

THE ILLS OF IRELAND.

Some Interesting but Forgotten Facts of Irish History.

(From the Belfast Witness.)

Dr. Roche Ardill has rendered important service to the cause of truth by the publication of this work on Irish history. The superstition that all Ireland's grievances are traceable solely to the English connection, and not to the Italian connection, is shown here to be baseless. Not "faith and fatherland," as the current and popular ballad would have us to believe, was the ancient cry, but, as Dr. Ardill says, "faith without fatherland" was the rule for unhappy Ireland. It was not Elizabeth of the Crownellian settlers who first reduced "the mere Irish" to be hewers of wood and drawers of water, but Plantagenet Kings, by the help of the whole power of the Church of Rome. It is to be remembered that in 1170 Henry II., shortly after he instigated the murder of Becket, received from the Pope our beloved Ireland to do what he liked with it. Two years later Pope Alexander III. confirmed Adrian's grant. Comyn, an Englishman, one of Becket's enemies, was the first Norman Archbishop of Dublin, and the first Irish Prelate consecrated by the Pope, and all his successors down to the Reformation were Englishmen. As Dr. Ardill phrases it, there are forgotten facts of Irish history.

And so it is that multitudes of Irish Roman Catholics, are to this hour ignorant of the fact that if England has tyrannised over "the mere Irish," it did so at the instigation of the Pope of Rome. It was not to Protestant but to Papal England that the infamous Statute of Kilkenny (1367) is attributable, which prohibited inter-marriage between the English and the Irish, which proscribed the Irish tongue, which forbade any Irish person to sue at law, which practically declared war against the Irish race; inasmuch that the Irish Princes in their complaint to Pope John XXII. asserted that even the Religious Orders were putting forward the heretical doctrine "that it is no more sin to kill an Irishman than to kill a dog."

Surely it is well in those days when there is such an aggression of the Religious Orders of Rome into the choicest parts of England and Ireland that it should be clearly stated that Irish patriots who want to make their Kingdom "a nation" not only owe nothing to Rome, but are indebted to her for much of the humiliation and degradation which have undoubtedly been theirs through the English connection, and the ancient and uninterrupted domination through England of the Papacy.

We are told that down to the very eve of the Reformation the Roman Episcopate was enforcing the Penal Laws against all O's and Maes, and in 1542 an incumbent was turned out of a benefice in the Diocese of Cashel for the crime of being an Irishman. It is abundantly clear that this Italian connection, this supervision and control of the Italian priest, has not redounded to the peace and happiness and honour of Ireland—and the sooner the connection with Rome is dissolved the better it will be both for the true faith of the glorious Gospel; and for the fatherland as well. Until this connection is broken Irish Roman Catholics should give up singing their touching hymn for "faith and fatherland."

Not long since at a public function a Protestant Episcopal clergyman spoke of the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland as "an alien Church," to the great indignation of some very respectable Roman Catholics to whom the words were reported. But when the matter is looked into, without prejudice, it cannot be denied that as at present constituted the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland is tied neck and heel to an Italian head—its orders come from Rome, its bishops are of Roman manufacture, its cardinals

are of Roman appointment, it lives and moves and has its being in Rome. If this does not make it an alien Church, in its present constitution and development language has lost its meaning. No doubt Pope Adrian professed to be animated by a concern for the religious improvement of the Irish people when he handed them over to Henry II. For it was he who formed the connection with England. But, as the historian tells us, if he really meant to elevate their condition he was signally unfortunate.

The English invasion is the commencement of the most dismal period in their history. The Irish Church parted then with its primitive simplicity and its ecclesiastical freedom. And many young Irishers of to-day know this full well, and would gladly throw off the Papal yoke if they could. Some years at the Intermediate examinations, some such question as the following appeared in the examination paper—"Tell the difference, if any, between the Roman invasion of England and the English invasion of Ireland?" The answer given by a Co. Clare boy, as we heard from the superintendent of the examination, was as follows—"When the Romans, in the days of Caesar, invaded England, a civilised nation invaded a savage nation and civilised them; when the English invaded Ireland a savage nation invaded a civilised nation and savagised them." We are not concerned to stand over this answer; our only point is to show the intensity of the feelings of young Ireland against the Saxon invader, and to emphasise the fact that it was the Pope of Rome—himself being an Englishman, and the only Englishman that ever was made Pope—sent the English invader to effect their spiritual as well as their civil degradation. After these transactions the old Hibernian Church was no longer "The Star of the West," the brightest spot in the ecclesiastical firmament, but the abode of divisions and alienations.

