

AN IRISH PARADOX.

AWAKENED INTEREST IN THE GAELIC TONGUE.

Humiliating Fact Forced to the Attention of the Irish Race in Enlightened America—Comment on a Rome Incident.

Nearly thirty years ago a writer in the Dublin Review wrote these words: "It is disgraceful to the whole of us Saxons and Kelts alike that we leave the real work of Keltic research to continental schools. With Irish Gaelic—the Keltic root tongue—and three dialects spoken in the very midst of us, with stores of documents of all kinds accessible to enquirers, with every means at command, we supinely permit the German and the Frenchman to take the honors that ought to rest with ourselves." All of us must admit that the above extract contained nothing but the literal truth when it was penned. To-day a few exceptions might be made for Scotch and English scholars who have grown enthusiastic in the study of Gaelic not only for its immense philological and ethnological value, but even as a beautiful medium of spoken language.

Among the able and ardent advocates of the modern Irish Gaelic in Scotland, John Stuart Blackie, professor of Greek and Keltic in the university of Edinburgh, stands pre-eminent. Hardly less enthusiastic and learned in the same departments are Professor Geddes and Mackey, with many others. The Saxon, who once did all in his power to crush the very life out of the Celt and his language, has begun to see the shame and the folly of his ways. Not only has he established several chairs in his universities for the study of the language, but has already given us Celtic scholars of world-wide repute, such as Arnold, Latham, Pritchard and Max Muller. It looks as if the Englishman's sturdy sense of honesty and fair play were leading him in this as in other departments of Irish public affairs, to make reparation for the myriad woes which his forefathers inflicted on a nation which contributed so much not only to the Christian civilization of England, but to the general education of Europe.

GERMANS IN THE LEAD.

It must be admitted, however, that not to Englishmen or Scotchmen, and, of course, least and last of all to Irishmen themselves, must the chief credit for the present awakened interest in the ancient tongue be assigned. The cultured Germans, led by the learned Zeuss, whom every Celtic scholar since has little more than copied, were the first in the field and are still the leaders in the movement. His great work, "Grammatica Keltica," Professor Zeuss carefully compiled from the dusty manuscripts written ages ago by the Irish monks who first preached the Gospel in the fatherland. The labors of those Irish missionaries, eminent alike for sanctity and learning, have been sketched by a learned priest of Providence Diocese in a little volume which ought to be in the hands of every Irish Catholic. We allude to "Germany's Debt to Ireland," by Rev. W. Stang, D.D.

Well, if we but consider the labors of Zeuss alone on behalf of our Celtic literature it will soon appear that Germany has done a great deal to pay for the priceless treasure which under God she owes to the Irish apostles. Indeed, when the immense researches of such scholars as Schleicher, Ebel, Bopp, Windisch and Zimmer, all in the department of Celtic language and literature, are taken into account, it may well be said that another volume, entitled "Ireland's Debt to Germany," would be just now entirely appropriate.

The best grammar of the Irish language has been compiled by a German, Professor Windisch. He is besides the only scholar who has given us anything like a hand-book of Irish literature in his magnificent article, "Keltische Sprache," in the new German Encyclopedia. This admirable compendium is still untranslated. Ireland would indeed be ungrateful were she ever to forget what German Protestant scholarship has done to rescue her fine Catholic literature from the obscurity and final decay which has long surrounded and threatened it. Yet it cannot but be painfully humiliating to us all to reflect that not to our own, but to foreign efforts, to aliens in speech and religion, do we owe the

restoration of our only living monument of distinct nationhood.

France has not forgotten her own Celtic origin, and in her gay and cultured capital has long been supporting an excellent monthly, the Revue Celtique, devoted exclusively to Celtic language and literature. She has given us some eminent Celtic scholars, such as Joubainville, Gaidoy and Lizeray. Switzerland claims Pictet, while Italy has her Nigra and Ascoli.

A HUMILIATING FACT.

