

WALTER LECKY.

Walter Lecky, a country doctor, as he calls himself, is the pseudonym of a comparatively young and brilliant Catholic writer who, for the present, at least, objects to let the public into the knowledge of his real identity. Respecting his wishes in that respect, I have his permission to supply you with some biographical details in connection with him as well as with his personality. Before I enter into a discussion of these subjects, I have a few words to say about the character and style of his essays, biographical and otherwise. The name of Lecky was unknown to the literary world two years ago. To-day his "Adirondack Sketches" have won him fame not only in Catholic circles, but also in all the literary circles of the land. These sketches, which he is contributing to the *Catholic World* of New York city, and which are illustrated by the doctor's friend, an artist, are pen and ink pictures of odd, quaint, novel characters in a little town situated on a plateau high up among these stately mountains which are covered with forests. French Canadians and their descendants are the predominant portion of this classic burgh. Among the best drawn, though morally worst of his characters, is a parson, who, after having started a bank, clears out of the town one fine morning with the deposits of his parishioners rich and poor. This swindling dominie is evidently drawn from nature, for he is one of those unique types of arch villains and pious canting hypocrites, like McKane, a tenant at present of Sing Sing, who was a volunteer Sunday school teacher on Coney Island, N. Y., who are never suspected till they are compelled to reveal themselves in their true character.

Lecky's maiden debut behind the footlights of the stage of literature was made in the columns of the *Montreal True Witness* the organ of the English-speaking Catholics in the Province of Quebec. The ideas of these articles matured in the brain of the author of them for a long time ere they were jotted down on a Ms. sheet. Walter does nothing in a hurry. He does not rush audaciously into print. He slides slowly into it. He is very careful of his words and sentences, and he is a great stickler for original and strange ideas garbed in epigrammatic and harmonious prose. His essays are full of a quaint dry humor peculiarly Leckyish, from the fact of its pretended unconsciousness—a particular species of humor which tickles his reader to fits of laughter at times, and thus beguiles his hours of recreation away. Walter's praise and criticism are the products of a candid pen. He is a hater of shams of every kind. He has had bitter experiences of the hypocrisy of humanity in his salad days, as will be shown further on in these pages. He knows that literary perfection belongs only to the Shakespeare and Dantes who are as few as white black birds in this sublunary sphere of ours, where it takes nature a century or two to create a great master. But to the brilliant and logical talents of several of our best known Catholic authors, he always gives their due need of intellectual merit. The writers taken up for a course of literary treatment were Dr. Egan of Notre Dame University, Mrs. Blake, Miss Guiney, and Miss Conway of the *Pilot* of Boston, and several others. Here I close my remarks on Lecky, the author. I shall now deal with Lecky, the man, and of his early adventurous career when the fragrance of the flower gardens tempted him to enter the frontiers of the clime of dreams in the sweetly scented atmosphere of which subtle fancies scintillate like the fire-flies of the sunny south, and the luscious and Lucullan treasures of the poet's imagination gild with their glamor the woodlands, and the verdant valleys, the picturesque mountains and glorious

vineyards of that delightful locality in the fruitful soil of which grow the twin plants of literary hope and ambition.

