Old Letters.

(By a Regular Contributor.)

The following letter may not be of any great interest to the greater number of the readers; yet it was written by one whose name had its place in the story of Ireland during the two mid-decades of the last century. At all events I give the letter as it is here before me, and I will add thereto some remarks, with the translation of a few paragraphs that are not too remotely connected with the subject. The letter runs thus:—

"17 Main Street
(Near West Gate)
"Clonmel,
"Aug. 9, 1848.

"Dear Friend:

"You will herewith find a copy of my lines on 'Music.' They certainly are not worth all the value that you and your gifted brother, seemed to have placed upon them. The verses were suggested by a short passage from Plato which came under my eye not long since. That ancient, and ever living authority, said, that, "We must not judge music by the pleasure which it affords, nor prefer the kind which has no other object, than pleasure, but that which contains in itself a resemblance to the beautiful." Pondering over this sage remark I constructed my rude address to 'music,' never expecting that it would find favor in the mind of any person, but simply for my own pleasure. * * * * * * *

"Yours ever sincerely,

"MICHAEL DOHENEY."

I would be very glad were I in possession of Doheney's poem; but, unfortunately I have not got it, nor do I recollect ever having seen it. Decidedly it is not to be found in any collection that I have ever seen. But if it is not possible to give the readers what must have been a fine poem, from the pen of one of Ireland's most conspicuous patriots, still the passage which he cites from Plato, brings to mind the occasion of the same quotation in one of Chateaubriand's finest pages— "The Influence of Christianity on Music." There may be a long space—measure it by whatever standard you please—between the correspondence of Michael Doheney and Chateaubriand's "Genius of Christianity," yet the Platonic quotations forms a sufficient hyphen between them to excuse a translation, here, of the French author's fine passage. Having quoted the passage from Plato, above given, Chateaubriand writes:—

"Music, in fact, considered as an art, is an imitation of nature; its perfection, therefore, consists in representing the most beautiful that is possible in nature. But pleasure is a matter of opinion which varies according to times, manners and nations, and which can be the beautiful, since the beautiful has an absolute existence. Hence every institution that is calculated to purify the soul, to banish trouble and discord therefrom, and to promote the growth of virtue, is by this very characteristic favorable to the best music, or to the most perfect imitation of the beautiful. But if such an institution is also of a religious nature, it must possess the two essential conditions of harmony — the beautiful and the mysterious, song has come to us from the angels, and symphony has its source in heaven.

"It is religion that causes the vestal to sigh amid the night of her peacefulness; it is religion that sings so tenderly beside the bed of affliction. To her Jeremiah owed his lamentations and David the sublime effusions of his repentance. If, prouder under the ancient covenant, she depicted only the sorrows of monarchs and of prophets,—more modest and not less loyal, under the new law, her sighs are equally suited to the mighty and the weak, because in Jesus Christ she has found humility combined with greatness.

"We may say, in addition, that the Christian religion is essentially melodious, for the single reason that she delights in solitude. Not that she has antipathy to society; but this celestial Philomela prefers the desert; she is shy and retiring under the roof of man; she prefers the forest, fot such are the places of her father, and her ancient above. There she raises her voice to the skies amid the concerts of nature; nature is incessantly celebrating the praises of the Creator, and nothing can be more religious than the hymns chanted in concert with the winds by the oaks of the forest and the reeds of the desert.

"Thus the musician who would follow religion in all her relations is obliged to learn the art of imitating the harmonies of solitude. He ought to be acquainted with the melancholy notes of the waters and the trees; he ought to study the sound of the winds in the cloister and those murmurs that pervade the Gothic temple, the grass of the cemetery and the vaults of the departed.

"Christianity has invented the organ and given sighs to brass itself. To her music owed its preservation in the barbarous ages; wherever she has erected her throne, there have arisen a people who sing as naturally as the birds of the air. Song is the daughter of Prayer, and Prayer is the companion of Religion. She has civilized the savage only by the means of hymns; and the Iroquois who would not submit to her doctrines was overcome by her concerts. O Religion of peace! thou has not, like other systems, inculcated the precepts of hatred and discord; thou has taught man nothing but love and harmony."

The reading of Plato's expression regarding music and the beautiful inspired Chateaubriand to pen the foregoing; the reading of the same passage inspired the fugitive patriot of Ireland to pen a poem, that, if we may judge from his other poetic effusions, must have been truly beautiful.