When we turn to the Irish race in free and enlightened America, can we point out even one Celtic scholar to rank with any of the German, French, English, Scotch or Italian just referred to? With sorrow and shame it must be confessed that not one solitary such is to be found. A rather recent confirmation of this humiliating fact may be regarded as furnished by that remarkable linguist, well known to the readers of the New York Sun, Mr. Jeremiah Curtin. This learned and judicious student of languages and folk-lore, when a few years ago he published "his first contribution to the ancient lore of the Kelts," could find in the whole United States no Irishman of scholarly prominence in Celtic studies to whom he could fittingly dedicate his interesting book, "Myths and Folk-Lore of Ireland." He, a Gaelo Celt and a warm friend of the Gaelic nation, was obliged to seek "a distinguished American of Cymric descent, Major J. W. Powell, LL.D., of Harvard and Heidelberg, to inscribe with some degree of propriety the first effort of the kind ever attempted here.

It is too painful to dwell upon the shameful treatment which the leaders of the Irish people, both lay and cleric, have at home for the past fifty years meted out to the native language. It will ever remain a foul blot on the otherwise bright page of ecclesiastical Ireland, as it is another sad chapter added to the many of Irish political inconsistencies.

Rev. E. O'Growney, whom the Irish Catholic prelates have, to make up for their acknowledged shameful apathy in the past, appointed to a Celtic chair in Maynooth, not long ago asked answered the following question: "In whose hands do we now find those lectures (O'Curry's "Manuscript Materials of Irish History") delivered in the National Catholic University and treating of the most Catholic literature in the world? Chiefly in the hands of foreigners and almost exclusively in the hands of non-Catholics. These precious ecclesiastical manuscripts, first studied by O'Curry, have been published in facsimile, after great toil and labor, mostly by the exertions of Dr. Atkinson, of Trinity College, an Englishman and a Protestant. An immense body of medieval sermons, Catholic, of course, to the core, have been given to Celtic students by the same Dr. Atkinson." We might add that a calendar of Irish saints, together with the first edition of the famous Irish life of St. Patrick, has been published not by a priest, not by a Catholic, but by a distinguished Irish Protestant, Whitley Stokes. Many other examples of commendable Protestant activity in Celtic circles might be cited, but we feel ashamed to proceed further.

IRISH PRELATES' NEGLECT.

This pitiable and almost criminal neglect of their father's refined and expressive tongue was shamefully emphasized by the Irish prelates themselves when, a few years ago, not one of them could be found to present an Irish address to the successor of Peter at our Holy Father's jubilee celebration. The language which was once and for so long a period so honorably associated with everything Catholic was on that august occasion left to the kind consideration, or rather commiseration, of an American bishop to be lisped as best it might before the assembled nations of the world. Neither an Irishman nor even the son or descendant of an Irishman was he who wrote and read the representative address of the Irish Church to the aged and illustrious ruler of the Church of Rome. The scholarly Bishop Becker, of Savannah, was the only Catholic prelate then in the Eternal City who was found capable of performing a duty so simple and so plainly called for by the Church of Patrick and of Brendan. And yet we are told that in Rome there is an Irish College! As an Irishman the writer would be most happy to know that for this degrading and eternally disgraceful conduct of the Irish prelates on so historic a day even the shade of a

shadow of excuse could be found. There seems to be nothing left to us and all descendants of the Gael but to admit the sad fact and hang our heads in shame.

Let us conclude these painful reflections with the pertinent remarks of a distinguished Irish-American, uttered in sorrow only three years ago:

"Two puzzling facts in recent Irish history. First, the interest that Protestants and foreigners take in the language and literature of that country—a language and a literature not only full of the spirit and teachings of Irish Catholicity, but which contain in themselves the seeds of the strongest and most aggressive Catholic tradition in the world. The other fact no less puzzling is the callous indifference or open hostility of the clergy and politicians to the native speech and literature."

