

TOPICS OF AN OLD-TIMER

Contributions from Two American Correspondents, John Hurley, of Litchfield, Conn., and Hon. William J. Onahan, of Chicago—Relating to the Work of the Early Missionary Irish in England and Europe—Gaelic Spoken in Northumbria as late as the Eighth Century—Extracts from "Green's History of the English People," Relating to Irish Missionary Enthusiasm in the Sixth Century—And Mr. Onahan's Contribution on "The Catholic Church and Popular Education."

Old Timer has some correspondents in the United States whom he highly values and will in this issue hand the Register contributions from two of them—John Hurley of Litchfield, Conn., and Hon. William J. Onahan of Chicago, who is now on his way to Rome (or soon will be) to receive the blessing of the Holy Father Pope Pius X. Mr. Hurley's contribution is on the name of Litchfield, in which town in Connecticut he himself resides, but the historic interest of the article clusters about Litchfield in England.

"The name of Litchfield is derived from the Gaelic word 'licht,' meaning a grave, and 'wol,' a part of the name 'Satwola,' one of the names of the patron saint and evangelizer of Mercia, in ancient England. The story which clusters about the name is full of interest because the events contained in the story had much to do with the progress of Christianity in Britain, and had therefore much to do also with the progress of civilization.

"Oswald became King of Northumbria in 636. He was the son of a sea-rover; but at an early age he became the pupil of three Irish monks who instilled into him a training which had much to do with making him one of the noblest of English kings. He obtained a good knowledge of the Gaelic language, and he worked with St. Aidan to convert the people to Christianity, acting as the interpreter and translator of St. Aidan's teachings.

"In 642 a great battle was fought between Oswald and the pagan Penda, King of Mercia, on the plain of Masserfield. Oswald, the saintly king, was slain and his labors seemed lost, but the harassed people clung to the cross. Oswald's younger brother, and fellow pupil at Iona, Oswin, drove back Penda. Christianity again began to spread. At length the two kings met for a death struggle on the field of Winwaed, near Leeds. In vain did Oswin, fearful of Penda's superior forces, endeavor to buy him off by offer of costly jewels and ornaments.

"If the pagan will not accept my gifts," cried the Northumbrian king, "let us offer them to one that will." And he vowed to God the endowment of twelve monasteries and the dedication of his daughter to God in one of them. A victory that seemed miraculous rewarded his vow. Penda himself fell on the field, the little river beside swelled with a sudden flood and swept away his flying hosts, together with their dead and baggage. The cause of the false god was lost forever and the winning of Central Britain, according to the historian Green, "was a victory for Irish Christianity as well as for Oswin."

"A monk of Lindisfarne was the first Bishop of Mercia, variously named Cedd, Satwola, Cadwalder, Cathmoil, etc. He was also called "the

good St. Caedda," the patron saint of Litchfield in Stafford, so-called from his light or grace, and to whom Litchfield Cathedral is still dedicated. He was a very learned and saintly man. He must have had a knowledge of three languages at least, Gaelic, Latin and Saxon. The scene of his early studies was in the County of Mayo, in Ireland, on the right bank of the river May, then called Rathmoil-Cath, and later Rathmoil, the meaning of which is "battle of Rath Moil." Cath-Moil would be "Moyle's Battle." I have no doubt but that he got his name from this place; hence, also, the family names Cadwell, Shadwell, Cedd, Cadwalder, etc., so named in honor of his saint. In "Keltic Researches" by Prof. E. W. B. Nicholson of Oxford University, England, the author states that Gaelic was spoken in Northumbria as late as the eighth century."

Aug. 9, in the Roman missal, is St. Oswald, martyr's day. He was King of Northumbria, A-D- 642. August 31 is St. Aidan's day. He was the first bishop of Lindisfarne and apostle of Northumbria. He is described as of Irish birth.