Evils of the Stage.

A simple despatch from Paris tells a story that suggests a grave and important moral. Sarah Bernhardt has recently been creating a sensation by her playing the character of "Werther"—one of the most graphic and passion-inspiring characters of the modern stage. So great has been her influence that a well known Parisian lady, a correspondent of the press and one who is considered as moving in the more select circles, became infatuated with the performance of the talented actress. After the scene in which "Werther" attempts to commit suicide, this lady —a Mrs. Paule De Martigny — who was accompanied to the theatre by her daughter, suddenly arose and cried out: "I too wish to die;" and, suiting the action to the word, she pulled out a revolver, and fired at her own head. Her daughter, who had previously had an idea of the effect of the play on the mother, had extracted the balls and left blank cartridges. Hence her failure to shoot herself; but, before the smoke had cleared away, she swallowed the contents of a battle of laudanum, which she carried in her handkerchief. It is probable, however, that she will recover. But whether she does or not the lesson remains. We see in this simple event how awful is the effect produced on weak minds by the over-excitement of the stage. It is no excuse that the art of the actress is wonderful; the greater the actree, the more powerful the sensation she creates, the more terrible the danger. All heads are not cool; all hearts are not governable; all minds are not well-balanced. The absence of that Faith, which has made France the great country that she is, has left millions of her vivacious and even talented children a prey to a species of despair that is born of ignorance. Not ignorance in the sense of a lack of human knowledge; but ignorance in the true sense, which is an absence of the knowledge of God, accompanied by faith in Him.

We cannot too strongly dwell upon such incidents and their baneful results. And at the bottom of all that evil is the stage.

It was only the other day that Madam Bernhardt, herself, made her debut as a writer, in an article intended to show the moral worth and the sublime teachings of the stage. She knew how to draw the distinction between the degraded theatre and the elevating or refining one. Yet she is, in person, instrumental in producing sentiments and passions that could drive a poor creature to a point of frenzy that might have culminated in a tragic death. Even art, itself, is dangerous when divorced from true religion, and, alas! in France, they are driving all religion away, and art will soon have to stand alone surrounded by its court of passions, vices, and crimes.

The Lord knows how to make stepping stones for us of our defects, even; it is what He lets them be for. we are but dust; the dust of earth, He remembereth in the making that that He chose to make something a little lower than the angels out of.

Always there is seed being sown silently and unseen, and everywhere there come sweet flowers without our foresight or labor. We reap what we sow, but nature has love over and above that justice, and gives us shadow, and blossom, and fruit that spring from no planting of ours.

The Irish Situation.

So rapidly, at this critical moment, do the affairs of Ireland and her position and chances in the Imperial House, change that we cannot well tell what any twenty-four hours may bring forth. The latest despatch of general importance, in which the situation is fairly set forth, is the following:—

"The announcement that the Government contemplates bringing in a bill providing a modified form of Home Rule for Ireland complicates the political situation, which already presents an extraordinary muddle. No measure of Home Rule can be brought before Parliament this year, and the Irish Secretary, Mr. Wyndham, is quite likely to deny the serious existence of such a plan. But any denial can be regarded as mere political evasion due to the Government's desire not to arouse further opposition among its own supporters until the Irish land purchase bill is safely passed, which is not experted until September. The provisions of the latter measure are still kept absolutely secret and will not be revealed until March 25, when the bill will be brought in. The Nationalist members of Parliament and the Irish Unionists, including Lord Dunraven, continue hopeful that it will, or indeed that it must, contain proposals which will in some degree meet the demands of united Ireland.

Lord Dunraven, while declining to make any statement regarding the steps the Government has taken looking to a scheme, for Home Rule and deprecating any announcement as likely to prejudice Irish interests, declared to a representative of the Associated Press that there was a widespread feeling among the Unionist landlords for an extended form of Local Government, and they saw no reason why all the Irish parties should not work together towards that end, as they had done in the land question. The Nationalist leaders refrain from making any comment and publicly make little of their now continuous support of Premier Balfour. The rank and file, however, do not hesitate to point out that the Government is now at their mercy and that the ministry would twice have been defeated this session, thanks to the vigorous attacks of the fourth party and the large abstention of its nominal supporters from voting, had the Nationalists voted, as they have done for years, with the Opposition."

