do bheatha," adding your Christian name. You will never be called Mr. or Miss, unless you are a foreigner. Whatever your dignity in Gaeldom you will be called Seaghan, Padraic, Maighread, *tout court.* You will grow to like this, for it is a token that the lovable people around you regard you as one of themselves. It is a Christian thing to use Christian names in the Gaelic style. There are three exceptions to this practice. If you are a clergyman, you will be called "Athair," of course. If you are the head of a clan, you will be called O'Donnell, or Maguire. (This is rather a remote contingency.) Finally, if you are settled here in your own abode, you will be called Fear a'tighe or Bean a'tighe—Man of the House, or Woman

of the House. Indeed, you should address the people you are staying with in these terms, not by their Christian names, nor, horrible to think of, as Mr. or Mrs. M'Gonigle.

That Catholic Ireland survived in its places of refuge was largely due to the healthy principles of self-support and versatility which Gaelic civilisation had always fostered, so that the scattered people were well-equipped for their task. Yonder you may see a man, assisted by one or two neighbours, raising four walls of stones, quarried from the cliff beside him. A few yards away, you see smoke issuing from a circle of stones—a primitive kiln. Therein, shells from the beach are being burnt by turf to provide lime, which, mixed with sand, will provide the mortar. The snow-like whiteness of the houses here, by the way, is due to the purity of the shell-made lime. The houses are simple in plan—an oblong sub-divided by partitions into a kitchen and two rooms —but are warm, and, in point of soundness, the reverse of jerry-built, so that it may be said in quite a literal sense, that the Donegal man's "house is his castle." When one of these small farmers grows prosperous he will add another oblong to the present house, and knock a door aperture into the wall between the two. Some houses here comprise a series of such oblongs, of growing size, added at different periods of progress, so that the whole looks as if it were of telescopic build and could be drawn in and out.

Inside the home-made houses we find all the furniture similarly home-made, the bed being part of the kitchen's woodwork, like the dresser. Almost all the drapery is produced by the aged bean a'tighe, who, as we enter, is busy at her old-fashioned wheel spinning. The strong

blankets on the bed are her work, and are a thickly-woven variety of the same sort of cloth of which her own typical red-dyed dress is made: that dress, she mentions, has been in use for eight years, though it still looks new. All her attire is home-made, except the dainty coloured kerchief in which her hair is hooded. This, like the bright-patterned shawl, which is sometimes substituted, is, imported from Scotland—an exception which should be corrected. The men-folk's under-clothing is her excellent work, too, while their homespun suits are also produced in the parish on cottage looms. Each family grows its own food, almost solely vegetarian, and the staple item, oat-bread, depends for its tastiness, which delights the visitor, on the good lady's baking skill at the turf-fire. Potatoes, eggs, milk, butter, and onions, with an occasional supply of herring from Tory, complete the diet of these vigorous and hardy people. This food is cheap and plentiful. Do not think it inadequate or the sign of a low standard of living. These people, on the same diet exactly, performed the military feats of endurance which made the armies of O'Donnell famous. This diet, minus the potatoes, was that on which the Greek and Roman armies shook the earth.

Of the intellectual life of Donegal this is the highest and justest praise: that it is the virile life of a complete community, which with all its seclusion has never manifested degeneracy. From these humble children of simple life sprang, and still do spring, the minds of distinguished ecclesiastics and laymen. These cottages around us are homes in which the love of refinement, wit and imagination is kept glowing, and handed from

generation to generation by a lively traditional culture. In the evenings the stools and benches around the turf-fire will be crowded by the neighbours of three houses, who will entertain one another with Gaelic songs of exquisite taste and melody, and tales in which the ancient myths of Balor will now be told, and now the doings of the Irish saints. To-night, at our cottage fire, we shall see a student whose willingness to be absorbed in the people's life distinguishes him from the superior person, whom they justly hate. Having listened to the songs and tales, carefully studying the pure speech in which they are delivered, he will possibly contribute an item himself. He proves to be a scholar of distinction, and his songs in Continental tongues are enjoyed by the cottage gathering, with no feeling of inequality of culture, thanks to his loyalty to the national tongue. And now he sings a translation by Cormac O Cadhla from Molière ("*Si le roi m'avait donné*"), which is enjoyed and vociferously applauded. To show you the literary quality of the fare at these fireside concerts (make a mental comparison with the intellectual standards of the city people's music hall) I will quote the Irish version of the old French lyric. It harmonises exquisitely with the same air :—

Da n-abróch an Ri liom féin
Go d-tiubhradh domh-sa leath a righeacht' :
Acht gurbh eigin domh—fairíor !—
Scar'mhaint le mo chailin caoin,
Deirfinn suas le béal an Riogh :
Tog-sa chughat thar n-ais do ríoghacht
B'fhearr liom bheith lem' chailín,
B'fhearr liom mo chailín caoin.

After a long stay in the Congested Districts, there are two things for the sight of which your eyes hunger. The first is—trees. Spend six months in the Gaeltacht, and when the train takes you inland at last you will hail the sight of trees as, after as long inland, you hail the sight of the sea. Now that security of tenure has come, the farmers are planting young trees, so that in 20 years the horror of denudation will be partly retrieved.

The other missing element is,—the sight of nuns! When you come inland, and see religious, with their air of calm and peace and gentleness, you suddenly realise how dear is their familiar presence, and you wish you could see those kindly Sisters moving among the people in the regions you have left. If some of our educational Orders established houses in the Gaeltacht, they would not only have a bracing resort for their members on holiday and enable their younger teachers to perfect their Irish, but they would confer an incalculable benefit on the young folk of the unspoilt Gaelic people, while their sweet presence would add a culminating beauty to the life that all who know it love so well.

LETTER II.—HOME TO THE NORTH.

§ 1.—*On Pilgrimage.*

Travelling on Friday is hungry work, for as our good hostess, Máire Bheag, said, in the epigrammatic Donegal manner, as we sank into her kitchen at the end of our 14-hours' journey from Dublin : " An té nach mbíonn acht tae aige, bíonn sé sáruí leis " (i.e., He that gets nothing but tea, he does be sick of it). But what is weariness to the body is an exaltation to the spirit and an augmentation to the mind, for as you come in sight of the Ultonian highlands, all the emotions of Scott's " Return of the Bard to Ulster " come over you :

> The streams are of silver, the mountains of dew,
> The land is an Eden, for fancy is new.

Through the moist spring air, the hills lose all perspective, and stand up sharp against the more distant sky like cardboard scenery—indeed the higher mountains have a curious concave appearance as if the tops were bending or toppling in. The eyes, long penned in by the brief scenery around Dublin, get a sort of stiffness in the lenses—you sense a loosed-out feeling in them as they gaze forth through crystal air to vastly remote prospects : the world has expanded all round you, and you feel uncramped, like a released prisoner.

I have Manus O'Donnell's wonderful great volume about Colmcille under my arm on this pilgrimage, which began not far from the Tolka—i.e., on ground actually

trodden by the saint when he was a student—and which has now got as far as his native Tirconaill. On the way, we whirled through the County of Little Hills, and looked forth on many glittering little lakes. Beside one of these, perhaps, Manus, the writer of my book, fought and lost that miserable battle in 1539 which ended his patriotic career. Anon, the train turned its nose towards the smoke and clatter and confusion of Derry, whereof the right name is Doire Colmcille, though to-day the Colmcille is dropped and "London" tacked on. As you rattle into the busy modern city you wonder how it would appear to the eyes of him whose name is properly part of its own, were he, as he longed to do in his exile-days, to revisit "Derry dear." You recall his words:

. . . Derry in the west, beloved place,
Is in my heart though I return not.
. . . As I come from Derry afar
Peaceful it is and delightful.

If mine were all of Alba
From its centre to its border,
I would liefer have space for a hut
In the middle of fair Derry.

Dá madh lium Alba uile
O atá a broine go a bile,
Do budh fearr liom áit tighe
Agam ar lár caemh-Doire.

§ 2.—*Derry to-day and to-morrow.*

I wonder why Derry is not richer in literary achievement? There are no good novels or poems about Derry

from any modern pen, and we hear of no literary circles in the city on the Foyle. And it is not that the palm of literature is held unchallengeably by Dublin now. Brilliant as was her literary career at the opening of this century, Cork bids fair to surpass her now, and Belfast, with its Allens and Rowleys and Reids and Wilsons, is creating a new literary tradition of great distinction. But what is wrong with Galway and Derry? The former surely should be a source of rare literary ambition, yet it has little or nothing of note to its credit thus far. The University College there has a sprightly magazine which printed some brilliant satires, but what else? The most Gaelic of the cities or bigger towns, Galway, should be the cradle of a Gaelic University and a Gaelic literary movement. Yet it shows no promise. Perhaps, however, unseen spade-work is being done, and some day soon Galway will surprise the world, as Dublin, Belfast, and Cork have done, and will surpass them, as the two latter are surpassing Dublin.

Derry, I think, is in the transition or chrysalis stage, and you will see the butterfly flutter forth ere long. It is a wonder that so beautiful, so desirable a city should be so lacking in literary fame so long. As you walk the Derry walls, or look along the broad Foyle waters with their pleasant banks of hills and tree-embowered mansions, you wonder that Derry has not teemed with poets and story-tellers. It is a clean, prosperous, and yet austere-looking city, with but little of slum disfigurements. It has no vast regions of decay like Dublin, and it is not a wilderness of little tight-packed brick-houses like Belfast. Its architecture is not decayed like the capital's, nor shoddy like that of Thompsonopolis

(though its Guildhall has something of vulgar gaudiness in its overdone red-stone Gothic). Its streets, both the new ones running into field-girt suburbs, and its older and historic ones, are freshened by well-kept trees, and on a summer's afternoon you walk through Derry as cheerfully as you would through a country lane.

There are many romantic views, too. There is a glimpse of the silver river through green trees down a hill to be caught from the Northland Road, with the boat-club's pagoda and a wheen of masts, that sets you thinking with the imagination of a Stevenson. There is a shipyard building great iron armadas for France, where brown-dungareed workers pour forth at evening into a green and golden residential district—high modern industry set amid calm and lovely surroundings instead of in the heart of smoky bricks as in Belfast. The yard is not there long, yet a large body of Derry and Donegal youths are already become highly-skilled industrial workers and show themselves capable of surpassing the men of other nations in technical skill. Long, snaky, red-bodied motor buses with glittering glassy sides are swarmed into by these workers, and bore their sinuous way through the traffic at lightning speed.

The people are a delightful surprise. They combine the business efficiency of Belfast with the grace and courtesy of Dublin, and they do not try to "do" you. You are not obliged to ask the price of every article and every service in advance, nor need you take it for granted that promises are made to be broken. When work is over the Derry folk are well-dressed and smart, and you feel you are moving through some tasteful Continental city instead of a commercial and industrial centre. They are a handsome folk, with honest looks.

With a beautiful environment and a fine people, Derry has also an historic tradition to complete its qualifications to become a literary centre. The spirit of S. Colmcille still dwells upon the "Isle of Derry," which to-day is crowned by S. Columb's College, one of the most interesting educational establishments in Ireland. There, in the grounds, you may see the base of a tower and a stone oratory dating from Columban days, and may thrill to think you are treading where the Dove himself used to move among his people. You will find men of the same stamp that he gathered round him still working on that site. There labours Dean M'Glinchey —whose recent booklet on the National Spirit, published by the C.T.S., is a fine piece of reading—and Father M'Shane, who, though a learner of Irish, will preach in it in the Gaeltacht, and who will read you wonderful old Fenian tales that he has edited from oral narration.

The College is housed in buildings first erected by that fantastic Bishop of Derry who in the Volunteer days used to repeat "We must have blood, my lord, we must have blood," and who set out to Rome to die there, yet was baulked of his desire, having to expire on the roadside, being denied shelter by some Italian peasant who regarded his claim to be a Bishop as preposterous. The dancing hall that he built is now a chapel, and his works are turned to ends that would be strange to him. In the grand library you will find another sagart, newly back from Africa, who talks at the rate of 300 words a minute in Irish or English, all about the wonderful things he has found in the huge treasury of rare volumes around him. There, before you, are some 30 Latin tomes—two editions of Suarez

that were flung at a controversialist's head in a newspaper office. And elsewhere you will see in four immense volumes a complete transcription of the Annals of the Four Masters that Eugene O'Curry made for his own private use: a miracle of penmanship and devotion. You will see some remarkable things in the museum, too: masks made of painted skulls, weird pagan objects of pagan worship or awe, poisoned weapons enough to satiate Tartarin of Tarascon. You will see, too, chalices from the Penal Days, and thorns from the Garden of Gethsemane, water from the Pool of Siloam, and olive leaves from a spot of untellable sanctity.

You will be surprised at the amount of Irish talked in Derry, outside the College walls, too. At the cheap bazaar you will ask the price of some triviality and be answered, "Ceithre Pighne." There is a hall in William street where native speakers foregather in a sort of bardic court, the scandal of which makes copy for some clever Gaelic writing in the local Press. There you will find Fionn MacCuail, whose book, "*Maicin*" is one of the best pieces of Irish printed for many a long day—it would draw tears from an Irish-speaking Scrooge, so it would—and is a first token of the impending Gaelic literary burst of Donegal writers. You will hear much Irish, too, among the huge congregations emerging from the Long Tower Church, that stands at the centre of Colmcille's foundation, where Mass has never ceased to be celebrated—not even in the Penal Days. You will see S. Colmcille's praying-stone outside the church, venerated by untold generations. The church itself is one of the most remarkable in the North of Ireland on account of its pictures from Irish and Biblical history. It is like a church of the Middle Ages, wherein every stone was vocal.

§ 3.—*Into Gaeldom.*

From Letterkenny on, you are in a new world—or in the old world, as you choose to regard it. For some three stations, the people talk English in stark Ulster style : after that they are thawed, and revert to Colum's tongue. A couple of farmers, returning from a fair, debate over a red leaflet, on which the workers at some enterprise or other announce that they have struck, and appeal to patrons to withhold their custom for the time. The younger farmer—who has just begun to shave, but who owns his land, and talks with the expert assurance of a patriarch—gives the leaflet his maturest consideration. Then he draws breath, and delivers himself like young Conor MacNessa making the judgment that won him the kingship of Ulster :—"Aye-ee," says he deliberately. "A'd give in to that. A man must live." His companion, an elderly man, is apparently of the same mind. "There's just this to it" says he. "The men in these places don't get living at all. And there never was harder times than these for the poor." Then the younger man very judicially begins to draw the other side of the case, so as to moderate the judgment, but just before we get an insight into the mind of these sturdy landowners on the industrial question, we reach the station at which he gets out—not bothering to say good-bye, or make any unnecessary remark.

The older man, remaining, cross-questions us about our business in these parts, thus camouflaging the desire to know where we came from. He tells us the curiosities of the lands beyond Tirconaill.

"I'm told," he says, "that in the three counties Mayo, King's Co., and Queen's Co.—just them three, mind you—if a man was to go into a house without saying 'God bless all here,' they'd take up a stick and beat him out of it. Now, the people are quite different here. You don't have to say anything when you go into a house. What's that? Aye. The people here do sometimes say, 'Go mbeannui' Dia annso,' but there's no remarks passed if you don't say it, and you needn't say it unless you want to. In those counties that I told you of, they'd beat you out if you didn't say it." . . . . Our informative companion leaves the train, and we fare into the dark, cavernous regions around Muckish, on the extreme bleak peak of which there is still a glow from the now invisible sun. Then suddenly we emerge from the rocky passes, and see below us sloping miles of moor, with the mighty ocean beyond, and Tory Island in the distance with its sharp headland facing the waters like the prow of a gigantic ship. Little white houses are sprinkled everywhere like snowflakes. The exquisite turf scent is in the air. In the car we whirl from the windy uplands into the calm village-clasping valleys, and fáilte, fáilte is the tune.