Relating to this period in English history I make the following quotations from Mr. Green's History of the English People:

"It was not the Church of Paulus which nerved Oswald to the struggle for the cross. Paulinus had fled from Northumbria at Eadwine's fall, and the Roman Church in Kent shrank into inactivity before the heathen reaction. Its place in the conversion of England was taken by missionaries from Ireland. To understand, however, the true meaning of the change, we must remember that before the landing of the English in Britain, the Christian Church comprised every country, save Germany, in Western Europe, as far as Ireland itself. The conquest of Britain by the pagan English thrust a wedge of heathendom into the heart of this great communion and broke it into two unequal parts. On the one side lay Italy, Spain and Gaul, whose churches owned obedience to the See of Rome, on the other the Church of Ireland. But the condition of the two portions of Western Christendom was very different. While the vigor of Christianity in Italy and Gaul and Spain was exhausted in a bare struggle for life, Ireland, which remained unscourged by invaders, drew from its conversion an energy such as it has never known since. Christianity had been received there with a burst of popular enthusiasm, and letters and arts sprang up rapidly in its train. The science and biblical knowledge which fled from the continent, took refuge in famous schools which made Durrow and Armagh the universities of the West. The new Christian life soon beat too strongly to brook confinement within the bounds of Ireland itself. Patrick, the first missionary of the island, had not been half a century dead when Irish Christianity flung itself with a fiery zeal into battle with the mass of heathenism which was rolling in upon the Christian world. Irish missionaries labored among the Picts of the Highlands and among the Frisians of the northern seas. An Irish missionary, Columban, founded monasteries in Burgundy and the Apennines. The canton of St. Gall still commemorates in its name another Irish missionary before whom the spirits of flood and fell fled, wailing over the waters of the Lake of Constance. For a time it seemed as if the course of the world's history was to be changed, as if the older Celtic race that Roman and German had swept before them had turned to the moral conquest of their conquerors, as if Celtic and not Latin Christianity was to mould the destinies of the churches of the West.

"On a low island of barren gneiss-rock off the west coast of Scotland, an Irish refuge, Columba, had raised the famous monastery of Iona. Oswald in youth found refuge within its walls, and on his accession to the throne of Northumbria he called for missionaries from among its monks. The first dispatches in answer to his call obtained little success. He declared on his return that among a people so stubborn and barbarous, success was impossible. "Was it their stubbornness or your severity?" asked Aidan, a brother sitting by; "did you forget God's word to give them the milk first and then the meat?" All eyes turned on the speaker as fittest to undertake the abandoned mission, and Aidan sailing at their bidding, fixed his bishop's stool or see in the island peninsula of Lindisfarne. Thence, from a monastery which gave to the spot its after name, of Holy Island, preachers poured forth over the heathen realms. Boasil guided a little troop of mis-

sionaries to the valley of the Tweed. Aidan himself wandered on foot, preaching among the peasants of Bernicia. The new religion served as a prelude to the Northumbrian advance. If Oswald was a saint, he was none the less resolved to build up again the realm Eadwine. Having extended his supremacy over the Britons of Strathclyde and won the submission of the Lindiswaras, he turned to reassert his supremacy over Wessex. The reception of the new faith became the mark of submission to his overlordship. In his own court the King acted as interpreter to the Irish missionaries in their efforts to convert his things."

Having given as much as my space will allow of this most interesting episode in English history, I will now turn to the contribution of my friend, Mr. Onahan of Chicago. It relates to

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Letter of Pope Pius X. to Archbishop Riordan

Your Most Illustrious and Most Reverend Grace: The Holy Father has had occasion already to manifest sentiments of grief, sympathy and paternal solicitude for the people of the great metropolis, a prey of late to overwhelming woes. Howbeit the august Pontiff has ever cherished the hope that his children in California would not hesitate to repair the losses they have suffered, because he knows full well their generous, enterprising character. In fact, he now hears with increased satisfaction of their resolve to apply vigorously to the rebuilding of the districts laid waste by earthquake or by fire. Accordingly His Holiness wills that I assure your Most Illustrious and Most Reverend Grace of the lively interest with which he regards the work of reconstruction, the while he complacently trusts that, adorned with other churches and schools and academies and asylums and hospitals, the city of San Francisco may rise quickly, apace with her destiny, to the first rank, not only by reason of her commercial importance, but also by reason of her advantages, religious, literary and social. In order to the fulfillment of this desire of his heart, the Holy Father has deigned to impart a special benediction to all his children of the diocese who, under the wise guidance of Your Grace, co-operate zealously in the restoration of their city to its former flourishing condition, spiritual and temporal.

I rejoice to be the channel of this communication, and with feelings of the utmost esteem I acknowledge myself Your Most Illustrious and Most Reverend Grace's servant.