Now all this gives us nothing very definite; it merely shows us the Irish Party silent, waiting, and holding the balance of power. It must be taken with the manifold rumors that are circulating, both in England and in Ireland. These rumors may be more or less founded; but there must be an element of truth in them, and there must be some foundation for them; otherwise they would not receive credit in quarters where they are believed, nor would they be promulgated by men who are supposed to be well informed, of these rumors, decidedly the most important is that which the "Tribune" received by cable from London on Monday last. It states that the Irish Land Bill will include a grant of £10,000,000 (equal to $50,000,000), from the Imperial Exchequer, to bridge over the difference between what the tenants think they ought to pay, and what the landlords feel they ought to receive for the Irish lands. If it be true that such an amount is proposed to be given, and that the Government is seriously considering the project of a modified measure of Home Rule, we can easily be justified in expecting the full contentment and satisfaction of the Irish people. There is a touch of statesmanship about such measures that has not yet been visible in anything undertaken, heretofore, from a legislative point of view in regard to Ireland. It is not at all difficult to understand the calm, confidential and patient attitude of the Irish leaders. They, of necessity, must have been taken, to a certain degree, into the confidence of the Government. A corner of the veil must have been raised for the observation of Mr. Redmond and his association. It is not probable, we were almost going to say that it was not possible, that the members and leaders of the Irish Parliamentary Party should be so tame, so ready to assist and to save the Government of the hour, if there were not present to their minds an almost absolute certainty of success in their undertaking.

There is talk of the splitting up of parties, of the divisions in the Liberal ranks, and the conflicting elements in the Conservative camp; but all these only show the more clearly the gathering strength of the Irish Party, and the ever increasing momentum, that is being given to their cause. We do not wish to hazard predictions, at this moment; it is often dangerous to be too sanguine; but we have a deep and abiding confidence in the cause, and we feel, with a kind of patriotic instinct, that the day of its triumph is at hand.

Sydney's Grand Old Priest.

It affords the "True Witness" great pleasure to reproduce from the Sydney "Academy Record" a brief account of the life-work of a venerable priest, Rev. James Quinan of Sydney, C.B. The grand old priest has hosts of friends all over the Dominion, and not a few in Montreal. To have known Father Quinan and to have had the pleasure of enjoying his society is to have had the benefit of a liberal education. We trust he may be spared for many years. The article runs as follows:—

The "Academy Record" would be lacking in its duty if it failed to join the hearty congratulations which are being tendered Rev. James Quinan, on the 50th anniversary of his ordinatiom. This auspicious event occurred on Thursday, the 12th inst., which by the way, is known in Church history as St. Gregory's Day. To the editors and readers of the "Academy Record" the name of Father Quinan has every reason to be cherished. He was Commissioner of Schools from 1860 to 1876. He encouraged literary taste by giving a handsome award every year since 1897 for the best essay on some set subject. By his tact and sound judgment he helped to "make smooth" the secular school law of the province, which at the time, was not all that was acceptable to himself or his co-religionists; but in no way, perhaps, has he proved to be a genuine friend and benefactor of the great cause of education than in his kindly words of appreciation and encouragement of the Sydney school teachers.

Father Quinan was born in Halifax of Irish parentage, A.D. 1826, the year after the granting of Catholic Emancipation. He attended school in his native city, and from there weent to St. Andrew's College, P. E. I. He finished his education in the Quebec Seminary where he was ordained March 12th, 1853. He took charge of the parish of Sydney in 1853, and continued until October, 1900, when he resigned finding his strength unequal to the work which the duties towards his now greatly increased congregation demanded. During his pastorship the Church of the Sacred Heart, the "Convent of the Holy Angels," and other edifices are evidences of his Apostolic energy and zeal.

It does not come within the scope of our observations, at the present time, to deal with the work of Father Quinan in his priestly office, during the long period of forty-seven years. Suffice it to say, for the past half century of his ministerial labors, Sydney has known many trials and vicissitudes all of which he shared. He has seen it rise from an obscure village to its present state of prosperity, with abundant promise of being one of the great cities of the world. Indeed, the life of Rev, James Quinan would be the history of Sydney; and let us hope some gifted pen will become inspired to do justice to the worthy theme.