No comment is needed to suggest a possibly sadder state of things, save to add that our vaunted Irish patriotism in this respect partakes a great deal of the nature of a puzzling paradox.—SACERDOS in Philadelphia Catholic Times.

IRISH LANGUAGE REVIVAL.

STRONG ENDORSEMENTS OF THE MOVEMENT.

The following strong endorsements of the movement to revive the Irish language were sent to Rev. T. E. Ryan, of Providence, R.I., who is the leader of it in this country:

CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA,

WASHINGTON, D. C., March 9.

REV. T. E. RYAN.

REV. DEAR SIR: I heartily rejoice to learn that the movement for the revival of the Irish language, originated in the old country, has crossed the ocean and is spreading amongst us. This is only as it ought to be, America is the second home of the Irish race, and it is only natural that she should become the second home of the Irish tongue. The almost universal neglect of that noble and beautiful language for so many years is a disgrace. I have heard Breton spoken in Brittany, Flemish in Flanders, Welsh in Wales. The people have their books, their newspapers, their popular songs, in their respective dialects, side by side with the official language of each country, and all classes take a pride in being familiar with both. I have met foreigners familiar with the language and literature of our country in which they claimed to find the most valuable philological and antiquarian elements. Surely it is unworthy of us that others should have to come to us from outside and reveal to us our own hidden treasures.

Time alone can tell in what measure Irish may win back what it has lost as a spoken language. Much may depend upon political changes and the spirit awakened by them. In the present century it only took three men—namely, indeed, of great gifts and great determination, Palacky, Yungmann and Safarik, a historian, a linguist and an antiquarian—to bring back to Bohemia her national spirit and her almost extinct language. They both flourish to-day. On the grave of one of their poets, Hanka, they have placed an inscription which we would do well to meditate: "A nation never dies so long as its language lives." With sincerest wishes for your success, believe me, reverend dear sir, very sincerely yours,

J. HOGAN.

CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA,

WASHINGTON, D. C., March 9.

REV. T. E. RYAN.

REV. DEAR SIR: I gladly comply with the request which you make for some words of sympathy and encouragement for the movement to revive and spread the study of the Irish language, that most ancient and venerable of the tongues of Europe. Of the great Keltic dialects the Cornish has ceased to be spoken, the Manx is dying, the Breton and the Gaelic losing ground; only the Welsh and the Irish seem able to hold their own. That it is possible to preserve both is clear from the example of the former, whose friends have saved it from extinction by personal sacrifice and devotion, as well as by their annual meetings or eisteddfods, which are quite in the line of what you propose.

Whatever be the fate of the Irish as a spoken language, it is a pity that it is not better known as the vast depository of a varied and splendid literature, capable of instructing and amusing the most polite generation. It has been for thousands of years the tongue of heroes and conquerors, of legislators, teachers and poets, and for fourteen centuries one of the great channels of Catholic Christian thought and endeavor. It was the mother tongue of the men who nurtured the Carolingian renaissance and transmitted to heathen Alemanic and rude Frank not only the elements of Christian faith and self-discipline, not only the first rudiments of philosophy and history, but the arts of music, painting, calligraphy and book making, men who were to the early middle ages what the Greek was to his Roman conqueror, the ever-open source of all that was beautiful in art and literature and all that was religious and spiritual in the higher life of the soul. It is to these men, fashioned by the Irish tongue and literature, that moral theology, Latin grammar, the text of the Latin Vulgate, the early medieval annals, church music, the studies of Greek, mathematics, geometry and astronomy, the vernacular tongues of the continent, philosophy and travel—above all, the study of the Scriptures, the art of writing, and the noble science of pedagogics owe an incalculable debt of gratitude. Were it only to understand the formation of these generations of Irish teachers, the study of their cultured tongue would be of the greatest value. But they have left after them a corpus of Irish literature whose unprinted mass would fill one thousand large octavo volumes, greater than the vernacular literature of any medieval European nation, larger than the united collections of the Greek and Latin fathers in Migne. It is a broad ocean, into which whoever dives is sure to bring up a pearl, an inexhaustible mine wherein the poet and the philosopher, the historian and the artist, the lawyer, the physician, the observer of ancient

Cottolene

A SHORTENING.

