

IRISH HISTORY.

By Observer in the Empire.

Another country whose history in ancient times is most unattractive to the general reader is Ireland—though the later stages of it are full of endless opportunities for venturesome writing. Among modern writers of history the late J. R. Green was the most friendly and sympathetic towards the early history of Ireland, that is the period previous to the tenth century, which is the only portion tinged with the glory shared at some time or other by all the British Isles and all European countries. In a remarkable passage he says: "For, while in Italy or Gaul or Spain, Christianity had spent its vigour in a struggle for self-preservation against the heathen invaders—in winning them to its creed, ... taming them by its discipline, in bringing to bear on them the civilization which it had alone preserved through the storm of conquest—Ireland, unscourged by assailants, drew from its conversion a life and movement such as it has never known since. The science and biblical knowledge which fled from the continent took refuge in famous schools, which made Durrow and Armagh universities of the west. The new Christian life soon beat too strongly to brook confinement within the bounds of Ireland itself. Patrick had not been a century dead when Irish Christianity flung itself with a fiery zeal into battle with the mass of heathenism, which was rolling in elsewhere 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 driven 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." Occasionally it does one good to recall these echoes of a time that has so hopelessly passed away.

We are reminded of them just now by a new volume entitled "A Short History of Ireland, from the Earliest Times to 1603," by P. W. Joyce. The author has some obvious claims to notice. He is an LL.D. of Trinity College, Dublin, an M.R.I.A., and was one of the commissioners for publishing the Brehon Laws. He has shown a certain degree of timidity in concluding his history at a period so remote that even an Irish feud could hardly be supposed to continue operative in disturbing the critical faculty, but he has at least done much to condense in an easy and satisfactory manner the early history of the country and the peculiar laws by which it was governed. We can but indicate in a general way the character of the work at present for the benefit of those who may subsequently pursue the subject. "Irish literature," says Mr. Stopford Brooke in his recent lecture on the subject, "is not to Ireland what English literature is to England. The mass of the Irish people know nothing of it, and care very little about it." No doubt that is in a great measure true; but the Irish press, bad as it is, has had always a certain wild literary flavour, and has propagated much regard for native literature among its many readers. It may be said in a general way that the mass of the people of any land know little and care less about the literature, and especially the ancient literature, of the country. Mr. Joyce has gone in a very systematic manner about his

task of popularizing a vaguely appreciated learning.

His first chapter, a long one, is devoted to the manners, customs and institutions of the ancient Irish, to the language, the literature of the ancient people; the ecclesiastical and religious writings—the early history of Ireland being, as we have shown by means of a quotation from Mr. Green, largely ecclesiastical in character, the annals, histories, genealogies of the countries—materials of which there is a great plenty in Ireland, to the Brehon Laws—the most remarkable code of laws ever possessed by any people; to music, art, dwellings and domestic customs. This chapter alone, if circulated by itself, would form a most useful volume. The late of the language has been noticeable. The ancient Irish, ending with the twelfth century, has left but few valuable remains; the middle Irish, ending about the fourteenth century, has been fairly prolific of important manuscripts; the modern Irish, from the fifteenth century to our day, has been rich in manuscript materials; but, of course, this, too, is a vanishing language, like the two preceding; and all are hard to comprehend. The Brehon Law is worth studying, at least, in this brief memoir. Dr. Joyce's description is as follows. "The Brehon Law then was derived partly from immemorial custom like the common law of England and partly from the decisions of eminent jurists—customs and decisions being carefully written with commentaries by successive generations of lawyers into their books." This is, in fact, the manner of the growth of the Roman Law, which obtained a world-wide authority.

One of the provisions of the Irish law may be referred to as having some merit in it. In certain cases, when justice could not be obtained without process, the plaintiff, having served due notice, went to the house of the defendant, and sitting down before his door remained there without food. The length of the fast was regulated by law according to the circumstances of each case. This was called "fasting" on the defendant. It hath an Irish air. It may be commended to the notice of a mercantile community which has to expend, we may calculate, about 6 per cent., at least, of its income in collecting it from debtors. It would certainly be a most interesting and even amusing sight to see, for example, a congregation of local tailors "fasting" outside the doors of some very opurate clients; of grocers camping out in the cool of a November day before the private residences of many people who have an idea "they must live"—at somebody's expense; of doctors endeavouring to collect their accounts by starving themselves in front of their patients' residences; of lawyers—no, a line must be drawn somewhere, the gentlemen of the profession may be trusted never to "fast" under any circumstances. It appears from some sources that the debtor was bound to fast as long as the creditor remained fasting! This gave "the bulge"—if that phrase has any technical value in the Brehon Law—to the debtor, who, remaining inside, was able to satisfy his hunger, if not his creditor, with a surreptitious sausage or an illegitimate and sinful swig at an usquebaugh flask, while the unfortunate creditor was compelled to remain out in the cold both as to his money and his nourishment. Still, the practice has antiquity to sanction it and we may commend it as a not impossible remedy in certain very bad cases. It may prove as effectual and as inexpensive as the Division Court.