SUNDAY IN A HIGHLAND TOWN.

Isaac Walton in his Life of Sir Henry Wotton records that as he returned from Winchester towards Eton College he said to a companion: "How useful was that advice of a holy monk who persuaded his friend to perform his customary devotions in a constant place, because in that place we usually meet with those very thoughts which possessed us at our last being there! And I find it thus far experimentally true that at my now being in that school and seeing the very place where I sat when I was a boy, occasioned me to remember those very thoughts of my youth which then possessed me." English Presbyterians who spent their youth in Scotland are reminded of their early thoughts when, in their holiday, they worship in the church of their fathers. A Scottish Liberal member recently asked what had become of the preacher and his pitchfork. Mr. James Murray will find them in, for instance, the United Free Church at Grantown-on-Spey. Here a considerable congregation worships in a neat edifice: Mr. Hall's sermons, in their intellectual culture as well as their religious depth, flatter a London Scot with the belief that preaching in his native land is still worthy of his reputation, but there is no instrumental music; here the preacher strikes his pitchfork before he leads the choir; and here too the bell is rung by the beadle as he stands in the gallery.

The announcement of the services of "The Free Church of Scotland" drew me to a tiny hall in the Victoria Institute, a building which contains tea-bath, and reading rooms. Soon after the decision of the House of Lords, the Wee Frees who had organized themselves before that event obtained possession of the church, and the United Free congregation worshipped in the Institute. Now the church has been restored to the larger flock which, in its wandering,

found an admirable shepherd in Mr. Hall, and the Wee Frees have come out, although their minister, Mr. Ellis, is not being hastily ejected from the manse. The feeling of critical curiosity with which I went to their service sharply disappeared as I crossed the threshold of the hall. At the door the collection-plate contained an amount of silver for the Aged and Infirm Ministers' Fund of the "Free Church," which proved the liberality of the humble congregation of some forty people. Several black-bonneted old women gave a tender character to the scene, but what instantly impressed me most was the earnestness of the service. The slow, solemn singing, in which everyone joined, was thrilling, and there were passages of pathos in the minister's prayers.

Behind the reading-desk was the minister in black coat and white tie, and near to him at a table was the preacher with his pitchfork. Psalms only, and no hymns, were sung by the Wee Frees. The congregation sat while singing, and stood in prayer. During the reading of Scripture the minister interpolated considerable expositions, and, unlike the London practice, everyone followed the reading with open Bibles. The sermon occupied about forty minutes, and was on the forgiving of trespasses. It turned on two main points:—First, there was the fact that the forgiveness or the punishment came not from Milton's "task master," but from a Father, and a heavenly Father; secondly, the congregation was invited to note that what the Father "could not look upon" were trespasses. The preacher incidentally attached importance to the wording even of the Old Testament, and he depreciated vain learning as well as bombastic and eloquent language. He had counted every time "Father" was used. His only literary illusion, in addition to the reference to Milton, was a mere mention of Bunyan's Christian. There was no sense of style in his discourse, but it set forth the familiar doctrines of the Gospel with some force, the argument being heightened by frequent appeals and admonitions, uttered in a strong voice. There were two homely remarks. One was a reference to the ticking of the clock behind the preacher. The other, apropos of the threatened prosecution of trespassers on land, was an admission that there were scarcely any such notices in the Grantown district. No peroration embellished the rugged sermon.

There are plenty places of worship in Grantown, including the handsome edifices of the Baptist and Episcopal communities, besides the Parish Church, which was erected by the supreme landlady to this territory, the Countess Dowager of Seafield, in memory of her husband and son, the last of the Earls who held lands as well as title. Visitors attend the services at noon on Sunday, and most of those who have not been exhausted by the golf of the week, roam thereafter in the fine woods. Fortunately some chief of the Grants had been "aye sticking in a tree" in the full assurance that it would be growing while he was sleeping.

REMEMBER.

Remember that in prayer you are speaking to God; that in reading the blessed Bible, God is speaking to you. Let your listening heart say, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." Pause and think over some blessed text, and allow yourself to drink in all its rich and blessed meaning. Study the Word in God's presence. Remember the blood. The light which shines from Calvary is the light which unfolds the Scriptures. A stain upon your conscience will be like a speck upon your eye. If you are indeed a child of God, it will not only be exquisite pain to you, it will almost blind you. Bring it to the blood to be cleansed, then, walking in the light.