R. CARDINAL MERRY DEL VAL,
Cardinal Secretary of State.
Rome, June 16, 1906.

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND POPULAR EDUCATION.

It comes to me in the form of a communication to "The Catholic Sun" of Syracuse, N.Y., and is as follows:

The struggle going on in England at the present time to maintain the denominational school system against unfriendly parliamentary legislation emphasizes anew the attitude of the Catholic Church on this important question. The bishops, priests and the laity are united in opposing the secularization of all schools, and are resolute in the determination to maintain Catholic teaching for Catholics.

In England, as in the United States, bigots and infidels unite in decrying and belittling denominational—that is to say, Catholic schools, and were it possible, would legislate these schools out of existence. It is these people, as well as the large and increasing class who are indifferent to any and all religions, and who scoff at religious teaching, it is from these is frequently heard the allegation that the Catholic Church prefers to keep the masses in ignorance—in fact, is opposed to free schools and to popular education!

Of course, it is an ignorant and utterly groundless assertion; but it is, nevertheless, a favorite text for blatant and ignorant demagogues in and outside the pulpit and in certain journals.

No one who has read history—garbled even as history too commonly is, would venture to make this assertion before an intelligent audience, no one, we might say, who has his or her eyes open to existing conditions all over this country, could repeat it unless blinded by bigotry and inflamed by prejudice. The Church that was commissioned to teach all truth cannot assuredly be opposed to the spread of knowledge. The Church that in the earliest stages of its existence, established free schools in Rome, in Antioch, in Alexandria; that during the Middle Ages everywhere sought to establish schools for the poor, exhorting in council and synod bishops and priests to vigilantly provide for the education of the faithful; the Church that instituted the great universities in Europe—which remain to-day, even though in alien hands—splendid monuments of Catholic educational zeal and Catholic munificence in past ages.

The United States abounds in like testimonials at the present time. Witness, too, the declaration made by the memorable Catholic congress held in Baltimore on this subject:

"We recognize, next in importance to religion itself, education as one of the chief factors in forming the character of the individual, the virtue of the citizen, and promoting the advance of a true civilization.

"Therefore we are committed to a sound popular education, which demands not only the physical and intellectual, but also the moral and religious training of our youth.

"As in the State schools, no pro-

(Continued on page 5.)

THE PRIEST ON CATHOLIC EDUCATION

Right Rev. Mgr. M. J. Lavelle, Vicar-General of New York, Gives His Views on Important Topics

At the meeting of the Catholic Educational Association at Cleveland last week Rt. Rev. Mgr. M. J. Lavelle, rector of St. Patrick's Cathedral, New York, who was on the programme, was unable to attend the convention, but he did the next best thing, namely, to send an able and interesting statement of his views on "The Relation of the Pastor or Priest to the Catholic School, Especially as Regards Religious Instruction, Secular Instruction and Discipline." The address, which was read by one of the delegates, contained much sound and practical advice and evoked much enthusiasm.

Mgr. Lavelle began by stating that the pastor deeply interested in the school and conversant with the ways whereby he can wisely aid it, is like the teacher in the gospel to whom the Lord compared the kingdom of heaven, who brings forth from his storehouse rich treasures both old and new and scatters them with bountiful, exhaustless and beneficent hand.

DUTY TO THE PEOPLE.

We owe it to the people who commit their most precious treasures to our care, and to the Catholic Church whose honor we hold in our hands, that the secular instruction in our schools be first-class and up-to-date, and the children whose souls we are trying to save lose nothing necessary to their proper equipment for the voyage of life. The pastor, in this respect also, can be invaluable. It is his office:

First: To see that the school be properly graded, supplied with plenty of skilled teachers; furnished with books and educational appliances, and that the courses of study be honestly followed.

Secondly: To visit the school frequently, every day if possible, for the purpose of encouraging the principals and the teachers and the pupils; to go through the classes at regular intervals, asking questions pleasantly and searchingly. Thus the teachers become aware that the pastor is cognizant of their progress, and the children grow to know him personally, and he them.

Thirdly: To be thoroughly conversant with the efficiency of the school, both absolute and relative, and to push all concerned, within reason, toward constantly greater perfection in work and results.

SHOULD STUDY PEDAGOGY.

