

who had gone somewhere or other to find out our destination. In about an hour he paraded us, and we marched on foot, through narrow, picturesque streets, to the other end of Damascus.

We observed on our way that the city, though beautiful, is incredibly filthy, that the River Adana borders forth into innumerable streams and foundations in many of the streets; and that the "Street Called Straight" is crooked. It was almost dusk when we reached the American Mission House, a large building standing in pleasant grounds. It was occupied by an Australian field ambulance, and we were greeted by the sergeant in charge very kindly and hospitably.

Here we were to stop for the night, before being drafted, in ten or dozens, into various neighboring units. We went to sleep in the garden, as the hospital was already filled to overflowing with the sick and dying. That very evening, patients were still coming in—and such dreadful, pitiable cases, most of them. The A. D. M. S. was recently buried here, and one could realize the heroic work that had been done by the Australians. The labour was more than human nature could have borne, unaided by a keen and high sense of duty and a noble love of humanity.

We met the matron, only for a few minutes, and I don't think I ever saw a woman look so tired. She must have willed not to give in; and how she must have prayed! She welcomed us brightly, with a cheerful smile, and thanked us for coming to help them. It soon became quite dark and very cold; and we got ravenously hungry and thirsty. By mistake our rations had been taken to a German hospital some miles away, and so that night we had nothing to eat. The hospital had no food to spare, as there were so many patients to feed, but we each received half a mug of tea. About an hour later we covered ourselves with our blankets, failed to keep warm, and shivered without interruption until the following morning.

We paraded early, and the sergeant chose out different contingents to leave for several ambulances and hospitals. With nine chums, I was to go to the French hospital, a little lower down the same street on the other side. After a parade we each of us were given half a very small loaf, but we only had cold water to drink.

The French hospital is in charge of the Sisters of St. Vincent de Paul; the buildings and garden are lovely in the particular convent way; and to a Catholic, the exquisite reason for such loveliness is the Presence of the Blessed Sacrament. For a few minutes, dirty and worn out as I was, I felt outside the glory of a rarefied atmosphere—a glory that the good Sisters were steeped in, but which had not directly penetrated my clogged body and mind. But only for a few minutes. Soon I was permeated by the noble purity of the atmosphere—and I did not need to be told of this, for I felt it. I felt it with an unexplainable certainty. Any Catholic will understand me, and my enforced humility. He will realize what it meant, after weeks in a world of feverish nightmare, of spiritual indifference, to be set in a place where Christ was honored in a special, incomparable way.

Such a knowledge is not merely in the mind; it is in the blood, the whole self. I no longer felt tired, and hope was uppermost, a light of hope in the face of things. Most of the Sisters were old, but the orderlies, working under them, told me they never seemed to get tired. Later on in the morning I went to their little chapel; and as I knelt there I knew the secret of their strength. They had suffered enough—the Turks saw that, and deprived them of the comfort of their chapel in the hospital building. But this turn their tired hands to extra work; and thus, a little room hidden in some outbuildings became Our Lord's home until better times. I still remember the fragrance of that secret place, and the steady contemplation, the unperturbed satisfaction (there is no other word for it) of two shrivelled but sturdy old Sisters who knelt almost in front of me. Their very hands, wrinkled and gnarled, clasping their rosaries, spoke, better than any words, of will, power, heroism, and long practice in doing good. Such virtue is beyond comparison; and it is so undoubtedly positive that when one comes across it the very memory of evil is wiped out of one's mind.

Dear, brave old Sisters! We were sent, on the same day, to a field ambulance on the other side of the city; we were in for worse, more strenuous times than we had yet experienced, even on the field. But the thought of you helped me through many a dark hour, and I shall ever claim to have seen angels in Damascus.

PRIZING A WONDROUS GIFT

We see on all sides of us, at the present time, facts which constitute a striking object lesson of the truth that Faith is a gift from God to man, dispensed according to His inscrutable wisdom and absolute freedom. The Catholic Church is set high on a hill, clearly discernible by all. The soul stirring events of the past six years have made men, groping in the night of human reason, thoroughly aware of their need of a better and nobler light. We find the best minds

in the world, with practical unanimity, declaring religious conviction to be the one hope of the world. We even find them standing intellectually convinced before the claims of the One Apostolic Infallible Church. So many of them, nevertheless, remain without that divine gift which would enable them, with humble hearts and bowed heads, to say those foundation words of all prayer, "I believe." To prize this wondrous gift, as we ourselves know it, should be the first fruit of this lesson; to do all in our power to carry the message of the Faith and to prove ourselves worthy to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ among our brothers should follow our deep-rooted appreciation of the Faith we are blessed in professing.—Catholic Standard and Times.