And now we are treading soil that the sandal of Colmcille often pressed: the place teems with memories of him, and the people have the old-world graces, the dignity of movement and gentleness of speech, the very features, the very accents, that were here in his times. I think he'd be more at home here than in Doire Colmcille, though I have great hopes for the latter: it's a fine city when you get used to it. . . . . The Gaeltacht has changed greatly in the past two years:

that is the first impression. There's a new air about it, and this would be yet more noticeable if the "flu" had not worked such havoc, for the epidemic laid a tragically heavy hand on these glens and braes. Many's the house where they answer your inquiries as to how the world is using them, with a sad shake of the head and "Tháinig an bás orrainn"—Death has visited us. In one house, all but a baby were slain. The young men were the chief victims. From Scotland, several corpses used to arrive home daily: a sad harvesters' home-coming. As you hear the terrible stories you think you are back in the black '48: such desolation was only equalled then.

Of late there is a feeling in the Gaeltacht that new days are coming. Two years ago, the people were still disheartened. They would talk of "Gaelig amaideach"—"foolish Irish"—but you don't hear that talk now. There's a club with Irish speeches and lectures, and with the beginnings of a Gaelic library, where the young men are putting their hand to a great work. The old men are glad to talk in Irish instead of seizing every opportunity to show you that they can talk English. They have a feeling that the tide has at last turned in the fortunes of the Gael—that an Ghaelig is at last coming back into respect, into priority. The big men in politics nowadays talk Irish. That means to the inhabitants of these glens that the students and propagandists who come here learning the language stand for something real. Politics is not my concern, but I would vote for Sir Edward Carson himself if his party had achieved all this. This is reality: beside this parliaments and statute books are but dust and shadows.

LETTER III.

A PRIEST'S TREASURES.

Tarlach's Pipes.

DECRIERS of the Catholic Church should have described to them the life of an Irish curate. Picture a country priest's week-end: the nerve-racking hours of duty on Saturday evening, the two Masses on Sunday morning, often said at chapels ten miles apart over rocky roads, with a sermon to be preached at each before fast can be broken. The wonder is, that men can be found with the constitution to endure the life, not to speak of the self-sacrifice. Then, add the loneliness, the incessant annoyances, the night-calls into snow-bound mountains—and you will realise that these tyrants of ours are heroes of unrealised nobility. But, strangest and pleasantest of all, in these men's character, is the fact that in their lonely and strenuous stations, they are also centres of culture, men of burning intellectual eagerness and interest, deep readers, gay talkers, philosophers and wags.

The most interesting evening I have spent of late was spent in the house of a curate in one of the remotest corners of this rocky kingdom. At the end of a long, long motor-ride, beyond Croc Fola and the wilderness of rocks there at Europe's shoulder, among the stony patches of one of the remotest, wildest and barrenest regions that imagination can conceive, my host's house glows in recollection as a home of rich intellectual life. In it—apart from the owner's valuable library of Gaelic

scholarship—was a collection of historic relics that charmed imagination. Here was a strangely-wrought cooking-pot, dug from the bog, of extraordinary age. And here were "Uilleán" pipes that belonged to the late Tarlach McSweeney. Tarlach was one of the most famous figures of the North in the last century, and regarded himself as the royal musician of Tirconaill. A tourist once breezily offered the poor old man half-a-sovereign for a tune and had the coin flung in his face. "A McSweeney does not want your dirty gold," said the insulted musician. A less-offensive visitor to Tarlach's cottage (who came curiosity-seeking) asked the proud old man to be seated, thinking to put him at ease. "I'll stand or sit or do what I like in my own house," was the answer he got.

When Tarlach died—Tarlach whose fame is sung in Gaelic ballads—Ireland lost a link with the proud past, a link with the age of Carolan. A few there were who realised this fact, and who sought to save Tarlach's relics. A message came from Rome bidding Tarlach's famous pipes be saved at any cost, but happily they were already in safe keeping. My host allowed me to take the instrument into my hands, and told me that it dated from at least the early 18th century. The ivory parts were seasoned by turf-smoke and age to a colour much like that of amber, and you could not but wonder how many thousands of country dances had been enlivened by these pipes by the fire! And how often had this instrument thrilled with gay Jacobite airs, chanting the hopes of Ireland for liberation at the Stewarts' hands! What vicissitudes of national fortune had these pipes rejoiced for, or lamented!

But the "chanter"—the vital part of pipes—was specially interesting. It was far older than the rest of the instrument, and used to be proudly praised by Tarlach as "an O'Neill chanter." The hard ebony had been worn by ages of fingering into deep grooves where the stop-holes were—that was token enough of the piece's extreme age. Quite possibly the chanter (which I struck a few notes from) had sounded gay or martial music before great Owen Roe, or even it may have sounded in the halls of dark Hugh O'Neill before the nation fell three hundred years ago. Mind you, Tarlach McSweeney had good warrant for all he said of his pipes, for the men of the old school cherished the records of the past with absolute accuracy. My host told me that Tarlach could rattle off his genealogy right back to Niall of the Nine Hostages, and, indeed, my host brought out a book in which his own descent likewise was set forth, in fair Gaelic, right back to the Niall who ruled Ireland when the boy St. Patrick was a slave.

Another of my host's relics was a certain mediæval-looking little picture of the 14th Station of the Cross set in a strong brass frame with crude gelatiny-glass over the face of it and a handle behind. Why should a picture have a big handle behind it? That was a question that puzzled the poor folk in whose chimney corner my host had found the relic. The answer is, that this was a Continental "Pax," that is, a picture for handing round in church to be kissed where the "Kiss of Peace" is given in the Mass. But how came this ancient Continental relic into a cabin by the Atlantic's brink? The question suggests this tale: In the days before the Penal Laws, before the Gael

was stricken down, some O'Donnell or Boyle or Gallagher brought this picture home from Rome. Came the Revolution, and the great Catholic houses fell. This relic, like all others of its sort, was hidden, and it chanced to escape destruction by being saved and handed down among the very poor, who had forgotten its origin and romantic associations.

My host's library was rich in Tirconaill history, and a little piece of biography that I noted from the Appendix of his Annals of the Four Masters (that mine of Tirconaill lore) illustrates what became of the fallen Catholic houses, one of whose relics had just been in my hands. One Henry O'Donnell (of whom I had never before heard) was the subject of the Appendix, and was just a type of thousands of Irish refugees in his time. He was born in 1729, and must have gone to the Continent when very young, for he seemed to know neither Irish nor English well. He entered the Austrian service, this youth "with no fortune but his sword and his pedigree," and in 1754 he married a cousin of the Empress Maria Theresa, wife of the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire.

This was a "brilliant marriage"—but let me add that O'Donnell's distinguished wife was a Princess of the Byzantine line—a descendant of John Cantacuzenus, an Emperor and historian who held sway at Constantinople in 1246 A.D. In 1767 we find this O'Donnell bearing one of the proudest titles of the Empire as being a sort of Privy Councillor to the Throne. He becomes Colonel of a corps that won fame over Europe as "The O'Donell Regiment." He is again honoured with titles and becomes Graf (i.e., Count) O'Donell von

Tyrconell, and before his death he is Lieut.-General in the Imperial forces. But, with all this success in life (so to speak), the Irish exile of the 18th century did not forget his origin, and we find Henry writing to his brother Manus in Ireland bidding him have whichever of his sons he intends to send to Austria carefully educated in the Irish language, so that he might instruct Henry's own children in the language of their Irish ancestors.

That is a beautiful and pathetic letter, when we reflect on the evil fate that drove these men to foreign service. But, as a final piece of evidence of the high regard in which my Irish fortuneless exile was held at the highest and most aristocratic Court in Europe, this is enough—that when the Emperor died in 1765, Maria Theresa sadly divided her jewels among her children, saying she would wear such embellishments no more; but put aside one share from those she gave to her children, handing it to Henry O'Donnell, bidding him present them to his wife as a token of the regard in which the Irish soldier was held by his Empress. Such was the esteem enjoyed by landless, moneyless Irish exiles at Royal Courts in days when the Gael was hunted like a wolf on his ancestral soil, his nation's fame maligned, his Faith penalised. As I reflected this, I breathed, to an imaginary Irish Walter Scott, the poet's line:

"Here's a subject made to your hand."

A little later, I discovered that Miss L. MacManus, in *Nuala*, had actually handled this subject with remarkable success.

LETTER IV.—HEATHER READING.

§ 1.—*Der Tag.*

YOU folk in the cities may think we, who have no stop-presses, no last-trams, no early doors, lack excitement: but you are wrong. Lá an Easbuic, i.e., Confirmation Day, is no small event with us. Such dresses, such drillings, such anxious moments! The evening before the great day, the children go up the heathery slopes and watch the winding roads for the dust of his Lordship's coming. When the sun is throwing red lances through the village street, he comes: not, indeed as Colmcille came, "to wit, with twenty bishops and two score priests, and ten and twenty deacons, and ten and two score sons of learning," but whizzing hitherwards in a metal-glittering motor. Next day, the little cruciform church is crowded till breathing is difficult, the ground packed with white-robed bundles of innocence and the three galleries creaking with parents' weight. Mightily dignified is his Lordship as he goes forth from the porch, arrayed in black vestments, and with snowy mitre, to read the prayers for the dead in the churchyard, where "the rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep." This is all you and I see of the ceremony.

The sermon is in Irish, and his Lordship uses the same tongue. All these children—save one—passed their Catechism examinations in Irish, including one youth whose parents are both from beyond sea; that shows you how, in Colum's county, Irish, not English' is the speaking tongue. The Catechism is not easy

learning—linguistically. It has enough twists of idiom abstract expression, and the like, to teach you the whole genius and syntax of whatever language you may learn it in, and on Confirmation Day one of the best Irish scholars I know remarked to me that the basis of his knowledge of literary Irish was—his "catechise." There is a fair on simultaneously with the ceremony, so the town land is nearly exploding with activity. The children stream forth, the fair breaks up, and the P.P. (now a Canon) sighs with relief and gratitude at the creditable passing-off of it all; while the learned lady, Inghean Uí Chuinneagáin, whose teaching has borne such happy fruit, sits calmly knitting in a spot aloof, as though nothing unusual was happening—the one unflustered figure in the parish.

Next day I sat on a heathery cliff and saw, on the horizon, his Lordship's vessel cut the waves towards remote Tory Island, where 40 children awaited the Sacrament—Tory Island, the romantic and antique, whose people only a few years ago decreed as punishment on some offending islander, "banishment to Ireland!" The "Leabhar Gabhála," or Book of Invasions, that relates the primitive barbaric colonisations of Ireland, teems with allusion to Tory Island, and tells how Tory and Ireland, so to speak, went to war with each other. No spot has more of mysterious antiquity in our history than has that quaint-looking rocky monster on the sky's edge. We are truly in old-time Ireland here. The people have a grace, a strength, that seems to mark them as a separate and superior race. There is a beauty in the simple shawl-dress of the women that would make your mannequins die of

envy. When some people take to wearing bonnets and fashions they look as grotesque among these natives as a Cockney in a bowler when set among statues of Greek gods. God forfend the day when these light-stepping young people and dignified *grandes dames* shall put aside their beautiful traditional attire for the tawdry eyesores of the shops! Well might the poet rage against "gach faisiún dá nódhacht ar Shíle 's ar Mhóir!"—But about this tale that I was reading among the heather . . . . .

§ 2.—*A Poetical Pilgrimage.*

Every Kerryman to this day cherishes the fame of Pierce Ferriter, a poet of former times, who dwelt in Corkaguiny. A contemporary of his was Raithie Mac Sionna, an Ulster poet residing in the far North-East, who was touched by jealousy at hearing so often the Kerryman praised as the leading master of poetic tricks-of-the-trade, and he took the notion to visit the famous Southerner, to test for himself his far-renowned literary powers. So Raithie mustered his retinue, namely, his good lady, his gilly and his dog, and fared southward till he came to Tralee; through Glen-na-Galt then, and Anascaul Valley, till they came to Dingle. Still without resting, the Ultonian company travelled through Cloughane beside Ventry, over Rahinane Gap to the foot of Marhin Mount. "Surely now," said the wearied gilly, "we must be in the neighbourhood of the Ferriter's stronghold, and let us seek direction at yonder cabin."

They went forward to a wattled cabin before them

where an able-bodied, lively-eyed youth saluted them, and: "By the look of you," says he "you are strangers in these parts, and it is likely you are hungry after your travels; and though I have no choice meats and drinks to set before you (seeing that I am, alas, naught but a clumsy weaver), yet if you will take a cake or two of barley flour and your fill of goat's-milk, you are welcome." "You need not make that offer twice," quoth Raithie, and they sat and ate and drank to their satisfaction. 'Twas then Raithie rose and says he to the gilly: "It is time to be moving on our errand." "No," said the weaver, "but let us sit and converse a while." "We will not," said Raithie, "for how do I know how much farther is my journey?—and tell me now, where shall we find the dwelling-place of Pierce Ferriter?—for I hear that the old women and the bodaghs of these parts esteem him as a poet, and I promise it will not be long before I put him in his right place, for I am an erudite poet myself from the Ultonian Province, who carried off poetical victory in every airt of Eirinn."

"You have made an unlucky journey so," said the weaver, "if that is the reason that you came among us, for Pierce will not be so lightly excelled as you suppose. And had I known that this was your object—by Padruig! (though I be but a poor country weaver)—I would turn a verse on you myself." Raithie and his companions gave a roar of laughter at this. Then said the weaver: "'Twere wrong for you to depart without leaving us knowledge of your name." "You shall have that," said Raithie: "to wit, Raithie Mac Sionna." "And who are those with you?"—"They are, namely, my gilly, my wife and my dog." Then the weaver

looked sharply at each of them till he said a couple of verses.

Now, on the hearing of these lines (so well-turned, witty and stinging they were) Raithie was filled with envy and terror, and his heart weakened in him so that he could make no reply. "By my conscience, gilly," said he to his boy, "if the weavers of this country are poets like this, I have no stomach to go seeking the Ferriter, and let us," says he, "be getting back to our own country forthwith." Straightway Raithie and his company turned homeward, heavy-minded, weary-footed, and sick with shame, and their adventures thereafter are not related. Know then, that 'twas Pierce Ferriter himself who had awaited them in weaver's guise!

§ 3.—*Some Morals Therefrom.*

This is a new turning of a popular folk-lore theme—the defeat of the scholars by scholars in disguise—which I lately found in a piece of exquisite Gaelic prose by the late Standish Hayes O'Grady (to be carefully distinguished from Mr. Standish O'Grady, the brilliant writer of Irish Historical Novels). This little story was written I suppose, some 30 years ago, and small as it is, it is an example of the fact that the pure, powerful literary dialect of Irish never really died. I wish I could convey in translation the marvellous richness and subtlety of that dialect, for by so doing I would prove this contention: that in our classic prose we have an educative medium superior to English and at least equal to Greek, so that, Greek having died out of our schools, our own literature has no competent rival.