There is an excellent account of the condition of education and schools in ancient times; and we may suspect that a good deal of rubbish has been written about the want of education and schools in early ages when a very

large part of the community was engaged in religious duties, and one of those duties was teaching. Greek, Latin, native Irish, history, arithmetic, astronomy, geometry, music, and of course theology—were all widely taught; and "the course," begun very early, was twelve years! The Brehon Law took cognizance of the schools in important particulars and laid down provisions for the protection of the masters. Men of learning were held in high estimation, and a teacher had many claims to distinction. The religious activity of the country was of course very remarkable, "such as probably," says the author, "has never been witnessed in any other country." All this educational and religious activity began as early as the sixth century. As we have said, Mr. Joyce ends his story in the 16th, but he gives a very vivid account of such remarkable and still picturesque incidents as the battle of Clontarf against the Danes; the Anglo Norman invasion; the prolonged "conquest" by England; the famous rebellion of "Silken Thomas" in days when

Silken Thomas flung
King James's sword
On council board.
The English Thanes among.

of the "Plantations" from England; of the rebellion of Hugh O'Neill, Earl of Tyrone, etc. A book like this written in a temperate spirit by a man apparently not a modern agitator, and having a respect for ancient history and an ancient people, is calculated to do good. The pity of it is that people will not read history, hardly even in compendiums; and the public is impatient of new ideas concerning early times. A prejudice is so much an easier thing to entertain.

The Dead of the Past 6,000 Years.

In that curious article, "The Number of People Since Adam," which has found a place in nearly all of the "Queer" columns in the United States during the past three or four years, the author asserts: "The whole surface of the globe has been dug over 120 times in order to get room for burial places." Let us see:

In 6,000 years we have 60 centuries and in each century an average of three generations, or 180 generations in all, each being a generation of 1,600,000,000. Now lay for that immense generation.

Give to each man, woman and child a grave 5 feet by 2, or 10 square feet. A square mile contains something less than 28,000,000 square feet. If this last calculation be correct, you will have to have a cemetery 55 miles long by 10 wide for each generation. Now, multiply this by 180, the whole number of generations "since Adam," and you have a burying ground large enough for every human being that has died in the last 6,000 years. This vast cemetery although awful to contemplate, would be but 1,800 miles long by 55 miles wide, or, in order to get it in better proportions, say 220 miles wide and 450 miles long. In other words a burying-ground containing 100,000 square miles would be sufficient for the graves of every human being that has ever existed. The area of Missouri and Iowa combined would be amply sufficient for such a cemetery, with 22,425 miles left for walks and driveways.

If the calculation is carried out for 100,000 years instead of 6,000 it will be found that the cemetery need only be a square 1,700 miles in extent each way. On this basis the United States east of the Mississippi River is large enough to furnish a grave for all the human beings that have died during the past 6,000 and for the 94,000 years to come.

A Simple way to help Poor Catholic Missions

Save all cancelled postage stamps of every kind and country and send them to Rev. P. M. Barral, Hammonton, New Jersey. Give at once your address, and you will receive with the necessary explanation a nice Souvenir of Hammonton Missions.

Wealth and Character.

Two citizens courting the daughter of Themistocles, he preferred the worthy man to the rich one, and as signed this reason: He had rather she should have a man without money than money without a man. Your Midas, that turns everything into gold that he touches rarely begets "golden lads," as Shakespeare calls the children of genius. The father of the "immortal William" himself failed utterly in business, but he loved art and the drama, and he had hospitable instincts and begot a "golden lad." Love for money destroys the higher instincts in man or woman. "Possession," Renan has said, "is not an evil, yet the acquisition of riches implies some imperfection, because, if the wealthy man had been less eager for gain, less engrossed in business, more mindful of his spiritual life; if he had given more alms and shown more of the liberality which marks a lofty mind, he would not have been so rich. We make our fortunes by our faults, because, in order to become wealthy, we must insist upon our rights, be careful of our money, take advantage of others, go to law, things which are not the best nor the fit work for a lofty mind." As the proverb says: "The rich man's wealth is his strong city, and the destruction of the poor is their poverty, but the labor of the righteous tendeth to life." Let us hope that all the labor of woman and her higher education tend, also, to righteousness and to life.

German Nobility, 1700.

If their rank is such as to keep up the state of guards for their houses, they are in general yagers, or military huntsmen, continually employed when off duty in bringing in venison and other game, or some other useful employment. * * * *

An exact regularity is observed in their mode of living; they breakfast at 6, summer and winter; dine at 12; drink coffee at three; sup at 6 in the evening, and are always in bed at 9, family prayers being always read before breakfast and after supper. They seldom spend more than an hour at dinner, drinking their quantity while eating. After supper is their only time for jollity and drinking in the Irish manner, so that no time is lost from attention to their concerns, and, indeed, I never saw much excess among them. Hunting the bear, coursing and shooting are their principal amusements abroad, and within, pretty much the same as our own.

Their ladies are more active, live more regular, and are better economists than ours, I think as handsome, but not in general so delicate in expression or otherwise. When alone, Lady Pappenheim rode out every morning a few miles, either on horseback or in a carriage—the former, if weather permitted; drank coffee on her return, and employed herself wholly in her cellars, preservative, or distillery, or necessary family avocations until dinner time; after dinner dressed, and, if no other business interfered, amused herself with sewing or music until 3, then drank tea and coffee, and walking abroad or in the gardens was the general evening's amusement until supper time.—*Fortnightly Review*

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Captain Chadwick, of the 101st Royal Munster Fusiliers, has been promoted to the Adjutancy of the 5th battalion, at Limerick, in succession to Adjutant Mawo, who retires (under the age clause) in December, and who has been connected with the regiment since 1865.

Sympathizing Visitor—"And what did the doctor say was really the matter with you?" Invalid—"Well, miss, his very words were 'You're a-sufferin' from a guitar in the stomach, with a great want of tone.'"