Down the street through the busy way
A lady passed on marketing day.
Who, pausing at a grocery store,
Stepped quickly in at the open door.
With bated breath and anxious mien
She queried: "have you COTTOLENE?"

The grocer, leaving off his work,
Interrogated every clerk;
But none up to that time had seen
An article called "COTTOLENE."

"What is it?" said he to the dame,
"That answers to this curious name.
What is it made of? What's its use?
My ignorance you'll please excuse."

"You're not the merchant for my dimes,
I see you're quite behind the times.
For COTTOLENE, I'd have you know,
Is now the thing that's all the go,
An article of high regard;
A healthful substitute for lard.
Its composition pure and clean;
For cooking give me COTTOLENE."

As from his store the lady fled,
The grocer gently scratched his head—
On his next order, first was seen,
"One dozen cases COTTOLENE."

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manners, the folk-lore, the philologist and the student of institutions may wander at will and find each the treasures on which his heart is set. Yet it is the sad, poor remnant of a literature which has had more enemies, for a longer time, than any known literature on earth, and which lies to-day neglected and forgotten, as those

Drenched sands
On which a great soul's wealth lies all in heaps
Like a wrecked argosy.

It is not that this literature is unknown. Besides the deserving names of O'Reilly, O'Donovan, O'Curry, O'Grady, Hogan, Sullivan, Stokes and many others in the British Isles, Frenchmen like De Belloguet, Pictet, D'Arbois de Jubainville, Loth and Gaidos; Germans like Zeuss, Dieffenbach, Windisch and Zimmer; Italians like Nigra and Ascoli have made the most laborious and fruitful researches in this domain which yields even more information on the migration of peoples from the Orient, or the North, on comparative philology, the original culture and religion of the Aryan race, the primitive traditions and institutions of European humanity. We are even learning in church history that just as the Coptic and the Syriac have preserved many valuable monuments of the old Greek Christian literature, so the Irish is the ark in which much of the old Latin Christian liturgy, legislation, doctrine and discipline has floated down to our own day.

Sporadic, unorganized effort is unavailing in a land and time whose attention is engaged by so many high and urgent interests of a practical, material nature. The proper way to further the study of the Irish language is the way adopted by the Universities of Oxford, Paris, Goettingen and Leipzig, the foundation of a chair of the Keltic language and literature. Let this be established in the Catholic University of America, where competent instructors and students may meet and study the splendid tongue of the Goideals, so poetic and flexible, so ardent tender and strong. Thus we will have a centre, a point of unity around which the necessary and rare books will be gathered, where Keltic antiquities (at least in casts and photographs) will be collected, where the study of Keltic can be carried on in union with the studies of Greek and Sanskrit. If you can accomplish this you will have secured for the tongue of the Goideals a new and imperishable existence in this blessed land of the west, toward which our forefathers so often strained their eyes in the long gone ages, and which their little suspected would be the refuge of their persecuted progeny, and perhaps the saving ark of all that is most worthy and imitable in the history, literature and experience of the Kelt. Yours sincerely in Xto,

THOMAS J. SHAHAN, D. D.,

Professor of Early Ecclesiastical History.
—Philadelphia Catholic Times.

Burdock Blood Bitters cures all diseases of the blood from a common Pimple to the worst Scrofulous Sores or Ulcers. Skin Diseases, Boils, Blotches and all Blood Humors cannot resist its healing powers.

It is a little strange that the cranks are the most active when the machinery is still.—Cleveland Plain Dealer.

For Cholera Morbus, Cholera Infantum, Cramps, Colic, Diarrhoea, Dysentery, and Summer Complaint Dr. Fowler's Extract of Wild Strawberry is a prompt, safe and sure cure that has been a popular favorite for over 40 years.