

JOHN BANIM.

A Writer of Romances, With a Romance in His Own Life—"Tales of the O'Hara Family."

This distinguished dramatist and novelist was born in Kilkenny, Ireland, on the 13th day of April, 1798. His father was Michael Banim, a respectable shop-keeper and farmer, and his mother, nee Joannah Carroll, was in rank and education the equal of her husband. He had one brother also named Michael, older than himself, and a sister, called after their mother, to whom he was much attached.

At an early age, John was sent to a local school, from which he was soon recalled and subsequently attended several others with little profit to himself or satisfaction to his teachers; not that he was averse to learning, but the imperfect system of tuition then in vogue disgusted his already poetical mind. At length, at thirteen, he entered Kilkenny College and remained there for nearly three years; classics, history, and modern languages being his tasks, poetry and prose fiction his amusement. Having while at the school developed a decided taste for drawing, he was in 1813, sent as a pupil to the Royal Society in Dublin, and for a couple of years applied himself so diligently to the study of design and painting that he was not only rewarded with the highest prize offered for proficiency in that delightful art, but was enabled to establish himself in his native city as a teacher while yet but eighteen years of age; thus at the outset realizing for himself one of his primary objects—personal independence.

THE ROMANCE OF HIS LIFE.

While prosecuting his new avocation, full of romance, and overflowing with affection, he unconsciously fell in love with a young lady, a pupil two years his junior, and who, as might have been expected, returned his love. Her father not only rejected Banim's proposals for his daughter's hand, but removed her secretly to a distant part of the province. When after the lapse of six months he learned that his lady love was dead of a broken heart, he roused himself from his lethargy, and, though in the depth of winter, he forthwith proceeded on foot twenty-five weary Irish miles to gaze once more on the placid features of his intended bride, to follow her hearse to the churchyard and to stand beside her grave. He now abandoned the profession of an artist, and in the May of 1820, his earliest and best drama, *Damon and Pythias*, was acted at Covent Garden Theatre, Ma-ready and Charles Kemble taking the principal parts.

In consultation with Michael Banim, Jr., he laid the foundation of the celebrated "Tales of the O'Hara Family"—John to be known by the *nom de plume* of Abel, and Michael by that of Barnes O'Hara. Each was to write as much as possible, and submit his MS. to the other for criticism.

In the following year, he commenced the first volume of the Tales, which appeared in April, 1825; all the stories but *Crohoore of the Billhook*, and a few chapters of some others, being from his pen. In 1824 he had already published his "Revelations," etc.—a series of good, natural, satirical sketches of the popular follies of the day; but the "O'Hara Tales" were received with so much approbation by the public that his success was at once assured.

Early in 1826 appeared "The Boyne Water," and in November the second series of the "Tales" including "The Nowlans" and "Peter of the Castle." In January, 1827, he produced a tragedy, "Sylla," which, owing to the fastidiousness of Mr. Kean, was not acted then nor till ten years afterwards. "The Croppy," "The Anglo Irish," "The Ghost Hunter and his family," "The Donounced," "The Smuggler," "The Mayor of Windgap," and finally "Father Connell," appeared in succession from this time until 1840, when the literary labors of the brothers were entirely suspended.

Only the cold shadow of fast approaching death could unnerve the brain and pale the hand of that untiring and fruitful mind. While in Dublin and various parts of the provinces, his malady would come upon him with more constant and renewed vigor, until in 1832 he was obliged to go to France. But it was of no avail and in 1835 he

returned to his birthplace to die, his lower limbs having become completely useless, and his general constitution utterly shaken.

Thus amid his friends and relatives the principal author of the "Tales of the O'Hara Family" lingered for several years at his little cottage of Windgap, surrounded by all the attentions that the most affectionate of relatives and the most judicious of friends could bestow, and finally breathed his last in the summer of 1842.—*Milwaukee Catholic Citizen.*

THE SIN OF SUICIDE.

For several weeks past one of New York's great dailies has held its columns open to a discussion of the question: "Is Suicide a Sin?" The first contributor was Robert E. Ingersoll, who seeks to justify self-murder. Among the subsequent letter writers were some who agreed with him and more who did not. In passing it may be noted that since the beginning of the discussion suicides in New York have been on the increase.

On Sunday last in the Paulists' Church, New York, Rev. G. M. Searle preached on suicide. Father Searle is a man of great learning. He is professor of moral theology in the Paulists' College of St. Thomas, at Washington, which is affiliated with the Catholic University, and he is also director of the University's observatory. His sermon was a comprehensive exposition of the doctrine of the Catholic Church on suicide. His text was: "See ye that I alone am, and there is no other God besides Me; I will kill, and I will make to live." Daut. xxxii., 39.

"I need hardly say that the question as to the morality of suicide is not an open one to Catholics," said he. "We all know, or should know, that suicide is considered by us not only as a sin, but as a mortal or grievous sin, and not only that, but as specially great and grievous among mortal sins, self-murder being of the same nature as the murder of some one else; and yet more, as in one sense the most deadly of all mortal sins, as it ordinarily implies dying in the very act of sin, and therefore shuts out the hope of repentance or pardon.

"Of course, however, we allow it to be quite possible that this most fatal of all acts may be committed in a state of temporary insanity, which may greatly reduce or even entirely remove its criminality, or it may be committed by one who, though sane, is not aware of the teaching of the Church and of right reason on the matter, or, without fault on his own part, does not believe in that teaching.