Lecky's early days were passed in such an elysium in the little Puritan town of Lawrence, Mass. His maternal uncle, Father Denver, provided for the expenses of the bright juvenile's education. His father's mother, from whom he inherits his decidedly literary and artistic tastes, and his omnivorous desire for the quality, and not the quantity, of literature he is in the habit of absorbing daily, was a very well-read woman. She was the proud possessor of the first editions of Coleridge, Southey, Scott and other writers which are now to be found in her nephew's library, the volumes of which number 25,000. His first studies were conducted in private school houses of New England, where he passed his boyhood afterwards under the tutelage of his Rev. uncle, and subsequently in the College of Villanova. Lecky had a natural aptitude for languages of which he has a profound knowledge. He left college and proceeded to Chicago, where he starved on too little oatmeal and *belles lettres*, as poor Thoreau did on beans in the wilds of Massachusetts. He became that phenomenal nuisance of every day life, the book canvasser, and had to bear up with many an affront in that perilous profession. Failing in the book arena, the indomitable youth became a reporter on the *Times*, *Herald* and *Mail* of Chicago. He afterwards left for the south and was attached to the *Louisville Courier* and *New Orleans Picayune*, and tramped on foot through lovely Mexico with his kit of provisions and liquids on his back. His money grew so slack that he had to accept the humble position of cabin page in a steamer bound for New York city. He abandoned journalism after a long illness in the Sisters' Hospital in Chicago, and became a college professor. Having fallen in for a decent windfall from a maiden aunt, Lecky took up his scrip and scallop shell, and made a pilgrimage to Europe, where he studied the character and customs of the various peoples with the observantly eagle eye of a true blue Yankee globe trotter. In London he had a chat with Parnell and Gladstone, and received the blessing of Cardinal Newman. He heard Renan philosophizing in his lectures at the Sorbonne, in Paris. He was delighted with Rome where he had an interview with the present Pontiff. He witnessed the Sacred Play at Oberammergau and stood on the summit of the venerable acropolis of Athens. After these interesting travels, Lecky returned to this country loaded down with diaries of his travels in Europe, and rented a Queen Anne cottage in the town amid the mountains already referred to in this article.

A large lawn extends before the door planted with fine shrubs, and is decked with flowers in the genial sunshiny summer when the cool breezes are caroling down the mountain slopes, refreshing the people who inhabit the plateau. A huge mastiff guards the portals. This animal and an Irish greyhound always accompany their master on his excursions over the mountains. Three deer hounds leisurely stroll over the lawn or cut high jinks of impatience in the sunlight, longing for the hills and their brothers and sisters deer. Peacocks, guinea fowl and various creeds of game hens whisper to me of Lecky's exquisite tastes, which are also in love with flowers, of which he has a deep knowledge. The office is provided with rare plants, and all kinds of literature and writing material. The author's evenings are generally spent in the cabin's of the poor, listening to their woe-begone stories and helping them out of his own modern little income. He has done much for this poor people—he built a hall and library for them;

taught, and still teaches, their children. His name is a household one in their midst. The little salon of Lecky's cottage, I should have remarked further up, contains busts, plaster-casts, and his magnificent collection of photographs of Adirondacks' scenery. The dining-room has its deer head, while another chamber contains some precious bearskins and fox-skins, trophies of his deft skill in the hunt, the delights of which he relishes and enjoys so much. The visitor, who is invited upstairs, has a genuine treat. Books here, there, and everywhere. Among them are many rare editions, picked up from the quai Voltaire, Paris book-stores, in the Corso of Rome, or in Fleet street, London.

Lecky is as fond of those old tomes as he is of the apple of his eye. He dotes on them with all the enthusiastic and highly cultured love of a genuine artist and aesthete. One of those valuable volumes is a copy of Lactantius that belonged to Garrick. It was its first Oxford edition. He has also in this collection "The annals of the Four Masters," 1st edition; rare editions of the Spanish classics and books given him by their authors. A volume with the signature of the author, Justin McCarthy, novelist and leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party, is one of his treasures. He has also the *South Sea*, *Idyls*, and several novels of his old friend, C. W. Stoddard and Malcolm Johnstone. I might add here that when Lecky was introduced to the late Brother Azarias, and submitted some of his articles on divers Catholic subjects to that distinguished scholar, the latter after his having read them, told their author that they were very promising, and that he would one day become a popular Catholic writer.

The following is not given here as a specimen of Lecky as his best; but as a sample specimen of his literary style in the article on "Literature and the Catholic Poor:"

"Could not parish libraries have cheap editions for free distribution among the poor denizens? To defray expenses, a collection might be taken up twice a year. No good Catholic will begrudge a few cents, when he knows that it will go to brighten the hard life of his less fortune favored brother. The critic who does nothing but sneer may call this Utopian. It is the old cuckoo call, known to every man that tries to help his fellows. Newman, Barry, Lilly, Brownson, Hecker, Ireland, all the glittering names on our rosary have heard it, and went their way, knowing full well that if the finger of God traces their path, human obstacles are of little weight. The plan, however is eminently practical. In one of the poorest parishes in the diocese of Ogdensburg, it has been tried and with abundant success. I remember well last summer with what pleasure I heard a mountain urchin ask his pastor, 'Father, can I have the *Pilot*?' This urchin had made the acquaintance of James Jeffrey Roche and Katherine E. Conway. He was in good company. Infidelity is going to our poor. Her weapon is the printing press. The pulpit is well, but its arm is too short."