In the days when the classics were taught, the youth who was bullied through Homer was at least equipped with the power thereafter to appreciate good literature while the spacious heroic imagery of the Homeric world gave the background of the world's dawn to his mental vision. Hence the sense of proportion, the fine taste, in which our grandfathers excelled the children of this Yankee Era. But Greek—or the study of any dead language—could never be a "democratic" study. Classical education encouraged snobbery and affectation. It could only be the privilege of the leisured few. Popular education swept away the study of dead tongues, and the world grew bourgeois.

In Ireland we have a means to be modern and yet refined. Standish Hayes O'Grady, author of this little tale, was editor of the riches of Fenian literature, which by his mighty costly, rare book, "Silva Gadelica," he restored to the esteem of reviving Irish scholarship. Padraic Pearse, in turn, apparently inspired by O'Grady, edited tales from the great Fenian saga in cheap pocket booklets—and it is from these books that I hold we can find a substitute for dead Greek on the one hand and drawingroom English on the other. This Fenian literature gives us, in a living tongue, the same exhilarating, majestic, mighty open-air life as that of Homer's heroes. The tales of Fionn M'Coul, like the tales of Odysseus, are of the highest order of literature, because they expand the reader's soul with delight in great winds and sunny seas, and giant athletic life; in boisterous adventure and thrilling, self-forgetting chivalry.

It is well to have the heroes of Homer as companions in the imagination. It is yet better to have the heroes

whose brave or comical doings were worked out at Kesh, or Tara, or Howth, places which we know, and which ever after are peopled for us with memories. And how gentle and dear were the authors who developed these tales down the centuries, writing their high vision in wonderful prose and verse by the homely turf-fire. How much rather would we take the fruits of their minds than those of, say, Macaulay, with his gentlemanly sniggering at vice. Authors are, after all, companions, and is it well that our young generation should have, as guiding companions, men not one of whom observed that leading principle of our own literature, that one of the three marks of a boor is "jesting so as to bring a blush to the cheek"?

LETTER V.

THE SCHOOLS OF TIRCONAILL.

"Come Over and Help Us."

WHEN Eoghan Rua O'Neill landed in Sheephaven Bay, yonder where Doe Castle among the trees casts its romantic reflection on the coloured waters, the first thing he did was—open four schools of Gaelic learning. O for the Kings of former days! Who can imagine a warrior of modern times, on warlike errand, giving his first thought to the revival of culture?

Up here in Tirconaill we have three summer schools 'pardon, Irish Colleges I should say—working away this summer. First there is Cloughaneely of known fame. Next there is the new Iol-Scoil Uladh or Ulster University, which has set up its banner at Dungloe. Our defenders have turned it out of the Hall arranged for, but military occupation of the town has not daunted Father O'Toal, Fionn M'Cuail, or Seumas O Grianna. I hope the Iol-Scoil, though it is reported to have travelling intentions, and to have planned seasons in different parts of the country, will at least give a second year to Dungloe. For where Dungloe leads, Tirconaill will follow, and though it is the most progressive and wide-awake town in North-West Ireland, Dungloe is sadly anglicised. This is a typical case in the Gaeltacht counties. Colleges are started in remote mountainy places, and their propaganda does some little good locally. But the progressive centres, the "capitals," are allowed to go anglicise themselves with never an effort to save them. I hear that already the Dungloe

experiment has proved "a howling success." Father Toal takes his whole college touring from house to house—no English being allowed, even to the struggling lisper of Irish—and you would be reminded of the Imeacht na Tromdháimhe—the Proceedings of the Great Bardic Assembly. In Dungloe now you are nobody if you don't "'De mar tá tú" . . . even the gamins by the roadway are doing it.

The right policy for the Gaelic counties would be to save the economic centres—Dungloe, Ballina, Westport, Galway City, Tralee, etc.—and then the more backward districts could be saved for Gaeldom far more easily. As it is, you find the old people in places like Dungloe shy of using their Irish except among themselves and the young people, despite their facilities for acquiring it, frankly contemptuous of the national language, and practising various political activities to the direct detriment of an Ghaelig. Irish Colleges in such centres may save the situation by bringing the local Irish-Irelanders into touch with the realities of the doctrine they profess, and rousing them to that pride in their local traditions which may yet make them the leaders of the country. These Gaeltacht towns, with their intact Gaelic tradition, their sturdy, open life, strong men and superb surroundings, have potentialities that the Dubliner may well envy. Were they but worthy of themselves they might each be a little Athens.

Before the Dungloe college opened, 'twas rumoured that a condition of entry was to be that the visitors should come in old clothes. It was also suggested that the professors should shave only once a week. (No restriction was to be placed on washing.) By this means

it was thought that the proletarian, comradely atmosphere of former times might be recovered in this one college at least, and the unhomely, touch-me-not, dancing slipper and gloved-hand manners of the modern college avoided. In the old days, before Gaelicism became fashionable, and when only enthusiasts went to Gaelic League functions, there was an easy-going, Christian-name familiarity that knit the participators together in enjoyable friendliness. In from the hills, in dusty shoes and old clothes, the students would flock to the céilidhe ; but nowadays they must first titivate and put powder on their noses—gach fáisiún dá nódhacht ar Shíle 's ar Mhóir—ere they present themselves for the Walls of Limerick or the Siege of Ennis.

Seumas O Grianna holds that céilidhes, excursions, high teas, and the like are all weaknesses of the flesh, snares and delusions. If students are students they go to study, not to indulge in worldly diversions and vanities, says he. This is going to another extreme. Irish colleges are not monasteries, though a monastic policy for language teaching is not beneath consideration. So long as they are lay affairs they should be conducted intelligently as such. Not that Seumas's counsels of perfection are adopted at Dungloe. The clerical section of the directorate will surely see after the interests of the un-other-worldly, and dance and song will tell forth, as they can, the charm of old memories and traditional delights. You get nearer to reality at a good céilidhe than in the classroom. When you hear the magic music that Hugh O'Neill heard your nature is tuned to his, and you look round the hall at the faces whose expressions are just those that he was familiar with.

Have you, by the way, ever seen Joe Gregg at a céilidhe? No?—Then you have yet to learn what true humour is, just as you have yet to know what dancing means if you have never seen Torymen on the floor. They say, by the way, that dancing down South is more complex, more artistic, than in this romping North. It could be.

Down at the far south of this dark northern county, a third Gaelic college is appearing—at Bundoran.

This last enterprise is interesting as showing a tendency to Gaelicise even a holiday-resort. I hope it will lead to the exploration of the lovely country of that neighbourhood by Gaels from all parts, so that the advantages of Ballyshannon as the site for some future Oireachtas will be considered. Northward across the bay see the romantic Donegal hills—Glencolumcille in their folds, and Glenties and Ardara: glorious Gaeltacht country, teeming with romance. Westward see Ben Gulban with its mysterious contour and Fenian memories. Under it runs the fine cliff-side road to the town of Sligo of antique fame and poetic glory, whither the ships still sail. Eastward are the island-studded waters of the Erne. All around is rolling, hillocky, green country swept by bracing airs, and sprinkled with tidy homesteads that Allingham once loved. It is country afire with poetry, attractive with variety, and redolent of the past. It is the strategic centre of western Ulster: propaganda floated here would react on the Donegal Gaeltacht, and on all the diocese of Clogher. The tide of strangers and travellers always passing here—to Sligo, Bundoran, Lough Derg, Ballyshannon—would carry that which was cast on it far and wide.

Generalship, messieurs of the Coiste Gnotha, generalship dictates the seizure of the land-bridges in peaceful propaganda no less than in war, and you could not do better than set up the flag of the Oireachtas at the place where the captains in ancient days set up the flag of battle. You have neglected the North hitherto—the North that needed propaganda and Gaelic teaching more than any other part—and have held those stimulating annual festivals year after year in the South where stimulus is not needed. Tirconaill's triple college activities show at least a tendency in Ulster to do its own propaganda, but our cry is that of the Macedonians: Come over and help us!

LETTER VI.

IDEAL INDUSTRIALISM.

Dungloe's Lead.

ONCE upon a time, the Atlantic coast of Ireland was busy and prosperous, and so it shall be again if nature has its way. Through those western ports of ours, Ireland looks out on the trade routes, and the economic current has been deflected from them only by the violence of politics. When Ireland is free to develop her own trading, and to restore her ancient distributive rural polity, the glorious mountain lands of the sunset will rear once more a proud and prosperous race. Though the winter of our discontent is not yet past, the first buds of the returning summer are already appearing.

Dungloe is a little Atlantic town, miles from the railway, with a hinterland of the bleakest, barrenest rocky moorland that this wild county can show. But desolate rocks may rear fine men, and there is no finer manhood in Ireland than that which strides through Dungloe's little streets. Here there are strength, intelligence, courage and industry, and like the sunlight on its granite there is the glow of prosperity upon the town. As you go through the main street, you see through a side-road an extensive stone building on the very brink of the rocks. This is the Co-operative Machine-Knitting Factory recently opened by Father T. Finlay, S.J.

The home-knitting industry of Donegal is well known, and is beloved of sentimentalists. In the old days—that are still the *present* days in many parishes—a girl would knit from dawn to dark, and count herself

lucky if her week's produce brought as much as eight shillings from the trader who bought it. No wonder, then, that poverty gripped the homestead and misery scourged the young people into flying abroad. Before a home-industry can be aught but a cause of sweating and misery, it must be organised on a scientific basis. This was achieved at Dungloe. The knitters came together in a hall belonging to the co-operators of the place, who, incidentally be it remarked, happened to be their parents. Machines were provided for them out of the co-operative capital, and when they had been paid by piecework for their labour, the society sent the goods away to a market found by the organisation. The profits made were not taken by the middleman, for the middleman in this case was an organisation existing for the purpose of marketing, i.e., a machine, as it were, belonging to those seeking a market. Instead, the profits swelled the fund which, at the year's end, could either be taken in dividend by the co-operators, or devoted to fresh expansion. So successful was this scientific production and distribution, that the work grew too large for the housing resources of the society, and the big factory had to be built.

Over 100 girls are now working in that factory, while others work in conjunction with them in their homes. Piece-work brings wages that have even gone as high as £5 and £6 a week, while the produce is exquisite pure woollen goods, modelled on the best styles and finished off with the thoroughness of workmanship that only traditional craft can supply. The girls live in their fathers' houses, and it is to those homes that the profits of their work go, over and above their good wages.

Here, then, is an ideal Irish industry. It is something traditional modernised. It exists in the healthiest and happiest of environments, and is not divorced from agriculture. It is an integral part of a group of associated activities which strengthen one another, just as —to take a homely symbol—the gas-engine that drives the dynamo for the electric lighting of the factory and the great distributive stores up the road (where the workers can spend their money to the best advantage) drives also the sawmill in the yard, where box-making, etc., are in busy progress. Above all, it is something new and uniquely hopeful in industrial organisation. "You in Dungloe," said Father Finlay when he opened the big new premises, "have done something that the Governments and the political parties and the reformers and the revolutionaries have all failed to do. You have created a democratic industry that is successful." In England, he pointed out, and other big industrial countries, the workers were trying to seize capital, and these countries were filled with turmoil. But Dungloe had shown that there is another road, and that industry can be built up without either exploitation or unrest.

The associated activities at Dungloe give work to some 500 people—practically all of them, by the way, Irish speakers, for this blossoming of healthy industry which the great Jesuit economist declares to be an example, not only to these islands, but to the world, took place in what people often regard as a backward place—the Gaeltacht. The turnover of the Society, which owns this ideal industry has reached nearly £100,000 per annum. That shows what is possible in the Gaeltacht even to-day. "Paddy the Cope," the

manager, is to my thinking the biggest man in Ulster. Yet if you meet him, you will find him just a plain specimen of the northern iron. He will probably be oiling his gas-engine, or packing boxes, or hustling up the work of salting fish into barrels, with the angry blue fire in his eyes blazing. The secret of his success is his flaming energy and his democratic hand in every detail.

The other day a dour Belfastman broke down at my door on his way home from Dungloe. His notions of Papist industrial capacity seemed to have gone to ribbons. "Man," said he, "A'm tellin' you that if them lads up thonder in Belfaust cud on'y get a look at that factory fella an' his doin's, they'd quit gassin' about their prosperity and beatin' their drums."

LETTER VII.

AN O'CONNELL TALE

and A Note on Newman.

THE Gaeltacht is the place for reading. Your imagination here has calm and content, and dwells on tradition or on literature, without that feverish restlessness that obsesses the city mind. You know that popular legend concerning Daniel O'Connell—to the effect that a plot to poison him by drugged wine at a banquet was foiled by an Irish-speaking serving maid warning him in Irish to "eat his fill, but drink nothing"? As an example of how the folk-imagination works on and embellishes a story—true or fictitious in origin—perhaps I may repeat a very much elaborated version of the poison-legend which I heard this week from an old Irish-speaker who called to share a breakfast-cup and pay his compliments to new neighbours.

"Did you ever hear tell," he asked, "of how the Black Party tried to poison Donal O'Connell? Well, they brought him to some sort of a tea-party, and whatever way it was, they had his cup poisoned, so that as soon as he drank from it he would be killed. But there was an Irish serving girl at the house and she knew of the scheme.

"Said she to Donal O'Connell, as he sat down at the table: 'Donal O'Connell, do you understand Irish?' 'I do,' says he. 'Well then,' said she, 'understand that there is enough in your cup to kill a thousand men.' 'If that is so,' said he, 'some of themselves

shall take it.' They said all this in Irish, you see, so none of the Black Party knew what the girl had told O'Connell.

"The tea-drinking went on then, and O'Connell ate his bread and butter, but he did not put his lips to his cup. He had a hand in one of his pockets to pull out his watch, and some way he pulled out a handful of money as well, and spilt it all over the floor—shillings and sixpences and half-crowns were in it. All the people of the Black Party then got down on their knees and scrambled for the money."

The narrator here gave a lively imitation of the greedy Sasanachs scrambling after the scattered coins. "While they were fighting for the money under the table," he proceeded, "what did O'Connell do but put the poison from his cup into their cups without them seeing him do it. So whatever way it was, when the tea party was over, there were they all stretched out and O'Connell safe!"

"Imthigh leat go Peata'gabha!" ("Go to Pettigo!") is an abusive expression used in North Donegal, having a meaning somewhere between "Go to Jericho!" and "Go to h—!" My visitor told how a clergyman visiting North Donegal called on him, and on being asked where he came from replied: "Pettigo." This reply occasioned the same kind of astonishment as would be caused in other places by a reply naming either of the two places! Now, Pettigo, which has such queer associations in the North, is a village at the far south of Donegal, half in Co. Tyrone, so that if Partition had been perpetrated a certain cottage in the middle of Pettigo would have been half in "Ireland" and half out. In old

days O'Donnell's territory ended just before Pettigo would be reached. It was then that the custom rose of consigning people to a place just outside Tirconaill.* "Go to Pettigo!" cried the enraged Tirconellian of old, meaning, "Get out of this county and from my sight." "Go to Pettigo!" said a poor old soul at my gate the other day to a dog that was worrying her, meaning, "Go to blazes."