THE LYRIC POETRY OF IRELAND

From the study of ancient sagas and early epic scholars have found that Ireland was always a literary country. Even in prehistoric times the people had invented an alphabet and carved inscriptions on ogham stones. Recent research in Celtic literature has made familiar ground of old Irish romances and heroic books composed centuries before they were committed to writing. And what a wonderful world is revealed! Men and women possessing all the elemental characteristics of the race—Emor and Conchulainn, Dierdre and Naisi, and Queen Meave, rise out of dim, half-mythical ages, and live again in the history of Erin. The tragedy of Dierdre, or the "Lamentable Death of the Sons of Uinnch," the story of the Children of Lir, and of the fate of the Children of Tuirenn, are known as "Three Sorrows of Erin." Of these we shall recall only one, the Story of Fianna, daughter of Lir, who was by some supernatural power transformed into a swan, and condemned to wander for many hundred years over lakes and rivers in Ireland till the coming of Christianity, when the first sound of the Mass bell was to be the signal for her release. Moore puts a sorrowful song upon her lips:

"Sadly, oh, Moyle, to thy winter-wave weeping, Fate bids me languish long ages away; Yet still in her darkness doth Erin lie sleeping, Still doth the pure light its dawning delay When will that day-star mildly springing Warm our isle with peace and love? When will heaven its sweet bell ringing, Call my spirit to the fields above?"

Clearly outlined against this background of romantic mythology rises the figure of one whose mission was to Christianize the nation and thus lift its thought to the highest plane of spiritual beauty—St. Patrick. Around his name and that of St. Bridget, the sweetest type of Celtic womanhood, cluster a wealth of early literature of Ireland, and many legends tenderly told of the time when the new divine creed entered the land and confronted the Celtic paganism.

Surrounded by the wild beauty of the country, the seas, the picturesque lakes, deep mossy valleys, and lofty rugged mountains, the true Celt is above all men gifted with fine sentiment and the capacity to admire the beautiful and the good. Nature and religion have combined to mould his genius; for the Catholic faith harmonizes with and contents his natural love of the mystical and the sublime.

Celtic verse for the most part has been lyrical, sometimes in triumphant, more often in wailing strains, it has sung the glories, hopes and aspirations of the suffering nation. To their song have the Irish clung through sunshine and shadow, with the same tenacity as to faith and fatherland.

Much controversy has arisen concerning the ballads of Ossian or Uisben who according to tradition was the son of that Fin mac Cumhail whose name is a beacon light in Celtic literature. All through the "Wanderings of Ossian" are recalled the delights of the land he so loved, the plaintive whistle of the sea-mews, the soft, swift gallop of fawns through the forest glade, the lowing of oxen, and the murmuring of falling mountain streams. But above all he is haunted by the song of the blackbird. One of the most familiar odes is to the "Blackbird of Derry-carr."

"Sweet bird and bard of sable wing, Sweet warbler in Carn's grove, No lay so haunting shall I hear Again, though round the world I rove."

A chief characteristic of Irish poetry is the ardent love of home and country by which it is often inspired. Ireland's dearest saint, Columba, the Apostle of Caledonia, who founded on the island of Iona a monastery which became a center of learning, sings in his exile from Erin, of the "isle of my heart, isle of my love," which he is never to see again, and makes the sea-gulls his messengers to his native land. St. Columba's fond love of home is shown in his "Song of Derry":

"My Derry, my fair oak grove, My dear little cell and dwelling I Beloved are Derry and Derry, Beloved are Raphos the pure, Beloved the fertile Drumhome, Beloved are Swords and Kells, But sweeter and fairer to me

The salt sea where the sea-gulls cry When I come to Derry from far, It is sweeter and dearer to me, Sweeter to me."

Since the time of this poet-priest Gaelic poetry has been tinged with melancholy. What a wailing note in the refrain, "O Kinkora!" of the bard MacLiagh, who after the battle of Clontarf, sang of the death of Brian Boru, monarch of Ireland! Kinkora was the name of Brian's palace.

"They are gone, those heroes of royal birth, Who plundered no churches and broke no trust; 'Tis weary for me to be living on earth. When they, O Kinkora, lie low in the dust! Low, O Kinkora! I am MacLiagh, and my home is on the lake's side, Thither oft to that palace whose beauty is fled Came Brian to ask me, and I went for his sake, Oh, my grief! that I should live and Brian be dead! Dead, O Kinkora!"