The following little gem entitled *Retribution* appeared from Lecky's pen in a recent issue of a small Catholic magazine, printed and published by the Paulist Fathers of New York City:

"He came and play'd his part,
He sang some songs of love,
The rabble praise'd his art,
As coming from above.

Thus praise'd his muse grew coarse,
And sought for art without;
Its voice was strangely hoarse,
To fit the rabble's shout.

He's dead, his age gone by,
The age of rich and din;
To-day with clearer sky,
We count his life a sin."

Socially, he is quite at home. It is here where his conversation sparkles with the *solitaires* of fun, and rich

diamonds of what the French call "esprit." He has a decidedly analytic mind. He dissects with all the self-satisfaction of an anatomist any statements written or oral, which he sees or hears with the view of finding a possible flaw in the jewel. He does not act as critic through any vindictive spirit. Far from it. Lecky has a warm and generous heart, but he is anxious to see if the truth is told, and gracefully told. Physically he is slightly over the medium height, and is somewhat inclined to *embonpoint*. He has bright dreamy eyes, a ruddy complexion, and an artistic head.—*Eugene Davis in the Catholic Columbian.*

Birthplace of the Jesuits.

In the first number of *La Revue de Paris* Pierre Loti contributes an interesting account of a journey taken by him to the great Spanish convent of St. Ignatius at Loyola, a monastery which may be styled the birthplace of the Jesuits, and where the election of each general of the Order takes place. The convent is far away from town or village, and forms an imposing mass of buildings surrounding the chapel, which is in the form of a basilica, and built of white and black marble. Every thing about the monastery is severely simple, if we except the room which was once the cell of the founder of the Jesuits. This apartment is turned into a kind of chapel, and is now, says the French writer, of fairy-like magnificence, hung with red brocade; each object in it is of gold, and in a number of reliquaries are to be seen fragments of the humble habit and pieces of the bones of St. Ignatius Loyola. The monastery, which is also one of the noviceships of the Order, is so large that its numberless passages give the impression of a labyrinth. The walls are whitewashed, and each corridor is lined with the doors opening into narrow cells, on each door being written the name of its present occupant, French, Russian, English and German names being in almost as great predominance as Spanish. The strangest thing about Loyola seems to be the tiny feudal castle around which the monastery was built.

The fathers are extremely proud of this strange survival of the Middle Ages. The walls, which are enormously thick, are made of rough stones and red brick, and so careful are the Jesuits of this curious little fortress that nothing is done which could in any way lead to its destruction, and the great monastery built around it and against it gives it the appearance of a pearl in a shell.

The Jesuits' gardens are filled with beds of chrysanthemums, and strange to say are surrounded by no wall nor even a hedge. All free to come in and out, the doors of the monastery being left unlocked during the daytime.

The Liverpool coal-heavers have struck against the Cunard Line's employing non-union men. The strike will in all probability extend to other steamship companies.

The University of Oxford will confer the degree of Doctor of Civil Law upon Captain Mahan of the United States cruiser *Chicago*, at the commencement exercise in June.

The Ameer of Afghanistan has issued a proclamation to his people asking that they consent to his visiting London "for the good of our holy religion and the glory of our country."

TOTALLY DEAF.—Mr. S. E. Crandall, Port Perry, writes: "I contracted a severe cold last winter, which resulted in my becoming totally deaf in one ear and partially so in the other. After trying various remedies, and consulting several doctors, without obtaining any relief, I was advised to try Dr. THOMAS' ELECTRIC OIL. I warmed the Oil and poured a little of it into my ear, and before one-half the bottle was used my hearing was completely restored. I have heard of other cases of deafness being cured by the use of this medicine."