But talking of literature . . . . When that rich uncle in America of whom I have never heard leaves me my first million, I am going to indulge myself, during my first year of idleness, in the literary treat of reading Newman. I intend to spend the winter in some iargúlta corner of the Donegal mountains, reading Newman from end to end by the blazing turf, while the winds of the world's end rage in Apocalyptic fury round Croc Fola and sky-cracking Arrigal. But if the aforesaid uncle fails to make good, I fear that a due appreciation of my hero will never be mine. For all the restfulness of the Gaeltacht is not enough to fit the mind for Newman so long as one is concerned at all with weekly-committee-meetings, printers' proofs, and business correspondence. He is to be read in cloisters. That serene and mighty mind must be approached with an utter abstraction of thought that one yields to no other master of letters. He asks to be read in religious retreats or sequestered places. Hence very few ever come to enjoy him. He awaits an interpreter—a literary middleman or devotee-critic, who shall retell

* Pettigo is the base from which pilgrims embark for St. Patrick's Purgatory on Lough Derg, and some have it that "Go to Pettigo" derives from this, Pettigo being regarded as next door to the lower regions.

his thoughts in form appreciable to the common mind as Wicksteed interprets Dante.

Of course, everyone knows the "Apologia," or should do. It ought to be read by every Catholic once a year. It teaches how Titanic a thing is truth. This Faith, this customary creed that we take so lightly—Catholic-born or convert—see what it meant to Newman! How he fought, suffered, and spiritually starved, as he searched for it! What Promethean agonies were his ere he found it, and when, having found it, he knew not whether it was his! This great book, and the University essays, also that soul-disturbing thing "The Dream of Gerontius," are all we ordinary folk know of Newman, but they are enough to convince us that he was one of the very great, the almost superhuman, prophet-like thinkers, an Augustine or Aquinas. There is an air of the terrific about all he wrote. He has an austerity that freezes our homely enthusiasms, and makes us conscious of being pitifully insignificant, as does some stupendous natural spectacle, an eruption or the limitless ocean. He preaches a scholarship that entails a preternatural discipline, and yet he talks pityingly of all secular literature as though the masterpieces of the world were to him stale and unprofitable. When he praises, then, it is as though the person or thing praised had received a testimonial from an archangel: he is pontifical in every breath.

> His soul was like a star and dwelt apart;
> He had a voice whose sound was like the sea,
> Pure as the naked heavens, majestic, free—
> So he did travel on life's common way
> In cheerful godliness, and yet his heart
> The lowliest burdens on itself did lay.

This splendid figure, distrusted, hated, slandered, in England, sought sympathy in Ireland, but, tragically enough, failed to find it. The misunderstanding which divided Newman from Ireland when he lived at that historic spot, in Harcourt street, is sad to dwell on. And yet, if we quarrelled with Newman, we at least recognised him as one of ourselves, a fellow-citizen of Christendom, and in our differences with him there was an underlying mutual regard. There are some people whom one hates to agree with. One resents their being on the right side. Newman was the antithesis of these. The fact that he was, in certain political issues, on the wrong side only endeared him to our memories by adding pathos to his relations with Ireland. For although he fell foul of Ireland's immediate ambitions, he was really one of the noblest praisers of our country that ever paid tribute to Ireland's fame. He is, by the way, responsible very largely for what may be called the nervous-Irish type in literature. In " John Bull's Other Island " the contrast between the buffoonish Broadbent and the highly strung, over-refined Larry Doyle popularised this type, which has now supplanted the old stage-Irishman. Shaw is often said to have followed Meredith's " Diana of the Crossways," where the over-fine Irish type is said to have originated. But in Newman's essays the Irish character will be found drawn in these lines with great tenderness.

Lecturing in Dublin on the reasons for which he wished to see our capital made the seat of his ideal Catholic University, Newman instanced as one, the national temperament. He examines the English character, which he finds to excel in law and precedent,

authority and prescription, literature and the classics; in contra-distinction to the Irish character, which is of scientific and speculative bent.

> . . . the Irish have ever been, as their worst enemies must grant, a people of great natural abilities, keen-witted, original and subtle. As Rome was the centre of authority, so, I may say, Ireland was the native home of speculation. In this they were as remarkably contrasted to the English as they are now . . . I think I rightly recognise in the Irishman now, as formerly, the curious, inquisitive observer, the acute reasoner, the subtle speculator.

Here, as in other passages, we see Newman painting the nervous Irishman before that character had been popularised. His description of the Irish character as speculative is certainly penetrating, for the speculative element in Irish genius has been long obscured, and science has been in modern times woefully neglected in Ireland. We have grown incurious and lethargic, and have almost nothing in modern science to our name. But in history, the Irish character was of the speculative turn, and it showed unusual appreciation of Irish history in Newman to recognise this fact.

Newman had great hopes for Ireland. "In your advancement," he said to the Dublin classes, "I am contemplating the honour and renown, the literary and scientific aggrandisement, the increase of political power, of the Island of the Saints." And some words that follow read curiously to-day:—

> It is impossible, Gentlemen, to doubt that a future is in store for Ireland. First, there is the circum-

> stances, so highly suggestive, even if there were nothing else to be said, viz.—that the Irish have been so miserably ill-treated and misused hitherto; for, in the times now opening upon us, nationalities are waking into life, and the remotest people can make themselves heard into all the quarters of the earth . . . The wrongs of the oppressed, in spite of oceans or of mountains, are brought under the public opinion of Europe,—*not before Kings and Governments alone, but before the tribunal of the European populations,* who are becoming ever more powerful in the determination of political questions.

This utterance of Cardinal Newman reads like one of Cardinal—I should say President—Woodrow Wilson.

Newman's highly complimentary delineations of Irish character and hopes for Irish future, were not mere polish for his speeches. His regard for Ireland showed itself in an act of devotion that had incalculable results in Irish history. In 1854 the classes at the Catholic University were opened under the auspices of Newman as rector. He at once appointed Eugene O'Curry to the Chair of Irish History and Archæology—"the first adequate and independent endowment of pure Irish scholarship since the days of the O'Clerys and the MacFirbises" as the brilliant author of "A Group of Nation-Builders" writes. Thus it was Newman's act of patronage to Gaelic learning—an act of the noblest courtesy and fine perception—that restored Irish scholarship to a position of repute after two centuries of obscuiity.

In this, Newman shewed that he had a keener and wider and more truthful vision of Ireland than had

Irishmen themselves in that anglicised generation. This action of his seems to me the greatest testimony to his greatness. It was the work of a seer. When the most distinguished Irishmen of the day knew nothing of the Irish past save in the colours of Moore's "Tara's Halls," he, a stranger, gave the invaluable helping hand that lifted the veil from the neglected truth. It is only by a careful study of the pre-O'Curry period in comparison with the Ireland immediately following his work that we can appreciate how epoch-making in significance were his labours. The darkness, the squalid want of self-respect that marked Irish notions of history just before O'Curry can hardly be appreciated by us to-day. The scene of O'Curry's lectures has often been described: that wizard-like old scholar unfolding the wonders of ancient Irish history in an almost empty hall, while one figure—the spare, ascetic, saint-like Newman—sits always in the front row, listening with concentrated attention to the story. O'Curry's lectures, so ill-attended in point of numbers (but were ever lectures better attended in point of distinction in saintliness and learning?) were fated, when collected in his great works, the "MS. Materials of Irish History" and "Manners and Customs of the Ancient Irish," to revolutionise Irish history, inspire poets, novelists and patriots, and to bring about that Gaelic movement which has led in our days to the resurrection of the nation. Let a nation, then, salute the memory of John Henry Newman.

LETTER VIII.—ABROAD AND BACK.

A Remarkable Island-State.

SINCE writing my last letter a week ago, I have been abroad and back. I won't tell what country I went to, but I'll just say this: that I was never in a country where there was more to admire and less to regret —'twas the nearest I have yet found to a model land. [No, it wasn't Erewhon.] There was a good "sgaifte" of us went sailing forth to this delightful country. We went in two vessels, with chaplains in each, and other religious. I regret to say that these, who should have set us an example of gravity, filled up the time with frivolous singing—comic songs, patriotic songs, unpatriotic songs, war songs, sentimental songs and nonsense songs; songs in Irish, English, French, German and Latin. We had "Die Wacht am Rhein" and the "Marseillaise" and we were disappointed that nobody knew the "Red Flag," so we had "Up cam' a man" instead, and:

> Slitter, Slaater, holy wather
> Sprinkle the Papishes every wan.

But though our politics were mixed in our songs they were clear in the faces of many, who were green, white and yellow before they got to land. . . . The sea was mountains high, and our consort often disappeared behind the waves, all but the mast-tops, or else climbed up into the sky before us with an Excelsior motion that we hardly hoped to imitate.

If you will believe me, the country we went to was oft visited by S. Colmcille himself; indeed, we landed just a stone's throw from his landing-place, and went, later on, to the spot where his holy sandals trod. And furthermore, this country used to go to war with Ireland in the distant ages, as you may read in the Irish book, the "Leabhar Gabhála"; but the people are very good friends to Ireland now. The man who showed us an ancient oratory near the harbour, which was consecrated, he said, by nine priests and three bishops, asked us how affairs were going, over in Ireland. He advised us (as did others of his countrymen) to hold out for "the whole thing." This country is extraordinarily clean and neat. I never saw such extremely scrupulous tidiness as prevailed all around us. The houses were as spick and span as dolls' houses, and every article was polished till it shone. The roads were kept like garden-paths. Everybody was well-dressed, and as the people are unsurpassable physical specimens, we seemed to be walking among a new, happy, unspoilt humanity. They are as brown as Mediterranean folk, for the sun is stronger here than in Ireland, and most of us were tanned within an hour of landing. All displayed that gracious ease which is the highest courtesy—a race of noble folk. They are not an opulent people, for they have a strenuous battle for life; but we did not see the smallest trace of poverty, for industry, good management and social health have banished social misery. All here regard themselves as kinsmen, as in the patriarchal nations, and no individual is left the friendless victim of misfortune.

We went to the King's house on landing. It is

just above the harbour like the house of Alcinous in the Odyssey, of which I was all the time kept in mind. I suppose everyone who ever read the Odyssey vividly remembers that delightful little kingdom with the plain description of the king's house, fanned by the sea wind, and surrounded with a "goodly orchard-ground" girt by "a lofty quickset"—and remembers, too, the wine poured out in the court, and the king's homely yet dignified welcome of the wanderer who is put at length to rest in the woollen bed in the "loop-hole tower above the sounding portico." And as he remembers this most realistic, romantic and fascinating of all the passages in Homer, does he not grieve that he will never see Nausicaa's island with his bodily eyes? Often my imagination dwelt in that little ideal kingdom till I thought: woe is the world that has lost this unsurpassed order of things. Yet this week (as I am telling you) I stepped ashore on a very counterpart of Alcinous' country—and saw a living Alcinous in the flesh.

The King, to spare us a weary search for comfort, set his house at our disposal at once, despite our being strangers from Ireland. We were shown where to find —in that airy and exquisitely neat house—the things we would need, and then were left to our devices. This was lordly hospitality worthy of Alcinous. The King passed once through the room in which we sat, casting an eye over us from the rear, as though anxious for our well-being, but so unobtrusively did he do this, that only by chance did I observe him: he was unmistakable (though I had never seen him or his picture before), so high an air of dignity he carried. Tall, finely-bearded

and, though aged, alert, he called to mind that King of Browning's—

> "Such grace had Kings when the world was new."

He was the kingliest man I ever saw, or ever spoke with (for I had speech with him later, by inestimable good fortune), and if all kings were like him, kingship would be justified. In these times, when monarchs are usually not so much supreme types of their people, as a caste apart, whose isolation is fostered, and whose flocks are too gigantic to hold any personal touch with them, we find it hard to understand phrases like "every inch a king" that date from the patriarchal days of the little family-states of old.

The King's son is in the prime of life. A more stalwart, yet fine and gentle figure, no artist could conceive. He is a poet and litterateur, and some day I will introduce you to some of his work. I did not get speech with him. This island "went dry" before America, thanks to a mission. Crime and disorder are unknown. There are no police, and little interest is taken in other of our legalistic institutions. Public opinion here rules more effectively than any less democratic institution, preserving peace and harmony. You have here, in fact, a living model of the Homeric communities or of their Irish counterparts, the old little clan-kingdoms. The life is full of Homeric poetry, too. Here the zest of healthy living expresses itself in industry, music, dancing; and the houses are poems like the Odyssey's self with their scoured utensils and primitive joy of matter. Human life here has the best chance that it can hope for in this world. A higher potentiality

is realised than anywhere else. Will the world ever return to this order of things? Had I the genius of a Scott, I would go to live in this place and from its suggestions I would reconstruct in tales the old Kingdoms of Ireland and Greece, and Russia and India, and—

All who read would see them there
And all would cry "Beware, beware.
Weave a circle round him thrice
And close your eyes with holy dread
For he on honey-dew has fed
And drunk the milk of Paradise.

When we embarked from the great stone pier, the sun was declining towards an anarchy of monstrous waves, and a hurricane was blowing into our throats, so that when we were but a little way out there seemed to be nothing in the world outside our little boat but illimitable water and white light and wind. It was exhilarating, and instead of meditating on our unusual experiences we took to singing with eager lungs. We sang first "The Fair Hills of Ireland" (Ban-chnuic Eireann) and then (conducted by our chaplain) the well-known melody:

John Brown's donkey had a red leather tail,
John Brown's donkey had a red leather tail,
John Brown's donkey had a red leather tail,
Agus sinne ag gluaiseacht ar aghaidh!
Glory, glory, hallelujah, etc.

So it was not till we got home that I had time to reflect that the journey had taught me more of Irish history than all the books. I have heard people who have seen the

Indian villages confess to a similar illumination. You must see the honest old world if you want to visualise Gaelic Ireland, in which it lingered so long. The Irish state of our schoolbooks is as much a fiction as the Irish barbarism of English schoolbooks. Old Ireland was a network of peaceful little states like the land we visited, each so sturdy and virile, that men mightier of mind and body were reared there than ever are seen in our modern countries. The superb physique of the old race, its intellectual vivacity, grew where life was, so to speak, subjected to intensive cultivation. Hence the intense vitality of the literature coming from those little states —the philosophies of Athens, the romances of the Milesian courts. Life runs so high and is so full of stimulus in that little country that I am home from that I have a mind to fare forth on my Odyssey again to seek there the inspiration that would be so long a-coming on these big islands.

LETTER IX.—OPEN AIR

In Life and Literature.

PEOPLE who recommend books because "they are so true to life" seem to me to have a false idea of the use of books. The best books surely are those which take us away from life to something more entertaining, or else to a life that is different from our own. I have no quarrel with literature for having created a fictitious and improbable world into which I can escape from this on wet and dismal days. At the same time, literature has no right to misrepresent life. Modern literature does this shamefully, and even in details fills readers' minds with misconceptions. Take what Dr. Spooner called the "horny handed ton of soil"—the hardy tiller of the land. Literature has given city readers quite a wrong conception of him.

Literature says that the countryman leads a healthy, robust life that contrasts with the enervating life of the townsman. The facts are otherwise. No countryman could endure for a week the exertion and nerve-racking perplexities that the portly bourgeois daily accepts without losing an ounce. A few miles' walk on Dublin pavements strains the sinews of the countryman's calves. Indeed, the Dubliner who goes to live in the country for a month or two finds city roads tiring to walk at his return, and it is a week or two before he recovers the graceful elasticity that marks his type. In the country the Dubliner amazes the countryman by his untiring energy for walking not less than by his curious taste for it. These remarks, by the way, are prompted

by observations of holiday-makers. In the quiet sunset hours the hillocks all along the coast are crowned by little solitary black figures—taking the air with deep respiration and relish. The people, I fancy, regard their visitors with a quiet pity for their eccentric love of climbing jagged rocks where no one but a goat could have any real object in going!