Wherever Irish hearts are found—and they are found the wide world over—"Moore's Melodies" are sung. Who does not know "The Harp that Once Thro' Tara's Halls," and "Believe Me, if All Those Endearing Young Charms"? There is no one familiar with "The Last Rose of Summer" who does not love the sweet, mournful melody. The words of "The Meeting of the Waters" are exquisite, and when sung, the music touches the very depths of the soul. We feel with the poet, that the charms of nature are imperfect till "we see them reflected in the looks that we love."

From time immemorial the harp has been the national symbol of Ireland and of her musical expression. Moore sings:

"Dear harp of my country, in darkness I found thee, The cold chain of silence had hung o'er thee long, When proudly, my own island harp, I unbound thee, And gave all thy chords to light, Freedom and song."

Of Moore and his music, Father Burke, O. P., has eloquently said: "The harp is yet near when God gave to our native land one of its highest gifts, a truly poetic child. When Ireland's poet came to find fame and immortality in Ireland, nothing was required of him but to take the ancient melodies floating in the land, to interpret the Celtic in which they were found into the language of today. Tom Moore, Ireland's poet, was a lover of his country. He made every true heart and every noble mind in the world melt into sorrow at the contemplation of Ireland's wrongs and the injustice that she suffered, as they came home to every sympathetic heart on the wings of Ireland's ancient melody."

Contemporaneous with Moore was James Clarence Mangan, who in "The Nameless One," tells his own story, whose boyhood was "one drear night hour," and who at last, worn by weakness, disease and wrong, "fled for shelter to God, Who mated his soul with song." Modern critics place Mangan among the most famous of Irish singers and poets, and mention "Dark Rosaleen" as the greatest of his poems. "Dark Rosaleen" was one of the many cryptic names for Ireland given her by the poets of those turbulent times when it was "treason to love her, and death to defend." A stanza will give some idea of the lyrical translation from the original Gaelic:

"Over dews, over sands, Will I fly for your wall; Your holy, delicate white hands Shall girdle me with steel, As thou in your emerald bowers, From morning's dawn to e'en You'll pray for me, my flower of flowers, My dark Rosaleen! My own Rosaleen! You'll think of me through daylight's hours, My virgin flower, my flower of flowers, My dark Rosaleen!"

To the same period belongs Gerald Griffin, whose name is "one of the finest and brightest in the history of literature, and surrounded by a halo of glory, virtue and romance." What a haunting quality in that beautiful lyric:

"A place in the memory, dearest, Is all that I claim, To pause and look back when thou hearest The sound of my name!" Another lyricist of this era is Rev. Francis S. O'Mahoney, "Father Front," who has immortalized "The Bells of Shandon That sound so grand On the pleasant waters Of the river Lee."

All these belong to an age that has gone, but the best of Ireland is still inspiring melodiously, and the voices of many sweet singers are heard in Erin's music-haunted isle. Their names would make a long list. Perhaps, the most individual, the most thoroughly Celtic, of them all is William Butler Yeats, whose poems breathe the melancholy mysticism of the ancient race, and the weird beauty of the Hlathach, the "Many-colored Land," rather than the spirit of Christian ethics. One of the most beautiful of his minor poems is "A Dream of a Blessed Spirit":

"All the heavy days are over, Leave the body's colored pride Underneath the grass and clover, With the feet laid side by side.

One with her are mirth and duty; Bear the gold-embroidered dress, For she needs not her sad beauty, To the scented oaken press.

Here the kiss of Mother Mary; The long hair is on her face; Still she goes with footsteps wary, Full of earth's old timid grace.

With white feet of angels seven Her white feet go glimmering; And above the deep of heaven, Flame on flame and wing on wing."

Though Canon Sheehan is best known as a novelist, we have from his pen many beautiful lyrics. A remarkable allegory is "The Dreaded Dawn," to which is prefixed the quotation: "I know nothing more longing, or perhaps more terrible, than the dawn of self-consciousness in the soul of a child."

"I amens! we walked the sands together, And I was winter and you were May; But our love of the sea broke time Mad's summer for both that living day."

"I amens! the hooded eve came down, And shadow fell betwixt you and me; And your brow grew troubled; you looked afar O'er the purple wastes of the twilight sea."

"I amens! I said, 'Behold the night! The hermit night and his sanctities Of star and wave.' Then I ventured to look In the fathomless depths of Iamens's eyes."

"I amens! I hoped that thy child-soul gazed From eyes that were pure as the eyes of a fawn, Alas! 'Twas a woman's soul looked at me; I was fain to face with the dreaded dawn."