Ever faithful in the performance of the onerous duties of his sacred calling,—public spirited when occasion called,—a devoted lover of his country,—simple in his habits, gentle in his manner,—fond of books, charitable,—if all this, said of him, by those who know him well, be true, is he not one of nature's noblemen whose influence and example for good must be far-reaching in this alas! too mercenary, selfish, and sordid age, of ours.

There is little danger that the name and benevolent acts of such a man will fade from our memories. The sea-encroaching piers, the tall chimneys, "the cloud capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces; the solemn temples shall leave not a rack behind," but the virtues of the just shall live on through generations. So may it be with Sydney's Grand Old Man.—Ithuriel in Sydney Academy Record.

DIED.

QUINN.—On 23rd Feb., 1903, in Cleveland, Ohio, Agnes Quinn, daughter of Peter Quinn, of the parish of St. Anicet, P.Q., and wife of Thomas Stewart, in her 42nd year, of heart disease. She leaves her husband and two children with four brothers, and three sisters to mourn her loss. May her soul rest in peace.

Leo's Last Poem

(By a Special Correspondent.)

In honor and commemoration of his golden and silver, his exceptional and manifold jubilee the Holy Father has composed a poem that he was pleased to entitle "Leo's Last Prayer." That he should, at any time in his life, have given the world a beautiful poetic production would be a subject worthy of a fertile pen; but, at the age of ninety-three, with all the cares of his exalted state upon his shoulders, and with the fatigues of the recent weeks —fatigues calculated to exhaust young and energetic men— that he could calmly sit down, disengage his mind from the affairs of state, and allow his soul to soar into the atmosphere of the muses, is an event that should be recorded in golden letters upon the pages of history.

We have not before us the Latin text of the poem that has just come from the pen of the great Pontiff; but Dr. William H. Ward has given a metrical translation of it into English. While we are not able, at this moment, to compare that translation with the original, still we can see by it what must be the beauties of the Latin verse. It naturally must be a free translation, otherwise it could not be woven into English verse; yet, as it is, we will reproduce it for the benefit of our readers. His Holiness presented copies of the poem to each of the cardinals of the Sacred College, and the gift was surely one that each of them will cherish as the sweetest memento of the illustrious one who reigns over the Church of Christ and guides the barque of Peter.

Dr. Ward's translation runs thus:—

Leo, now sets thy sun; pale is its dying ray;
Black night succeeds thy day,
Black night for thee; wasted thy frame,
Life's flood sustains,
No more thy shrunken veins.
Death casts his fatal dart; robed for the grave thy bones,
Lie under the cold stones,
But my freed soul escapes her chains, and longs in flight
To reach the realms of light,
That is the goal she seeks; thither her journey fares;
Grant, Lord, my anxious prayers
That with the citizens of heaven, God's face and light,
May ever thrill my sight;
That I may see thy face, heaven's queen, whose mother love
Has brought me home above
To thee, saved through the tangles of a perilous way,
I lift my grateful lay.

Fine as these lines are, in English, and lofty as are the sentiments that they express, still we would be glad to render the Latin, even in blank verse, with more literary exactness. However, we behold in this prayer, like that last one of St. Bernard, the heart and soul of the Apostle rising to the Source whence they came, and catching a foretaste, as it were, of the glories of that Beatific Vision, which assuredly awaits the great Leo, the moment he crosses the threshold of eternity.

Such a production, while it comes from a master of Latin verse, cannot be subjected to the ordinary rules of literary criticism. To appreciate its value it becomes necessary to divest one's self of all preconceived ideas and to enter into the spirit of the Pontiff, while considering all the surrounding circumstances. The one who is able to do this has a rare treat in store for him. He can, in imagination, sit by the white-robed Vicar of Christ, in the solitude of his study, and contemplate that great soul, disengaging itself from all its surroundings, and, as if by anticipation, winging its flight towards the source of all light and life and power, and tasting, as if beforehand, the joys that are reserved for the great and the good, the true and the faithful, in regions where age does not weaken, nor sorrows oppress, nor cares affect. It is a sublime spectacle and one that might well make angels bend down in attentive admiration and awe.

NOTES FROM SCOTLAND.