Again, while many of the ladies have adopted the dainty head-kerchief of local fashion—a fashion that would create a furore in Dublin if the students had the courage to wear their discoveries on their return—they naturally discard this headgear on going indoors. The men wear no headgear at all, indoors or out, but march the roads with their locks blowing in the salt breeze. The people of the place, I am sure, regard both sexes as eccentric in this, for like most country people, they themselves cling to their headgear indoors as well as out. One of the students tramped over to visit me the other evening and I entertained him at the kitchen turf-fire. Of course, he was hatless, and I still cling to the townsman's fad of remaining bareheaded indoors. As we talked, entered the man of the house. He joined in the yarns. After a few minutes he became conscious of our hatlessness. Afraid of appearing rude by remaining covered himself, but delicately anxious not to let us notice he was depriving himself of his usual comfort, he set to manœuvres to discard his hat. First he began thoughtfully to scratch his head. Then, lifting the headgear, to stroking his crown, and so by artful stages succeeded in dropping the hat to the corner of his chair—undetected in his artifice, so he thought.

The townsman's love of fresh air, so riotously indulged

in holiday time, and so carefully catered for by scientific ventilation in his home and place of labour, has no counterpart in the country. Country people hate fresh air. In the house I am staying in above the Atlantic's brink there are but two windows, and those are on one side of the building : the land side. On the seaside the windows that once were, have been walled in. In my room, happily, there is one of the windows, but it has been carefully nailed up to prevent use for ventilating purposes. This is typical of the whole countryside, and one sighs for a famous Mid-Ulster priest who used to encourage hygiene by putting his umbrella through his parishioner's windows. He is now teaching in a seminary, and it is to be hoped he includes this practice in his course of instruction. At night the people scrupulously prevent any fresh air that may be trespassing in the room from invading the bed by drawing curtains across the opening to that ingenious air-tight wooden-box. Country people are healthy in spite, not because of their conditions of life, or else our modern ideas of hygiene are all wrong.

Still, the Irish people of former times must have been an open-air race in every sense of the world. There is no more open-air literature than the Gaelic. Did not "Ossian" bring the open-air like a blast into the feverish drawing-room literature of the 18th century, and thus initiate the greatest revolution in modern literary history ? MacPherson, of course, was denounced as an imposter, and Dr. Johnson said that a man could certainly write Ossianic literature out of his invention—if he would descend to it. The cause of such protests by the staider folk was their indignation at the new

literature's freshness and beauty. Their fierce condemnations so advertised the work that it was brought to the notice of thousands, was done into the Continental tongues, inspired writers in Germany and Italy, and was carried about as his favourite book by Napoleon. Thus did the indignation of Fleet Street critics cause the legendary songs of the son of Fionn M'Coul to conquer literary Europe one-and-a-half thousand years after the hero himself went off to Tir-na-nOg.

Irish literature would benefit to-day by such treatment as was meted to its Scottish offspring. We should be put on our mettle, and our interest in our classics would be stimulated, if we more frequently heard them described in the words of Dr. Atkinson, T.C.D., who in 1900 gave evidence before the Education Commission thus: "Irish literature is almost intolerably low in tone, and every now and then goes down lower than the low. If I read Irish books, I see nothing ideal in them, and my astonishment is that through the whole range of Irish literature that I have read, the smallness of the element of idealism is most noticeable. There is very little imagination. The Irish tales, as a rule, are devoid of it fundamentally." This spirited "jevassing" (as it would be called in Ulster) enriched our literature by inspiring Lady Gregory to confute it with an exhaustive collection of our classic tales.

If Dr. Atkinson had wished to appear paradoxical, he could not have more accurately hit on the very *virtues* of Irish literature to declare them absent. "Lowness," for instance, is a quality which mars even Shakspere, so that no five consecutive pages of his plays are free from gross jests, and though Dr. Atkinson would, doubt-

less approve of him, his works can only be taught from "school editions." Yet it is just one of the faults that the most candid judge cannot trace from start to finish of Irish letters. Thus Dr. Atkinson's denials laid stress (by contradiction) on a leading merit of our song and story. What we now need, however, is appreciative writings by enthusiasts who will tell us what they have found to delight them in the stories that Dr. Atkinson glanced through in vain.

Our literature will not be read until some such delvers in it awake popular interest. Mere description in terms of other literatures will not bring readers, for you cannot analyse the fascination of a story any more than you can define the causes of your friendships—it is the indefinable personality that attracts you. You cannot define milk by saying that it is stronger than water and weaker than whiskey; for the only quality that distinguishes it from all other beverages is not its strength or weakness, but its essential milkiness. (This is verging on metaphysics.) The only quality which identifies Irish literature is the quality peculiar to it—its unique atmosphere—and if it were otherwise we should have no claim to boast of a literature, however meritorious foreign work composed in Ireland might be. Our Fenian tales are heroic like Homer, and bright with social elegance like French drama, yet they are as different from these as a picture is different from others, even though touches of common colours are used in its composition.

Padraic Pearse was one of the few real appreciators of Irish literature, and to read his notes to the Fenian tales he edited is to have your attention drawn to

beauties you would not otherwise have adequately appreciated. Thus Pearse was one of the choicest—because creative—critics. "The Carle of the Drab Coat" (which he once did into a pocket booklet) illustrates the individuality of our classics. On a summer's day the Fenians are holding an Oireachtas at Howth. They see a sail driving towards them, when a single prodigious hero leaps by the hafts of his spears and the handle of his lances to the strand. It is the King's son of Thessaly, who will take the sovereignty of Ireland unless some one of the Fenians can excel him in a race.

Caoilte, the Fenian runner, is absent, so Fionn bids Caol (the invader) be entertained at Howth while he himself goes seeking Caoilte. On his road he meets a mighty, stumbling, top-heavy creature in an "ignorant suit," and with shoes larger than boats—the Carle or Clown—who offers to run the race in Caolite's place. "I think you have enough to do to transport yourself half-a-mile, without seeking to do the deeds of champions," says Fionn, yet the Carle is at last accepted, and goes back with Fionn to Howth. Caol hesitates to accept such a common-looking competitor, but names for the course, the road from Slieve Luachra in Kerry, and they tramp to the starting-place that night.

Now begins a rare pantomime of humour, shot through with the poetry of the hunt, of night on the mountains, and of the loveliness of the Irish countryside at dawn. The Carle plays with Caol, leaving him hungry for refusing to hunt in his plebeian company, mocking his high pretensions, and displaying extraordinary powers that his fantastic get-up had hidden. At the end the Carle finishes the race some leisurely hours

before his rival, who, when he arrives at last with outraged dignity, is so violent that the Carle has to knock off his head. The chivalrous spirit of Fenian authorship, however, cannot agree to a companionless enemy being slain, so the head is stuck on again, but backwards, as a punishment for presumption. In this plight the invader is pushed out to sea by the Carle.

"And when the Clown of the Drab Coat returned from the water to where Fionn and the Fenians stood—lo! the wind and the sun flamed up before and after him, and they knew him for Manannan mac Lir, the spirit king of Rathcroghan, who had come to rescue them from their dread strait."

Such is the poetic conclusion. Manannan runs through a score of similar tales, and is, I think, a unique character in national literatures. The heroes of Greece and Rome never unbent, but our macLir performs his hero-deeds in succour of the Gael with playful droll pretences of stupidity, which turn out to be the kindly satire of upstart pomp. Get to know Manannan and you learn the unique traits of our literature—poetry that is unspoilt by its interweaving of fun, dignity that never loses humanity. He personifies the mind of the penalised race that created him, with its secret royalty and its contempt for pretentious exteriors. The King's son of Thessaly who arrived with such arrogant pomp and went away so foolishly humbled, may in turn be taken as an allegory of what the creators of our literature most hated—the false claims of Ascendancy.

LETTER X.—TORY REVISITED.

The Coarb of Colum.

LET it be confessed: that fascinating "foreign land" to which I voyaged a little while ago, as described in Letter VIII, was—Tory Island.

Tory is undoubtedly one of the most remarkable places in western Europe. Its appearance is remarkable. The tower-shaped precipices from which it takes its name, seen on the far horizon from the mainland, strike the imagination with romantic suggestions, all of which are intensified as you approach the island in the little Torian boats and see the old-world town about the harbour, with the Round Tower near the pier-head, and the strange black curraghs tossing on the waters. In history, too, Tory is remarkable. The home of Balor of the Blows, whose legendary castle is to be seen among the stupendous eastern cliffs, it is associated with one of the most ancient of humanity's legends; it was the scene of the primitive racial struggles recorded in the Leabhar Gabhála, while its conversion by S. Colmcille is one of the most familiar tales of Donegal, and half-a-dozen place names on the mainland and the island commemorate incidents in the Saint's conquest.

To-day, you embark at the Hill of the Saints, from which Colum and his companions first spied Tory, and be sure ere sailing to repeat the traditional prayer: "Le cuidiú Dé agus Chuilm Chille, rachaidh mé slán go Toraighe." (By the help of God and Colum, I will go safe to Tory). The little Torian boat, with its sprit-sail, that can be dropped in an instant (for squalls are

frequent here at the extreme corner of Europe) will climb up and down the hugh waves ever in a straight line for Moraid, the hill where Colum's staff struck earth when he cast it from the Hill of the Saints, and in two hours, you will land close to the spot where the Dove of the Church himself came ashore.

If you chose, you may see the imprint on the rocks made by the feet of the " poisonous hound " that sprang at the Saint ; one rock is split where it was struck by the animal as Colmcille blasted it with death. Memories of Colmcille are as vivid in Tory to-day as they were hundreds of years ago. As you travel on the island, viewing the innumerable relics or legend-named caves and rocks his name is repeated again and again. You will hear how he banned rats forever from Tory (to this day rats die when landed from boats) and how Tory clay drives rats from any building. You will see the ruins of the " Church of the seven " (Teampaill a'Mhóirshesir), where he buried the children of the King of India, and on the other side of the island you will see Scoilt-á-Mhóirsheisir, the rocky chasm where the Seven came ashore. After hearing the tale of the Seven from a local shanachie, I found it word for word in Manus O'Donnell's Life of Colmcille, written 400 years ago. There is scarcely a stone from the lighthouse in the west to the Deathgod's fortress in the east but the people have a name for it that recalls some beautiful or tragic tale.

As you look back after landing, you see the stately mountain wall of Ireland from Inishowen to Arranmore against the sky, and you begin to realise that you are in a strange land. You have left Ireland, you are in

a new world. "Banishment to Ireland" was a Torian sentence on misdemeanants not long ago. For Tory is as remarkable in manners as in scenery and history. It is still, for all intents and purposes, an independent State. You seem to be in one of the ancient little Greek city-states where the community was never larger than could be addressed by a speaker. The king's house is set above the quay, like that of King Alcinous, and Alcinous' self was not a kinglier figure than is Tory's Mac-a'-Bháird, hospitable, manly, perfect in courtesy. Mac-á-Bháird suspended his own licence to sell drink. How few of the rich men of the mainland would do it! Yet how much more easily would they get through the Eye of the Needle if they would!

You might expect that so remote a place as Tory would be wrapt wholly in the obsolete past, and would know little of the big world. You would be wrong. There is no paper of importance printed in these islands that does not find its way regularly to the King's house, and even if you are a journalist, supposed to be abreast of the news, you will find the King better informed than yourself. You will wonder at the sprightly youthfulness and restless curiosity of an aged man's mind, realising that you are in the presence of one of those rare intellects that years never conquer. The King's son—who is author of "Troid Bhaile-an-Droichid," one of the finest gems of modern descriptive Irish printed—is just as keen a thinker, and sitting in his library you will hear Dante and Soloviev debated no less than the Gaelic and Anglo-Irish writers of the neighbouring island. Tory has the intellectual as well as the social air of Attica.

True to antique liberty, the Torian people will allow nothing to be decided on for the island by committees or delegates: the whole population must assemble at the discussion of new projects. So when the Islanders began to discuss Co-operation, we who live in Cloughaneely had to be invited by their well-loved pastor, to sail forth and meet them all. This we did, his reverence at the helm. "Tá siad ag amharc orm!"—said a young man from Dublin, aged two-point-five, on his first experience of seafaring, and we looked up to see the whole State gathered on the pier to greet us as we sailed in at sunset.

It was a wonderful experience next morning to hear Mass in the little Torian chapel, with those unforgettable pictures of S. Colmcille behind the altar—one of the most exquisite pieces of stained-glass work ever effected in Ireland—recited, as it was, on a spot that S. Colmcille himself must often have walked over and to hear the priest address the people in the same tongue that the saint used to their remote ancestors.

The council of the State was held in the schoolroom the living co-arb of S. Colmcille leading the discussion, zealous in this, as in many another activity, to help S. Colmcille's flock. Every man of the community was present, and everybody had his say. In Tory everything is unanimous; there seems to be a unity of mind that has left the world outside that deserted the old Greek and Gaelic ideal of little States. So when the discussion was complete—it was all in Colum's tongue, and there was not a waste word, all direct, clear, and to the point—the State resolved to proceed on the morrow's morn.

Next morning we were storm-bound—it is easy to be caught thus in Tory for weeks on end—so we had the chance to see in real life a thing much written of in books, viz.—co-operation. We saw the whole male population sally forth with mallets and crowbars and barrows, and set to work, without gaffers or foremen, or wages or pay, or anything save the co-operative spirit to break a new slip among the rocks of the harbour, and bring the stones thus quarried to the selected site for their co-operative headquarters.

In two days they had broken and carried enough stones to erect the whole building, had laid the foundations and partly builded the walls! Roman soldiers could not have done it. It was splendid, inspiring. And no doubt it was gratifying to S. Colmcille as he looked down on the island that he loved. Go mbeannuighidh sé don obair!

LETTER XI.—ART AND HOLIDAYS.

City and Country.

WHAT possibilities the Gaeltacht offers the artist! The Galway Gaeltacht is well-colonised by the artist tribe, but the splendours of Donegal are not much exploited. True, Æ. spends a month every summer painting in the neighbourhood of Dunfanaghy, and after seventeen years, says he still finds that district inexhaustible. But fully to interpret the soul of the Gaeltacht, the artist must live here all the year round, and grow familiar with those delicate and austere tones which clothe the bog and heath under winter's rain, as well as with those more radiant hues that attract the tripper in the summer. But alas!—our artists are tied to the cities, save in holiday times.

Do you know the artist quarter in Belfast? It comprises a streetful of attic-studios that catch the light which slips between the turrets of the City Hall and the lofty warehouses around Smithfield (Belfast's Whitechapel). In those airy lofts, the Muses' wings glitter amid the dust to the artist's inward eye. Such visions as flit through those bare chambers! And from the slanting sky-lights which are the only windows of those rooms, daily the fancy of these craftsmen pictures the New Jerusalem, or the sky-cracking towers of Tara, or fights of angels or of Gaelic fairy-hosts, athwart the sun-pierced Belfast smoke. For artists have an ambitious, if not a florid kind of imagination, and though this evil age condemns them to design advertisements and the like, they will dream their dreams. They are the

most heroic of people, for no man becomes an artist save for love of his vocation, art being the least tempting of all professions in the matter of material assurances. In Belfast artists' quarter, therefore, there are the choicest spirits of that city. And it goes without saying that Belfast's accursed controversies are unknown here. No man could be an artist, or in other words, a hero and a man of intellect—and a bigot at the same time. O that Belfast were worthy of its artists! But the same prayer might be uttered for any of our cities.