It is beyond the scope of this brief sketch to comment on all the writings of the numberless lyric poets of Ireland, or of her exiled sons who have brought into foreign lands their minstrelsy. It was in the order of Providence that sorrow and oppression at home should send the children of Erin to carry their music and song, their paths and gayety, and above all, their religion to the uttermost parts of the world, for as Cardinal Newman said, "The Irish people are overrunning the earth." But wherever he goes, the exile from Erin is followed by a haunting remembrance of olden times, an echo of music blown from the Land of his Heart's Desire, and forever in his dreams he sees the "dawn on the fair hills of holy Erin."—Blaid Marie Lally, in The Laborer.

ON CRITICIZING THE PRIEST

To the question "Why is it that some Catholics would rather criticize the priest than pray for him?" the following excellent answer is given by Father P. J. Dunne of St. Louis in his Newsboy's Journal:

Reverence for the priestly office and for the priest is an inborn instinct in real Catholics. In some of the saints this reverence has been so great that they never dared to receive the sacrament of holy orders. Francis of Assisi, a genius of sanctity, declared himself unworthy of so great an honor. The Council of Trent says that nowhere on earth may be found a power equal to the power possessed by the humblest priest of consecrating the Body of Christ and of remitting sins.

And yet— "Father So-and-So is stuck up, or Father So-and-So makes himself too common. Or he's too friendly, or he's too cold, or he mixes too much with the people, or he's never seen outside the rectory."

"He talks too much about money. (Poor man! His creditors talk a good deal about money to him, too; and he has many a bad hour wondering who among his critics is going to help him pay the coal bill.) Or 'Why doesn't he buy new news and put a little point on the walk like they're doing in the parish beyond the track?' "He's too strict in the box, or he never says a word to you in the box, or he says Mass too fast, or does he think we can wait all morning for him to be finishing Mass?"

And so on ad infinitum. His critics are not Protestants either. They are Catholics; good Catholics, too, but a little thoughtful. As their entrance into this world some good priest was waiting to make them children of God, heirs of heaven, by administering the sacrament of baptism. Later in life a priest was anxious to nourish them with the Bread of Angels. Perhaps like the Good Shepherd he brought them back when they had strayed far off into the desert of sin. And when death draws near all the horror of its coming will be lost, please God, in the consoling presence of a priest at their side. They forget this—these critics of the priest.

And they forget that when sorrow comes to the priest, like the Master, so His disciple, the priest, is alone in his agony. He has renounced all that the world values. No human love is there to lighten his burden. He has given up all to take on Christ, to be a man consecrated to the work of helping others doubly consecrated to God. He does not complain—he wishes to be like his Master—but he is only human and the trial is often bitter. The world can give him nothing—not love, not even a home. Few of the many human interests with which other men may lawfully engage, are open to him. He is a man apart. And he knows that when he dies, he will in all probability be very quickly forgotten by those for whom he has given his life, unthought, very often unprayed for.

This, however, is very different from the maudlin sentimentality that has muddled the judgment of

some on this point in a woe-ful manner. If a man or a woman fail to respect the Seventh Commandment, and appropriate the property of another, not because they are in dire want, but simply because they cannot have everything their hearts desire in the way of comfort and luxury, that is a case of simple dishonesty and there is very little to excuse, and nothing at all to justify such action. A big income is no guarantee of honesty. There is no absolute amount of money that can be said to be a warranted protection against dishonesty. Where the desires are undisciplined, there is a continual temptation to dishonesty, however large the income may be, for the unrestrained desires and the fancied needs will always outrun the means. The only thing that keeps a man or a woman honest is the grace of God and self-restraint. The moment one begins to think that he must have every fancy and share every amusement, he sets his foot on very slippery ground. The unsoftened desires of the heart are responsible for the sad lapses from honesty which figure so prominently in the daily papers. Dishonesty is not forced upon a man from without; it springs out of his own heart. Most of the money dishonestly obtained, is not spent on actual needs or used to relieve real distress, but on artificial and, frequently enough, on sinful wants. This is an old story. It has happened time and again. Befuddled modern sentiment clouds the real issues in its foolish desire to show mercy where mercy is out of place. False pity does great harm; it encourages those whose evil inclinations are kept in check only by social disapproval.

Extravagance is the forerunner of dishonesty. Where the desires remain unchastened, where the craving for pleasure and display goes uncurbed, no raise of salary and wages can save a man from himself. A man can be honest with a very moderate income, if he learns to control his appetites and to accustom himself to live rigidly within the limits of his means. Honesty is not a question of wages and salary. It is a question of self-discipline; a question of habits of moderation; a question of self-denial. An uncontrolled heart that has never learned to deny itself anything will readily yield to the temptation of dishonesty.—Catholic Standard and Times.

Oh, it is easy to criticize God's ministers, and many there are to throw stones. But how many Catholics ever pray for their priests that God may give them the graces they need? Do you ever offer a Communion for them? Did you ever in all your life make a novena for the priests of your parish?

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