A NOTABLE JUBILEE. — The "Catholic Times" thus refers to an event of national importance to Scottish Catholics—the celebration recently of the silver jubilee of their restored Hierarchy. The chief of a widespread series of thanksgiving services in honor of the welcome event took place in St. Mary's Cathedral, Edinburgh, on Thursday, March 5th. This great service gathered on Thursday to the Scottish capital the entire Hierarchy and the leading clergy of the six dioceses which that Hierarchy represents, viz, St. Andrews and Edinburgh, Glasgow, Dunkeld, Aberdeen, Galloway, and Argyll and the Isles. Archbishop Maguire of Glasgow, though unfortunately detained and unable to join in the church service, arrived in the capital later on the in the day, and, besides participating in a quiet part of the jubilee proceedings, attended the Bishops' meeting. At 11.30 a. m., the appointed hour of service, a large and fashionable congregation, eager with expectancy, had assembled to witness what was destined to prove one of the most brilliant and picturesque Catholic pageants which the old Cathedral Churrh of St. Mary has ever held within its venerable walls.

To many it seemed like the reproductive realization of some historic pre-"Reformation" picture, as at the appointed hour the subdued trumpet tones from the balcony and the boom of the grand organ pealing forth Mendelssohn's "March of the Priests" announced that the archiepiscopal procession had left the sacristy.

First came the acolyte cross-bearer, with his comrades, arrayed in spotless surplices and scarlet cassocks and skull-caps, looking not unlive little Cardinals in cameo, and blazing torches in their white-goved hands. Next came a large contingent of the young ladies of the parish, gowned gorgeously in white, and bearing aloft a number of beautiful banners of devotional design. These were followed by the girls of the Academy and York Lane Schools, also dressed in white, with wreath and veil, and carrying flowers in their hands. After them came the boys' Guild of St. Andrew, wearing white gloves, red sashes, and silver St. Andrew cross badges, and bearing aloft the religious standards of their guild. Next came a large retinue of altar boys, whose rear was brought up by the thurifer, followed by a long and stately procession of priests in cassock, surplice, and biretta, and finally came the Bishops in the following order, after being preceded by the Canons of the Eastern and other dioceses: Bishop Macfarlane of Dunkeld and Bishop Turner of Galloway; Bishop Chisholm of Aberdeen and Bishop Smith of Argyll and the Isles, the rear of the archiepiscopal procession being completed by the venerable and revered figure of the beloved Metropolitan Archbishop, James Augustine Smith, D.D., attended by train-bearers, and blessing the kneeling congregation as he went along, crozier in hand. The Master of the ceremonies was the Very Rev. Canon Donlevy.

Reaching the high altar, and after the different representatives of the Scottish missions and deaneries had taken their seats in and around the sanctuary, the Archbishop of St. Andrews and Edinburgh, the celebrant, began the High Mass, and then Haydn's First Mass pealed forth in joyous strains throughout the church. The deacon and sub-deacon of the Mass were respectively the Rev. Jos. Long and the Rev. Father Logue. The assistant priest at the Mass was the Right Rev. Monsignor Provost Grady. The deacon and sub-deacon at the Archbishop's Throne were Very Rev. Canon Morris and Very Rev. Canon O'Neill. The choir and orchestra were specially augmented for the occasion, instrumental music being a particular feature of the service. In keeping with the occasion, the altar and sanctuary were magnificently adorned with the finest of flowers and palm trees. Nearly five hundred lilies of the Nile were employed in the altar decorations alone, and the entire floral scheme was planned and carried out by the Administrator, Very Rev. Canon Donlevy.

After the first Gospel a sermon was delivered by the Rev. Gerald Stack, of St. Bride's, Cambuslang. The statistics set forth in the discourse afford most gratifying evidence of the progress made by the Church in Scotland dnring the past twenty-five years. It was estimated that the Catholics of the country at the restoration of the Hierarchy numbered 360,000. It was certain that the number at present exceeded 510,000, showing an increase of 150,000 in a quarter of a century.

Commenting upon the sermon the "Catholic Times" remarks:—

From these figures it is clear that the increase in the Church is keeping pace with the growth of population, and we believe it would be correct to state that there is not another denomination of any size in Scotland of which the same can be said.

There are now 222 missions, giving an increase of 60 per cent., and 359 churches and chapels, showing an increase of 36 per cent. or more than one-third. The priests have increased from 276 to 462, or 70 per cent. In the number of schools there has been an increase of 55 per cent. Half a century ago it was thought by many that Scotland and Holland were so strongly opposed to Catholic principles as to make the prospect of the missionary almost hopeless; but to-day the outlook for the Church in both lands is full of encouragement.