Belfast, such is my impression, gathered with no small surprise, is in advance of Dublin in the matter of national art. In Belfast I saw extraordinary specimens of vigorous Celtic work. Perhaps the severe hostility of the Belfast atmosphere forces the artists by reaction to an intenser zeal for the beauties of art. And a picture which I saw of Cuchulain dashing in his chariot through the dawn, his cloak stiff in the wind of his progress, his eyes and his spear sharp-pointed towards victory, seemed to me exactly an artist's effort to relieve himself of the oppression of sordid Smithfield by some passionate envisioning of what Mr. Yeats would call "the Heart's Desire." Belfast artists also produce copper ornaments of Gaelic pattern that are redolent with historic suggestion, while their stained woodwork is famous.

Dublin's artists' quarter is less struggling than Belfast's, and your Dublin artist lives in an artist's city, an artist's earthly Paradise. There was once an artist who carried his easel through the Belfast streets, and was surprised to find himself followed by a large crowd. Not ragamuffins, but respectable business-men; serious-

looking women; surly, dour old fellows from the docks—these made up his following, which grew and grew as he wound through the maze of streets that puzzle the stranger who tries to find his way through the environs of Smithfield. As the artist was a stranger, he found himself coming back over the same corner again; but he was afraid to ask anyone the right road, for the mysterious crowd behind him was growing and growing, and his only wish was to get away from them.

The artist was a Dublin man and a "Papish"—he recalled all the stories he had heard of Belfast intolerance, and wondered if his creed had leaked out to public knowledge. But the queer thing was that the crowd looked friendly! Were they mad, or was he? He would get on a tram and fly if only he could find the tram lines. He paused a second at another corner in indecision, and a leading figure of the crowd stepped forward and addressed him: "This would be a good place for ya, mister," said he. "What do you mean?" asked the artist, nervously. "Why the crowd's big enough the noo, an' this wud make a quaren good pitch for ya." "What the d——l do you mean?" asked the Dubliner, "do you want me to draw your blessed crowds?" "Man, that's quaren strong language for a Meenister of the Gospel," said the Belfastman. "What!" shouted the Dubliner, "what do you take me for?" "Do you mean to say," says the Belfastman, "that you're going round with yon lactern and collacting yon crowd and aren't goin' to preach the night?"

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But talking of the Gaeltacht in the winter, why should it not be visited even for holidays only, as at

Christmas and the New Year? This suggestion may surprise many. "What," they will say, "leave our cosy frequented haunts for the bleak mountains and the wild Atlantic's verge? And what sort of a time would we have there, anyway?"

But the cityman's notion of the West in winter is erroneous. Your cities are damp and draughty, and colds are very easily got as you run from the hot theatre to the tram. Beside the Atlantic, the winter is wild and blustrous, but it is not excessively hard; there is, in fact, a mildness in the air that you don't get in the east. The rain dries away quickly under the bracing, exhilarating winds, and when there is frost, and the sun climbs through crystal air over the sharp cut distant mountains, the hard roads and the mellow slopes beckon you out for long, delightful, stimulating walks. In the relaxing summer-time you see but a quarter of the beauties of the Gael's homeland.

And in winter alone can you make acquaintance with the Gaeltacht's social life. The men are now home from Scotland, and the nights are long. Now is the seanchaidhe's hour, when the turf-fire glows and the neighbours come ceilidhing. Now, too, the country dances are in swing, the fiddles and the pipes are busy. If you would get to know Irish-Ireland, the winter is your time. A little stream of initiates realising this, visits the Gaeltacht every Christmas, but winter sessions should be a feature of the Irish colleges; social sessions, if the term is permissible. Far more effective use would be made of the Gaeltacht by mixing in its social life in winter than in flooding it with English speakers (who keep to themselves all the time) in the summer.

Perhaps it would be well, indeed, if lightning winter visits were not centralised at the Irish colleges, but spread over the whole Irish-speaking territories. Much would be done to save the Gaeltacht if enthusiasts penetrated into every corner of it. In Donegal, for example, the untouched Gaeldom of Fanad, Inishowen, Gweedore, Glencolumcille, etc., should be visited by little groups instead of making a mass invasion of one parish.

For those anxious for the restoration of Irish, the watchword should be " Use up the Gaeltacht." Efforts should be made to awaken keener literary pride in the language here. A literature in Irish will only come when the native speakers *read* the language, for reading comes before ambitious writing. You see little girls herding cows and conning Irish fairy-tales and devotional books, which they read proudly aloud to the fireside circles. But books and papers should be poured in, so that young Irish-Ireland grows up well-read in the best Gaelic writers.

Excursions from schools in the English-speaking counties should be organised. A Dublin man distinguished in education used to take the students at his private school in London on fortnight trips up the Rhine each year. A similar plan for tours in the glamorous Irish-speaking counties would equally reward the college enterprising enough to adopt it.

A week in the Gaeltacht in the charge of a teacher or two would inspire a class of children with a zeal for the language and a national idealism that no other means could produce. If the Gaelic League had ever faced the language question in a practical, instead of a

propagandist, spirit, it would long since have organised a touring agency; but this, it would seem, must be left with other things to individual endeavour. Where is the individual group that will draw up railway and lodging arrangements, and thus offer parents means to send their children on educative visits to what should be the recognised home of national culture? This New Year, it may be hoped, some parents will visit the Gaeltacht, and, seeing for themselves the accommodation, will leave their young folk behind in Irish-speaking homes to attend the bilingual schools till Easter. In one Donegal parish, a little group of visitors has made a successful start in this modern fosterage, and all have qualified for the Fáinne.

Some of those societies that produce Gaelic plays in Dublin should send their companies to the Gaeltacht at this time. Here in the mountains we are sometimes visited by touring cinemas or variety entertainers. A hungry man seizes any fare, so we crowd out our halls on these occasions. A company of amateur Dubliners, with a Gaelic play, would more than pay its expenses if it would give two or three performances in each of three neighbouring parishes at Xmas time; no, but it would go away laden with cash, unless it chose to devote its gains to some public object—say, prizes in a local feis. There is no reason why Christmas and New Year feiseanna should not be a feature of Gaeltacht life—some energetic visitors could make the possibility an actuality. Could men like the late Father Fitzgerald be persuaded to give Gaelic lantern lectures to rouse the Gaeltacht?

The best propaganda possible for the furtherance

of natural culture is, just to bring Irish-speaking and English-speaking Ireland into touch. If the Gaeltacht is an inspiration to the visitor, with its melodious speech, its lore, its antique graces, its sturdy and beautiful life, it in turn is benefited by contact with the enthusiast. Until quite recently Irish-speaking Ireland knew more of New York than of Dublin, and its youths never considered the possibilities of making a living in Ireland. The war stoppage of emigration and the visits of students have familiarised many with the idea of giving their fine strength and their linguistic advantages to Irish life, and more are seeking openings at home. The country will benefit immeasurably by absorbing the fine types that the Gaeltacht rears, and the use of Irish in commerce, education and social life will be facilitated by their diffusion over Ireland.

The fundamental needs of the Gaeltacht in respect of the saving of the language are (i) increased appreciation by parents of the advantages of bilingual qualifications, and (ii) as has lately been pointed out by Sean Mac Maolain, a wider knowledge of Irish reading and writing. As to the first, serious inroads on the language's strongholds are being made by some Irish-speaking parents' notion that they are giving their children a better chance in life by speaking English to them in infancy. Where this idea prevails, the children grow up with barbarous English grammar and—what is ineradicable—barbarous pronunciation : they are stamped for life as ignorant. On the other hand, where the children hear Irish in the home and learn English as a second language at school. they acquire a fine and correct English that stands to them in the world if they

emigrate in after years. Professor Hall, of Manchester, recently visited some Donegal schools and expressed amazement at the pure and clear English spoken. Later he discovered that the children speaking it learnt it as a correct book language after having their vocal organs formed by the rich sounds of Irish.

The language will not be safe until the Gaeltacht population reads it; for it is the language one *reads* that nowadays gains supremacy. If the children and their parents were equipped to read books like "Robinson Crusoe" in Irish, and then given plenty of such literature, the language would no longer be regarded as a backward and uninteresting medium. Years of propaganda has done less for the language than a few months of teaching reading in the Gaeltacht might do.

LETTER XII.

TURF, TALK AND CELTIC REVIVAL.

DAUDET'S "Tartarin de Tarascon" is one of the most delicious works of humour ever penned, and Tartarin is as immortally loveable as Falstaff. If you would see that masterpiece in the making read also Daudet's "Letters from my Mill." It collects the impressions—legends expanded into tales, anecdotes, slangy witticisms—which the author collected when living in a disused mill in what townspeople would call "a godforsaken" corner of the country. But specially note, please, that Daudet would never have written his masterpiece if he had always lived in Paris—if he had never gathered those delightful "impressions." Which brings me to my proposition: that to enjoy the pleasures of observation, reflection, and warm society, you must go to the countryside and (for awhile at any rate) leave the cities, where life passes too swiftly for one ever to enjoy a good "crack," as we call an interesting conversation in the North.

For instance, as I was building my winter-turf the other morning—but, by the way, are you familiar with that operation?—it is most interesting to those who are used only to coal. You must know that the digger at the bog cuts the turf with his spade not into cubes, but into oblong pieces, with the ends sloping at an obtuse angle. When you have got your year's supply of turf the outside of the stack must be built in such a way as to throw off the rain—for dampness would destroy your

fuel. It is here the ingenious slanting cut of the turfs explains itself. For as you build the outside layer of sods you tilt them slightly, so that any intruding moisture will be drained to the exterior. At the exterior, however, the sloping edges of the turf, neatly aligned, edge to edge, provide a smooth, sloping surface to the stack, from which water is cast as from a duck's back. The more closely you study the science of turf-building, the more you admire its ingenuity and wonder how the art was contrived and perfected. Perhaps the Irish mathematicians of old figured it out!

As I was engaged, then, in this difficult and democratic pursuit, Lord Ashbourne (newly arrived from France) appeared at my gate in his picturesque Celtic costume. To the Ulster saffron kilt, etc., his lordship has lately added a handsome plaid of the MacGiolla Bride tartan, while for headgear, the neat serge bonnet, which is familiar to all who know the classical Irish attire, he has brought from Southern France, where it is worn by the mysterious Basque race. The Basques are of ancient and unknown origin, and as they are the only older race than the Gaels in all Western Europe, some suppose them to be the same as the Firbolg tribe of Irish legend. This apart, the Celtic attire which Lord Ashbourne has popularised in Paris has so many features in common with elements still found in France that he tells me it is coming to be known as "le costume Gaulois." The object of "MacGiolla Bride's" visit was to present me with a Testament in the Celtic tongue of Brittany, in which language he gave me an open-air lesson to show how far it resembled Gaelic and could be learnt therefrom. He then proceeded to speak of

the desirability of Irish people studying the other Celtic tongues and literatures, and unfolded a picture of a Celtic revival which is to centre in Paris and reform Western Europe.

"In Paris," said his lordship, "this ideal has won numerous adherents, and the study of Irish is being taken up by many Frenchmen who hope to get into closer communion with Ireland. We have planted Irish in the French Foreign Office, where it is now understood by a department, so that you can write in Irish to 'La Propagande,' and you will be as promptly answered as if you had applied in French. The Celtic civilisation is the only real one in modern Europe, and we are working to restore it to power by means of an united movement towards revival in France, Alsace, Brittany, Ireland, Scotland and Wales. Celtic Alsace has given us many enthusiastic workers. From North Spain, and even Portugal, we have received inquiries, and even from Luxembourg we hear tidings of re-awakening interest in Celtic origins." His lordship went on describing the history of the submerged parts of old Celt-dom, and telling of remarkable survivals of Celtic custom and speech which had come under his notice. The French, he contends, is the greatest of the Celtic nations. My mind was full of fascinating lore and the pleasing imagery of historic dreams as I turned again to my turf stack.

Now, of this very interesting conversation there is almost nothing with which I find myself in agreement. It is true, indeed, that Irish people would do well to read more Celtic literature. For instance, the Celtic romances of the "Morte d'Arthur," the Welsh "Mabinogin," the Breton "Holy Graal," or the work of modern

Celts like Scott or Stevenson—all this is literature which has a special appeal to Irish readers. It is naturally more congenial to them than literature produced by Teutonic temperaments. In fact, some Irish publisher might well publish a Celtic library making such works more easily available here. But this sort of argument can be pushed too far. Race is a weak reed to lean upon. Nationality is more tangible. We all know what Irish art, Irish manners, and Irish history are, and how they distinguish Ireland from France. But we only work on theory when we try to find common manners or thought between two Celtic countries distinguishing them from Slavonic or Teutonic countries, for there are so many common quantities between, say, Catholic countries which create quite another cleavage between national groups. Again, if we begin this policy, where are we to stop ?

Celts from Spain and Portugal and Celts from Luxembourg have joined the brigade. Why should not the Celts of Etruria find a place in the ranks ? Etruria is part of North Italy once inhabited by Gauls from Celtic France, and a Latin scholar lately wrote a striking thesis in which he argued that the imagination and tender elements in Latin poetry all were derived from this blood. Virgil, Catullus, Propertius, he pointed out, all came from that part of Italy. These poets are more glowing than the strict Roman type. Therefore, they are written down as Celts, and as exponents of a Celtic element in Latin. Well now, it is clearly impossible, on these grounds, to exclude Northern Italy from the new Celtdom, and O'Growney's " Irish Lessons " must be distributed for study beyond the Alps as well as in the French Foreign Office.

Dodging indoors from my turf to my library to verify the facts of my reflections, I was reminded by my books of the Galatians, to whom S. Paul addressed an epistle. These people were supposed to be a division of the Celtic race which separated from the main bulk at the break-up of the Celtic European Empire, and was pushed southward until it became isolated in Asia Minor, just south of the Black Sea. S. Paul's letter to the Galatians reproves these people for yielding to new doctrines, and critics with a prejudice against Ireland have turned S. Paul's letter to political account. "Even in his day," they have said, "the Celts were fickle"—fickleness being one of the stage-Irish qualities habitually attributed to the Celt, who endured the Penal Laws. Advanced critics, I believe, have scoffed at the Celtic theory of the Galatians, but the romantic theory is still popular. Perhaps the spread of the Pan-Celtic movement will put Asia-Minor to the test. Will the Turks be perplexed by a Gaelic Revival in their midst, I wonder?

A step farther. The Albanians wear the kilt. So do the Ruthenians. The Ruthenian traditional costume is held to prove an ancient relationship between its wearers and the Celtic race. It is clear from this that at one sweep half the Slavs of Western Europe can be brought into the Pan-Celtic net. In fact there is scant area from Teneriffe to the Ural Mountains that could not be proved more or less Celtic on this reductio ad absurdum principle. One is reminded of Mr Dooley's remarks on the Anglo-Saxon theory of the United States.

"I'm wan iv th' hottest Anglo-Saxons," said he.

'. The name iv Dooley has been th' proudest Anglo-Saxon name in th' County Roscommon f'r many years. Mack is an Anglo-Saxon. His folks come fr'm th' County Armagh, an' their naytional Anglo-Saxon hymn is 'O'Donnell Aboo.' Teddy Roosevelt is another Anglo-Saxon. Pether Bowbeen down be th' Frinch church is formin' the Circle Francaize Anglo-Saxon Club. Th' Bohemians an' Pole Anglo-Saxons may be a little slow in wakin' up to what th' pa-apers calls our common hurtage, but ye may be sure they'll be all r-right whin they're called on." Dooley then proposed an Anglo-Saxon Alliance branch in his ward, and nominated Sarsfield O'Brien president, as that gentleman's father had " carried a pike in Hibernyans." When the Clan-na-Gael and the Sons of Sweden and the Banana Club and the Pollacky Society and the Rooshian Sons of Dinnymite and the Afro-Americans raised their Anglo-Saxon battle-cry, it would, opined the philosopher, be a bad day " for the eight or nine people in th' wurruld that had the misfortune iv not being brought up Anglo-Saxons."