Fourthly: To acquire by reading a knowledge of pedagogy in its different branches—school management, methods and principles, history and psychology, keeping in touch with the real progress of the times and discriminating between the ephemeral fad and the lasting, precious fact.

Fifthly: To encourage study among the teachers, procure lectures and advocate institutions.

Sixthly: To hold meetings of the principals and teachers two or three times each year, for the purpose of discussing methods, plans for improvement, attendance, punctuality and discipline, urging upon the teachers affection and personal interest in the children, even outside of the class and insisting that the spirituality of the school suffer no detriment.

Sevently: To invite, prudently and sparingly, visitors to the school—educators, persons of high character or of considerable influence, who may go through the classes interrogating, thus training the boys and girls out of the bashfulness and awkwardness which are likely to characterize them when they are never addressed by any one but their own teachers. Such persons may also be useful by their suggestions or by the favors that they may be able to give or to procure for the school.

ALWAYS BE PLEASANT.

Eighthly: Cultivate cordial relations always with the principals and teachers, making them understand that he appreciates their labors, difficulties, trials, sacrifices and results.

The following suggestions to pastors were offered by Father Lavelle as being essential to the maintenance of true Catholicity and real spirituality in the parochial schools:

First: Keep a close eye on the thoroughness of the religious instruction,

in all the classes from the lowest to the highest.

Secondly: Explain the catechism to the children once a week, either by himself or by his assistants, or, better still, by both; but not, as a rule, take the detailed teaching of the catechism from the class teachers.

Thirdly: Supervise the preparation for holy communion and confirmation, giving the final examination himself, after the children have passed their teachers satisfactorily; and provide a good retreat conducted by priests. Many believe it is good to separate the confirmation from the holy communion and to not allow the children to be confirmed until at least a year after they have made their first holy communion. Of course, this holds only in places where confirmation can be administered annually or nearly so.

GIVES AN EXTRA YEAR.

The arguments in its favor are that it keeps the children a year longer in tutelage, and that it gives them the advantage of a second retreat at a time when their minds are better able to appreciate and retain the truths inculcated. It may not be out of place here to mention also the practice prevalent in some dioceses of giving the total abstinence pledge to the children, with the previously obtained consent of their parents, on the occasion of their confirmation. This promise holds until the boys and girls reach the age of twenty-one. Very few parents object to it. It is believed to have done a great deal of good.

Fourthly: Have regular and inflexible days for the confessions and holy communions of the children; every month for those who have made their first holy communion, and every three months for those who have made their first confession. Some allow the children to go every month during the year immediately preceding their first holy communion. Much care, and often something approaching to registration, are needed with regard to the confessions. Otherwise a large number of children are liable to stay away for a long time.

Fifthly: Have a medal for Christian doctrine which shall be the chief prize of the school, and which shall be open to competition not for the senior classes alone, but for a considerable number of the upper grades. The examination for this medal should include Bible history, Church history, and even polemics, as well as the catechism.

AS TO DISCIPLINE.

Following are some of the suggestions made by Father Lavelle in connection with the relation of pastors to the discipline of the school:

First: The detailed discipline is best left, like the teaching, in the hands of the principals and teachers. But the pastor can be very efficient by assisting upon a very high standard of character and conduct and by being always ready to advise.

Secondly: He can teach the teachers that the main promoters of true discipline are affection, the faculty of being interesting, politeness and control of temper on the part of the teachers themselves.

Thirdly: He may give or cause to be given frequent lessons in politeness, industry, affection and gentility of thought.

Fourthly: Train the children to be not only obedient, but promptly obedient.

ON PUNISHMENT.

Fifthly: You have not asked me what I think of corporal punishment. If you had I should have answered quite unequivocally. But there is one form of punishment I have seen employed which I wish particularly to decry, that of making children kneel as a punishment for offences. It is better that their young minds be formed to never associate kneeling with anything but the beautiful idea of free and holy conversation with their Father who is in heaven.

Sixthly: I cannot see any reason why the priest should ever do any punishing himself when he can get somebody else to do it. The punishment becomes too acute and painful when administered by him. Besides,

"No rogue e'er felt the halter draw
With good opinion of the law."

It is better that the children never have a rancorous thought with regard to the priest. Let them cherish him always as their refuge, their father, and their friend.

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