"Also it is quite possible that even though death should seem to follow immediately, there may yet be time for enlightenment by God's grace and repentance for the act. So in no case can we absolutely assume as a certainty that the soul of a suicide is indeed lost, or even that the act was in itself mortally culpable, as it appeared in the mind of the one committing it.

"One thing more. It should, of course, be understood that we do not class as suicide acts which are really heroic, such as the exposing of one's self to death in order to accomplish some good work for the sake of God or our neighbor; least of all is it suicide to allow one's life to be taken rather than to commit a sin, as the martyrs of faith and charity have done.

"Suicide is, according to Catholic teaching and right reason, clearly a direct attack on God, a clear violation of His rights. It is, in fact, stealing something which belongs to Him. Let us see how this is.

"We should remember that naturally the whole creation belongs to Him who created it. We may acquire a right to some part of it as against other men, but we can never by any act or exertion of our own make anything our own as against Him by whom it was drawn from nothing.

"The natural ownership of God over us remains: He has never parted with it. He can, indeed, commission us or make us His agents or ministers to take even human life. Such a right is recognized by the common sense of mankind and sanctioned in the Scriptures, as inherent in the State; but even by the State it can only be exercised in God's name as the minister of God's justice. Even the State never acquires an ownership over man.

"No man has the right to absolutely dispose of his own life any more than of that of another man. He is here in-

fringing on the right of God, expressed in the words I have taken as a text: 'See ye that I alone am, and there is no other God besides Me; I will kill, and I will make to live.'

"The suicide then directly puts himself in the place of God; he arrogates to himself the right which belongs to God alone and which has always remained reserved and never communicated to any creature in general terms.

"The prohibition is in possession; the presumption reserving the life of each and every one of us as God's untransferred property remains till it is overthrown by an express statement on His part, in general or in the particular case. The suicide then is always a thief, and, moreover, a sacrilegious one, laying hands on what is the exclusive possession of the Almighty."

AN ARTIST.

[The following beautiful poem appeared in the Boston Pilot of September 1. It is from the pen of our old friend Walter Lecky, and is as beautiful as the ivory crucifix that it sings.—Ed. T. W.]

He took a piece of ivory bone
That long had lain aside,
And plac'd it on his carving stone,
Then gazed on it with pride.

And day by day he gladly wrought,
With chisel bright and keen,
To carve the image that he sought,
The hidden treasure glean.

At length his toil was o'er; a cross
Was carved whose beauty won
The critic herd. An ivory cross;
His master work was done.

He sank within the reach of fame;
His life was dark and drear,
And yet he left behind a name
To coming ages dear.

What matters then, his life was sad?
By want and censure kill'd.
He made the grasping world more glad,
And others' purses fill'd.

They'll raise a marble column high,
Those men who scorn'd his art,
Their cant, their praise is blasphemy,
Above a broken heart.

—Squidville Town. WALTER LECKY.

THE POPE'S TEMPORAL POWER.

We know there are many non-Catholics who will declare that the demand made by the Liege Catholic International Conference for the restoration of the temporal power of the Holy See does not come within the range of practical questions, but we would ask them to study the arguments put forward by the delegates, and we are convinced that if they do so they will quickly alter their opinions. A claim advanced by an assembly representing over two hundred million people cannot, under any circumstances, be ignored, but the importance of the problem dealt with by the Liege Conference is increased a hundred-fold by the nature of the position now occupied by the head of the Church. The Italian Government and its supporters and friends may seek to persuade the world by the force of much speaking that there is no Roman question to be solved, but nobody is deceived by such transparently absurd assertions. It cannot be disputed that Leo XIII. wields the greatest moral power on earth, and it must be evident to the meanest capacity that so long as he is deprived of his full liberty and practically a prisoner the interest of the Roman problem must of necessity be pressing and crucial.—*Liverpool Catholic Times.*

REPORT OF THE IRISH LAND COMMISSION.

The report of the Irish Land Commission, just issued, is a big volume, mostly filled with technical statistics. The Commission say that the evidence before them showed that the Irish rents, fixed by courts between 1831 and 1885, are now materially excessive. The present system, they say, appears to impede seriously the administration of justice to the tenants, owing to the expense and delays. The courts generally have denied the tenant a share in the value of his improvements, although the judgment in the famous case of Adams against Danseath declared him entitled to it. The Commission recommend that the occupant be no longer compelled to pay rent on his improvements. All of these ought to be regarded as made by him unless the contrary be proved. It is urged that a commission be appointed at the next session of Parliament to inquire further into the subject. The above matter is covered by the majority report. The minority report admits the desir-

ability of lessening the expense of litigation and revising rents in Ireland, but contends that in the fixing of the judicial rents the act has been construed in the tenant's favor.

ODD LITTLE TRIFLES.

The Queen's Scotch journeys cost her \$25,000 a year for traveling expenses.

In 1552 books on geometry and astronomy were destroyed in England as savoring of magic.

The Harpers are said to have on hand more than \$50,000 worth of accepted manuscripts.

The increase of schools in every country has generally been attended by a decrease of crime.

Greek education comprised reading, writing, arithmetic, music, literature, art and gymnastics.

The first regular effort to instruct the deaf and dumb was by Pedro de Ponce, a Spanish monk, in 1570.

During the sixth, seventh and eighth centuries the Irish monastic schools were the most renowned in Europe.

There is a coal mine at Nanaimo, in British Columbia, the galleries of which extend for a distance of twelve miles under the ocean.

Some one seems to have told the Sultan that chlorate of potash is a dangerous explosive. Consequently no druggist or pharmacist in Constantinople is allowed to possess or sell it. The grand master of artillery alone is allowed to have it in keeping.

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