Such was the drift of an argument in the intervals of turf-building beside the sunny Atlantic. I may perhaps also repeat a good story which my companion told of a well-known Protestant gentleman popular in literary and musical circles in Belfast and Ireland in general. Travelling in the South of Ireland, this gentleman stayed at a hotel owned by a brother Northern, who, however, did not approve of his visiting Catholic social gatherings. " Ya see, Mr. ——," said his remonstrating host, " it's all verra well for you to be mixin' with the Catholics, seein' you don't live here. But a

scattered Protestant like maself can't afford to du it." "Tell me, then," said Mr. ——," what you make your money from here in the South." "Well, you see, Mr. B——," replied the hotelkeeper, "I have the hotel, an' then I get the carryin' for the railway, an' there's a wee harbour down yonder wants a harbourmaster, and I manage that for them, and I have just the contract for the workhouse coal, and the setting of two or three houses in the village, and"—"Faith!" interrupted the Belfastman, "I wish I were a 'scattered Protestant.'"

LETTER XIII.

AN EAST ULSTERMAN.

A Portrait.

HERE in Gaelic Tirconaill, we seem far, far separated from the anglicised industrial east of Ulster. Yet the gulf is less profound than it seems. Forty years ago, had but the present vision reigned, East Ulster could have been captured for Gaeldom.

Yesterday a conversationalist said that the Parnell Split proved good, because it gave the Gaelic movement its chance by throwing a disheartened country back to introspection. Another held that the Split only came because there was no cultural movement in nationalism to prevent it. I incline to the latter view. The dissension which followed Parnell's fall would, I think, have been avoided had he, in his hour of power, preached industrial and cultural revival—had he given the country something to work at as well as to fight for. The awful stress of the Land War, of course, prevented him from doing this, but the result was, that all depended on his personality, and when that was gone, nothing remained to uphold the country's unity.

This view particularly appeals to me, because it explains (as I think) the growth of the Two-Nation idea. Thirty years ago, if that idea existed at all, it was absolutely useless as a political cry. Bigotry, indeed, was stronger then than now, but when Samuel Smiles visited Ireland, in 1883 and noted the swift

progress of Belfast industry, he wrote of this as an example of Irish ability, and made it clear that he saw absolutely no distinction of nationality between that prosperous corner and the less fortunate Connemara. There was a young man, about that time, living in Newry in whom I am particularly interested, both for personal reasons and because he was a type from which the history of the Two-Nation idea may be read. He was a typical Ulsterman, mixing the blood of the Episcopalian Anglo-Irish with that of the Presbyterian planter from the Scottish Lowlands. He was reared in the most orthodox and conservative atmosphere.

His business takes him to Derry and to Belfast—always breathing the most Protestant atmosphere—and when he reaches the latter city he takes to using the pen. His manuscripts, composed at the hour of Parnell's power, give an insight into Belfast mentality at that time. Here is the MS. of a lecture read before a Church of Ireland Debating Society; it breathes Radicalism of alarming fierceness and calls for Irish liberty with the anger of a Mitchel—quoting liberally from Mitchel, as a matter of actual fact. Notes at the end of the MS. report the comments that followed. You might think that a loyal body like that debating society would not allow Republicanism to be preached within its doors, or would send for the police. But despite a little flutter, it seems that clergy and laity lightly discussed these outrageous proposals as being quite reasonable matter of debate. Thus almost revolutionary Nationalism—going as far beyond Parnell as young men's enthusiasm runs beyond old men's prudence—had open and tolerated adherents in the most respectable of religious societies.

Ten years after talking revolution in Belfast, these young men were all voting Conservative at a General Election, and the one that read this ferocious manuscript was absorbed in business and books and family life in a cross-Channel city, with never a thought for the country that reared him. For in the meanwhile, Parnell had fallen, and the hope of Irish liberty was trampled down under undignified quarrelling over issues that my young Ulstermen did not understand nor care for. Their nationalism had been but the generous instinct of youth, that is always on the side of liberty (with a tendency to exaggeration) but it had neither intellectual not material sustenance—neither a programme of language and art revival, nor an economic and social objective. It was merely emotional; and emotion, however generous, cannot stand alone.

O'Connell could have saved the Irish language, but he mistakenly threw his strength against it. The Young Irelanders retrieved his error to some degree; they left a vision after them. Their movement was literary and intellectual, not merely combative; so, when they fell, the country's unity was not dissolved. But O, the tragedy of that visionless spell that followed Parnell's fall! The bond of a common religion held the South of Ireland together: common customs, common economic difficulties assisted. In fact, the South maintained the mere unity of inertia. But because Irish nationality was thus inert, it lost, for the time, all hold on wayward impulses and the tendency of the population to drain away took the form, in the North, of losing the genius and enthusiasm of the young

to London and Liverpool and Australia, while those who stayed at home lived soured and aimless lives.

How many ruined lives have we not seen, resulting from that tragic episode! Take away nationality—the sense of a common object with one's neighbour; the source of enthusiasm and the stimulus of ambition—and national evils penetrate even individual life. I have seen men of artistic genius lose all inspiration; men of business ability grow mere penny-grudgers; men of good impulses become mere wasters—all from the result of that national debacle. When the young man I have written of was a youth in Newry (no longer ago, observe) the people of the surrounding country came chattering Irish into the town on market days, and some shopkeepers actually instructed their assistants to study the language so as to engage a wider custom among the farmers. Thus the language showed a tendency to spread in even an industrial centre. Suppose the word had gone out at that time to save the language—what could have been easier? That zealous young man would have become a Gaelic-speaker in a year, and scores with him, in the heart of Ulster Unionism; a completer vision of Irish nationality than emotion could ever give would have been his; and the liberal impulses of young Ulster would have been diverted into constructive service to the nation.

That was how Ulster grew temporarily estranged: the ground was prepared for the tares of the bigot's sowing. I do not find in all my subject's manuscripts so much as one single reference to religious distinctions: and you may be sure, had the Two-Nation theory held favour in those days that the young men of Ulster

would at least have made reference to it in trying to explain it away. And in all the years that I knew my subject, I never heard him allude to the religion of Southern Ireland save to defend it from attacks by Englishmen. From his own utter absence of reference to it, you would suppose no religious question had ever existed : and that would be true so far as young Ulster was concerned before the Parnell Split. The Ulstermen of that generation, like the Protestants who joined the Young Irelanders, thought no more of religious distinctions in Ireland than is thought of such distinctions in England.

The utter absence of Two-Nation sentiment in those times is again called to my mind by the fact that the Irish clergy gave the business of their houses to my subject by sheer preference for dealing with an Irishman ; gave tickets, too, to their annual concerts, where a certain innocent young visitor sat and wondered who the " traitor Saxons " were that he was called up to slay, and heard, for the first time, songs in the tongue of the Gael. There was wearing of shamrock, too, one day in the year, but these two annual events were the only glint of nationality in a household set down in the Conservative registers as that of a safe voter for Conservative measures. Such was the tragic flickering-out of nationality not in one, but in hundreds or thousands of lives of Ulstermen who were, at heart and by impulse, as staunchly Irish as any Celtic victim of the Penal Laws.

LETTER XIV.—ROMAN EARTH.

Ireland and Empire.

IN the candle-lighted church before dawn on Christmas Day, a wealth of symbolism takes us in spirit to the First Christmas Morn, for Christmas stands eternal, unchanged by centuries. That, indeed, is too sacred a subject to gossip of, but of a certain sublime Christmas morning in more secular history, my pen may write without irreverence. As I mingle with the throng going up through the darkness to Mass to-morrow, I shall remember that we are going to take part in the same rite as that which was celebrated on a morning most thrilling to the historic imagination, and it will be pleasing to reflect that the same Christmas symbolism and imagery as that we enjoy, was in the minds of those who were present at the great event I speak of. This event took place in Rome on Christmas Day in the year 800, and it was the turning point of the world's fate.

Picture the austere and magnificent basilica which Constantine the Great had reared over the place of S. Peter's martyrdom. Look down the body of this great Cathedral, between the colonnades of classic pillars and bright mosaic walls; you see a throng of wild, clean-limbed giants, fierce and barbarous, but magnificent. These strangers in the city of the Caesars are those who left their name to France—Franks called by the Pope from the black North to save his city and his people from destruction. Their King kneels before the high altar, clothed in the graceful Roman robe and sandals which mark the patrician rank conferred on him by the

Pope. In semi-circle behind the altar sit the Roman clergy, row on row, with the chair of the Bishop of Rome set high in the centre, overlooking the altar and all that strange assembly. Up there sits Pope Leo III., one of the greatest statesmen the world has known, now about to execute an epoch-making design.

The sonorous Latin of the Gospel (the same to be read to-morrow) dies away, and the deacon kisses the Missal. Then, in a hush of wonder, the Pope leaves his chair and descends to where the Frankish King is kneeling. He lifts a crown—the crown of the Caesars—and sets it on that brow, while the King, perhaps, looks up in surprise, not realising the full meaning of this unexpected act until his warriors, with shouts from mighty lungs, fill the church with their barbarian accents: "Life and victory to Charles, the most pious Augustus, crowned of God, the great and peace-giving Emperor." The Pontiff anoints him, and the Mass is finished. The assembly goes forth of the church, and looks up at a sky that covers a new world.

What has happened? The Roman Empire that gathered the world under the wings of its eagles has passed away three hundred years before this, the Emperors at Constantinople claiming its lordship, indeed, but unable to justify their claims against the Teuton swarms that have conquered all the west. Corruption reigns on the Bosporus, and in the year 800 there is no man in Caesar's chair. Rome exercises its immemorial privilege of appointing the Emperor. Leo, with statesmanship that seems almost inspired, causes Charles to be selected. He crowns him and Rome ratifies his election. The Roman Empire rises again, but in a new

form. It is not now the mere union of the Eagles' conquests, it is a free and joyful union of Christendom. The Christian warrior who falls to the Pagan Northmen in Wessex can proudly say that

"All the earth is Roman earth
And I shall die in Rome."

This Holy Roman Empire, created by that Christmas morning ceremony, is to last for full one thousand years until the cataclysmic ideas of the French Revolution are to re-make the world. In its prime, it is to be the truthful embodiment of what, to some of us at least, was the most splendid ideal among mankind's political experiments and dreams.

The Empire would never have arisen but for the wonderful coincidence by which Leo and Charles were born to the one generation. The Churchman's vision could not have been realised but for the mighty mind and power of Charlemagne. Armed defender of the Universal Church as he regarded himself, Charles ruled without arrogance or oppression. He did not supersede the Kings of the new nations then rising throughout Europe; he interfered with no national or racial institutions, customs, or laws. It might fairly be said that the Empire's prime was the heyday of small nationalities, for the Empire, outward expression of the essential unity or brotherhood of Christian nations, overshadowed all, and guarded all from aggression. Very extensive was Charles's sway, yet his fame ran farther than his *missi dominici*, or itinerant inspectors, by whom imperial order was directed throughout his immediate realms. The Slavs of the East, far out beyond the Franco-Roman marches, sent him tribute, and in the

West he was honoured in our own remote corner of Christendom.

Charlemagne's secretary, who has fortunately left a Life of the Emperor, mentions among the distant potentates of Christendom who saluted Charles, the King of the Scots, who, he says, sent gifts and called the Emperor dominus. This King of the Scots was of course the Ard-Ri of Ireland, who at that time (I think) was Aodh (or Hugh) V., the King in whose reign the Danes invaded Ireland. Very significant, in view of modern controversies, is his salutation of the Roman Emperor.* It is interesting to note here that the name Manus, so common in N.W. Ulster, enshrines the memory of Charles. In a Norse saga it is told that a delicate babe of the Norse King Olaf was hastily baptised by the King's poet in the name Magnus. "Why did you give that name?" asked the angry King, for no such name was known to his race. "I named the child after King Carl Magnus, the best man in the world," said the scald. The child grew up to be King Magnus the Good, and from him the name became popular. The Northmen brought it to Ireland, where, in the Irish form Mághnus, it become the patronymic of the gallant Clan MacManus!

It is worth quoting another testimony to the fact that Gaelic, pre-invasion, Ireland regarded herself as part of imperial Christendom. Apart from her King sending his reverence to the Emperor, there is evidence to be found in the written Gaelic law. First it must be explained that in Old Irish homage was expressed by the saying that the inferior "took stock from" his

* The Versailles tapestries representing Charlemagne and his allies shewed the King of Ireland carrying his harp.

lord. This rose from the custom, in patriarchal times, of the chief loaning out his cattle to be grazed on his clansman's land. In Brehon Law, this quaint idiom is used to describe the gradations of Celtic society from bo-aire, or large farmer, to the captain of the clan, again to the provincial King, and so to the High King. In a passage to which attention was drawn by Sir Henry Maine (quoted in Bryce's "Holy Roman Empire") the law says: "When the King of Ireland is without opposition, he receives stock from the King of the Romans" (an imperial title). Paraphrased, this sentence may be put thus: When the High-King is free from incursions of the enemy and the land is at peace, he does homage to the Emperor.—A passage difficult to explain away for those who contend that Celtic Ireland was divorced from the Roman communion.

"Think Imperially" was Joseph Chamberlain's watchword, and he launched his party into the Boer War in the same spirit that thrice in a century goaded Ireland to insurrection. "Think jingoistically!" was his real meaning, and he degraded and distorted the word empire. The sure safeguard against Jingoism is to "think Imperially" in the sense that Leo and Charlemagne thought, and therefore I would have their achievement often talked of, taught and pondered on. "The dignity of empire," said one of Charlemagne's successors on the Imperial Throne, "consists not in high-sounding titles, but in the achievement of glorious piety." (Imperii dignitas, etc. Letter of Lewis II.). One cannot fancy Joseph Chamberlain's friends declaring their aims in any similar utterance! The objects of Empire, if one may expand the aphorism, are not the

amassing of honours, wealth, or power, but the fostering of the wholesome and happy living of the people. Such was the Imperial idea in days when it was the friend, not the menace, of true nationalism.

The fate of the Holy Roman Empire is a subject on which opinions differ, and it has been described, in the days after its mediaeval prime, as a "gorgeous anachronism," a lingering absurdity. Some think, on the other hand, that nothing better ever filled its place. But there can be no doubt as to its prime. It then saved Christian civilisation from the barbarian and the infidel without and from disintegration and anarchy within. This is admitted by atheistic and anti-Catholic scholarship. And while the Empire guarded Europe, there was no war like ours, no deadly civil war of Christian Powers; and when strife came, the Empire's Truce of God forbade the desecration of Christmas Day. Perhaps the Empire was not a political instrument fitted for later times, yet surely it justified its institution by the ideal it bequeathed to us. Surely, the disunion of Christian States, and still more their grouping into hostile alliances, is repellant, like something horribly unnatural. Surely the federation of European civilisation is the natural end of our interior brotherhood. The Empire's faith was livelier than ours, and very naturally the statesmen of the Empire acted as though Christian brotherhood were a reality. Their ideal, so boldly executed, reproves our anarchy of modern times. That reproof will be very piquant to-morrow morning. For with the message of "Peace on earth to men of good will" in our ears, we shall reflect that it was fitting that the Holy Roman Empire, the federation of a Christian world, was created—one Christmas morning.

LETTER XV.
A FENIAN FRAGMENT.

The Heroic Note.

THE best piece of all the Fenian literature is ungetatable, never having been edited in a separate volume: I mean, of course, "Agallamh na Seanorach" or The Colloquy of the Ancients, as it is called in that rare work Silva Gadelica. It is descriptive of S. Patrick's meeting with Caoilte and Oisin, the last of the Fianna.

When all the heroes save these two had passed away, following the terrible defeats, then "at the falling of the evening clouds that night they were melancholy and dispirited." They consulted as to where they would seek shelter, and at last thought of the Lady Camha, on whom in the past days of victory, Fionn had bestowed many treasures including the third best thing of price that ever he had, the Drinking Horn of the King's daughter of Greece. So Camha made them welcome and gave them the entertainment that was of old proper to members of the Fianna, and when they had ate and drunk, she languidly and feebly rose "and held forth on the Fianna and on Fionn; of Oisin's son, Oscar, too, she deliberated, of McLugach, of the battle of Gowra, with other matters; and by reason of this in the end a great silence settled on them all." Caoilte at length declared that bitterer still than the loss of these to him was the lonely plight in which they themselves were placed. Oisin said: "they being gone, in me verily there is no more fight or pith." And "valiant as were those warrior-men, here nevertheless with Camha they

wept in gloom, in sadness, and dejectedly." And so at last they decided to part and seek their destinies separately—" and this parting of theirs was a sundering of soul and body."

" Ba scaradh cuirp re h-anmain a scaradh."

Patrick was at that time at Drumderg, chanting the Mass and lauding the Creator, and pronouncing benediction on the rath there in which Fionn had been long ago. The clerics looked up and " saw Caoilte and his band draw near, and fear fell on them before the tall men with their huge wolf dogs that accompanied them, for they were not people of one epoch or of one time with the clergy. Then Heaven's distinguished one, that pillar of dignity and angel on earth : Calphurn's son, Patrick, Apostle of the Gael, rose and took the aspergillum to sprinkle holy water on the great men ; floating over whom until that day there had been (and were now) a thousands legions of demons. Into the hills and skalps, into the outer borders of the region and of the country, the demons forthwith departed in all directions ; after which, the enormous men sat down." Courteous conversation ensued, and Caoilte accepted baptism from the saint, and began to speak of Fionn MacCuail. " Patrick said then, ' was not he a good lord with whom ye were, Fionn ? ' Upon which Caoilte uttered this little tribute of praise : ' Were but the brown leaf which the wood sheds from it gold—were but the white billow silver—Fionn would have given it all away :

" ' Damadh ór an duille donn
Chuireas di an choill,
Damadh airgead an ghealtonn
Do thiodhlaiceadh Fionn.' "

" ' Who or what was it that maintained you so in your life ? ' Patrick enquired, and Caoilte answered : ' Truth that was in our hearts, and strength in our arms, and fulfilment in our tongues.'—' Fírinne inár gcroidhthibh agus neart inár lámhaibh agus comhall inár dteangthaibh.' "

So interested was the Saint in Caoilte's tales of the times of old that he remarked : " Were it not for us an impairing of the devout life, an occasion of neglecting prayer, and of deserting converse with God, we, as we talked with thee, would find the time pass quickly, warrior." He anxiously inquired of his guardian angels whether it was permissible for him to indulge his interest in the tales, and they answered " with equal emphasis and concordantly " that the warriors had forgotten all but a third part of their tales, but Patrick should take down this remnant on poet's tablets, so that the companies and nobles of later ages should hear them repeated in pastime. So the apostle travelled Ireland with Caoilte, bidding his scribe, Brogan, copy down all the old Fenians' tales and poems, and wonderful reading they are, till they came to Tara and found Oisin installed there with the King. At the feast, the two veterans recited in turns all they could recall of the great days and copies of the narrative were made for the men of Eire to carry into her far quarters when the feast should be dispersed. It was then that thrice nine followers of Caoilte came out of the West to Tara, and noting that they now lacked vigour, and that not much regard was paid to them, they laid their lips to the earth of the hillside and expired. That day, Caoilte and Oisin were grieved and wretched, " and the men of Ireland all were

hushed, not a man of them speaking to his fellow, so greatly oppressed they were with the sorrow which the ancients testified after the Fianna."

These few fragments exhibit characteristic traits. Note the tenderness of the comradeship. Is not that a fine line that describes the parting of the heroes as a parting of soul and body for grievousness? All through the piece there is an air of giant proportions. You feel all the time that the two veterans are in body and soul immense. The tale is always on a big scale—an open-air scale. That is a mark of Gaelic literature. Colmcille, in Manus O'Donnell's Life, moves before us as a huge, deep-breathing figure, great in energy, great in humour, great in passion. The Cuchulain saga, when we read it, gives us an impression of enormous reckless forces, death-contemning heroism. This is the heroic note, the note that P. H. Pearse won from Gaelic literature and revived in our present age. Irish literature has many shortcomings: it is not contemplative or speculative: but it has a power of exhilarating you more than any other literature. Nowhere but in Irish saga would you find such a picture of big men as this before us. "Fionn would have given it all away." What a suggestion of bigness is conveyed! But if Pearse revived the heroic note in literature, Mr. John Keating, A.R.H.A., has caught it in art. Have you seen his picture, *The Men of the West*, lately published in coloured reproduction? It is a picture that contains all the power and splendour of Fenian romance.

It is just a study of three typical Gaeltacht figures, men in country shirts and bawneens, armed with rifles, guarding a pierhead by some Western loch or inlet of

the sea. The artist has reproduced with extraordinary skill, the joyous colour and light of the great expanses of the Irish coast; this alone exhilarates you. When you are shut in the city, sometimes you glimpse in your mind's eye the exquisite light that flashes on the silver and blue lakes with the distant, calm and salmon-toned hills in the vague distance; and you rebel against the lot that binds men between walls in these dismal days. If you see this picture, you will begin to count every day of your life lost that is spent away from the haunts of cormorant and seagull. But the scenery is the least important feature of this masterpiece. The three men, Fergus and Oscar and Conan, you might suppose them to be, are as true as ever pictures could be to the men you meet cutting turf or drawing duileasc. The first, big, looseboned, solemn-eyed, gentle-handed, at once powerful and gentle, is as handsome a figure as you could conceive. He seems to be the visionary of the group, dreaming of the holiness of their cause. Next, a heavy, very dark, frowning man, tremendously powerful; the sort of figure that you see behind the plough or at the cattle fair, and know to be a conqueror of wild earth. The third is a fierce, brisk little fellow, desperately in earnest, but no dreamer. He is out in this business as he would be in any affair that affected his pocket; not in a mood for talk or heroics, but to be relied on to the last. I suppose you would hear these men called "peasant types," but peasant or peer, they are the virile, representative manhood of Ireland. Each knows how to use his hands, each one is a man of his muscles; yet each one has an alert, shrewd mind, and a dangerous readiness to follow principles to extremes.

These are real live men, livers, not experimenters in life. Beside their full-blooded, rich personalities, the artificial enthusiasms of a mere intelligentsia appear very tawdry. Your theatres, your literary movements, your new metres and your schools of thought: what are they? Playthings for children. Ireland is not there: only her simulacrum. Real Ireland is in the thoughts and sinews of these sturdy souls. Their roughness is the roughness of strong things; they have courtesies and dignities that your etiquette-observing dilettantes know nothing of. Watch a crowd of these fine giants at a fair-day meeting. ["Loud words and dark faces and the wild blood behind."] There is interruption and tumult perhaps, and then your chairman (that shrewd-eyed, coarse-shirted fellow with the gun, perhaps) will cry "múineadh, múineadh": which is untranslateable, though it at once commands calm. The word means in effect: "Breeding!"

LETTER XVI.

THE LIGHTS OF FAITH.

"These Things Shall Be."

ON Christmas Eve I saw one of the grandest sights ever presented to my eyes. There is a certain summit on the "Old Road" from which you may see half of this mighty parish spread beneath you. To your right is the Atlantic, with Tory on the verge; before you the Hill of the Saints and the Way of Adoration; the Bloody Foreland looming in a dome beyond. Next vast leagues of moor and bog, till you see the great range of Tieve-a-leihid, with its descending terraces to the beautiful valley of Glena, the river water coiling itself this way and that till it spreads into the cliff-hung estuary and the broad, calm bay. There, by the bridge at the tidehead, is the heart of our little kingdom (nó saorstáit, cé acu ?), embosomed in trees; there the houses are plentiful about the chapel and college-hall.* And climbing up herefrom along the hillside at your left comes the ribbon path to your feet. It is a varied and majestical sight—note, I beg of you, the misty folds of unknown mountains faintly seen beyond the central gap. At dawn or sunset or in driving rain, this view is unforgettable, but on Christmas Eve it displayed a new beauty that transformed it into something lovelier than itself. For as far as eye could pierce right, left and centre, it was a-sparkle with lights brighter than the stars above.

* Laid in ashes since this Letter was written. There is a little Ypres there now.

You would fancy for a moment that you were surveying the lights of some vast city—Dublin from Ticknock or London from Parliament Hill. But these lights glowed with a mellow orange clearness through the crystal air and their reflections glimmered in the bay. In the valley they were as thick as the lights of the Milky Way ; up the mountain slopes they shone more sparsely till at last a solitary glow here and there marked an abode in remote recesses. Out at sea, the clustering houses on the island were indicated by a yellow glow over the sandy bar. When you go down the hill a little till you reach some houses, you will see that every window has its burning candle. What common impulse, what communal idea, has lit all these candles and turned a wild area into a gala ground ? These lights have been lit from generation to generation since the Christian Faith first came to Ireland ; they are kindled to guide the Angels who on Christmas night direct the New Born from the Heavens. And you will see, too, that in most of the clean-swept, brightly-garnished houses, the door stands open—a mute invitation to those travellers Who once found all doors closed before Them. No protestation could be more eloquent than this beautiful act of the countryside : as you look down from the hill top you are stirred to the depths of your imagination, and reflect that, were the Angel of Wrath passing hitherward, this superb communal act of faith would stay his hand and save Ireland.

Christmas afternoon was ideally spent by pilgrims from Belfast who fared hither to wake us up. S. Colmcille's Cross at Rye Churchyard is known to very few people. I had often heard the story of it, and imagined

it to be a rough-hewn, barbaric thing. You go out past the new Church of S. Finian, with its huge swinging bell in the grounds: herefrom, on a neighbouring hill-top, you may spy the white gleam of that celebrated piece of marble, the Cloghaneely Stone, on which Kinnealy lost his head. [Reader: Kinnealy lost his head? Libellous! Writer: It was cut off, not lost in the usual way; the iron is in the stone still.] Over a shoulder of land we climb, till a chasmic valley and a vast expanse of low land lie before us. We descend into this new territory, and after long, long walking, we see to our left, through the gathering dusk, a wall-girt mound, like a dun of ancient times, with the clear outline of a ruined church against the lemon sky. We quit the road and plough our way into a boggy wilderness. We are going seawards: the Atlantic looms ahead. We leave all houses behind, and before we reach the rampart of the graveyard, we are amid murky solitude. Trickles of water reflect the green luminance of the heavens here and there through the wide-spreading darkness away to where the distant mountains are cut against the still-bright west. A wild, lonely place indeed, but sublime.

Now we reach the high wall: the gate is locked, so we must needs climb the wall—no easy task. How long the grass is amongst the graves! The long ruined church, you will notice, has no windows in its northern, seaward side; only strong masonry could sustain the tempest-battering that is hurled hither from the ocean whenever the wind rises. On the southern side, however, a line of broad windows show us the mountain

ranges. As we emerge again from this silenced temple we recall the poem on Timoleague Abbey :

Fotharach folamh gan áird
An t-árus so is aosda túr—
Is iomdha easgal agus gaoth
Do bhuail fa mhaol do mhúr !

A mhúir naofa na mbeann nglas !
Dob órnáid don tír seo tráth—
Is díombáidh dhian liom do scrios
Agus cur do naomh ar fán !

And now we see before us, like a black mark in the ground, the great stone cross of Colmcille. It lies level with the grass, due N. and S., smooth, flat and delicately shaped—no less than 23 feet long. The distinctive Celtic circle is sharply cut. The great plinth itself is broken in three places, but its majestic size and graceful slender shape tell us how impressively fine it was before it was overthrown.

The seanchaidhe tells us that the cross was hewn out at the other side of mighty Muckish mountain by Colmcille's directions. It was to be taken to Tory Island, which lowers over the waves ten miles from the thundrous beach. It was brought thus far from the mountain perhaps on rolling tree-trunks, through bog and ancient forest, and over rocky gorges. At this place S. Colmcille had it set up beside S. Finian's monastery, and people from far and wide flocked to see and admire it, while the two saints (no doubt) dined together (bhi siad ag sugradh, says the seanchaidhe). And then Colmcille remembered that he had left his breviary at the mountain.

He had been walking up and down reading while the cross was hewn, and laid the book down when the task was finished. "Whoever will bring me the book," said he, "shall receive for reward whatever he may ask." So a young cleric offered to perform the errand. "When you reach the place," said Colmcille, "it will be raining, but you will see an eagle perched on the book with wings outspread to protect the pages." The cleric went: he found the eagle as prophesied, and returned with the volume. "What now do you ask for reward?" asked the saint. "Let me consult my Abbot," said the young man.

When the youth asked S. Finian what request to make, the Abbot, envious of the much-admired cross, suggested that he should beg for the cross to be left at Rye. The young cleric made this request of Colmcille, and the cross is there from that day to this. All the seanchaidhes agree on the story thus far, but one said that when S. Colmcille heard the demand, he was so indignant that he flung out his hand in protest, and on his accidentally striking the cross, the great stone broke into three fragments and fell into the exact position in which it now lies. This agrees with Colmcille's traditionally impetuous character, but it is not confirmed by general agreement; popular opinion is, that Colmcille left the cross standing there, and that it was broken by fanatics of the Reformation. . . . .

At this strange, wild, windy spot, with the vast expanses round about and a solitary sea-bird winging through the air; close, as we are, to the stark splendour of nature, we seem to get near to the minds of the great men of Columban Eire. Strange men, lonely men,

terrible men were these, who built their retreats on the sounding coast or amid the ocean torrents on Tory Island. Awe and splendour they loved, not prettiness nor comfort. Not many of their kind are seen to-day. Yet Padraic Pearse was of their company—witness his educational writings and dramas—and we may conceive him, who thought Cuchulain and Colmcille of greater educational value than Ransome or Macaulay, thinking, worshipping and teaching in these places. Some day, I dream, the hero-spirit will move our nation again, and education will then be moulded on the heroic model. Not in cities and suburbs will our youth be taught, but in the re-arisen shrines, at Clonmacnoise amid the silver Shannon waters; on Tory, amid storm and under terrific sunset lights; at Rye perhaps, and on Inis Caltra, where the Round Towers are reflected in Lough Derg. In these frugal and austere abodes of faith and vision, young Eire will gain intellectual and spiritual riches, and will grow strong in body, heroic in mind, so that "the Táin shall come again in mighty cycles" and a manhood shall arise among which Colmcille might walk as he walked with his companions of old. . . . A far prospect!

Night falls, and the Atlantic is louder now in the darkness. We win our way back from desolation to the high road and the lamplit windows: and looking back to where the black outline of the dún is just visible, we turn home meditating on the hero-greatness of the dead.

Acht beidh an t-ath-aoibhneas againn!

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