

MRS. BLAKE.

AN ABLE SKETCH OF A BRIGHT CHARACTER.

Her Hints as to Means of Bringing the World Under the Sweet Sway of Religion—Her Poems, Sketches and Essays—Rational and Wholesome Writings.

Boston is a charming city. It is the whim of the passing hour to sneer at the modest dame. Henry James has done so. Is not the author of Daisy Miller and other interminable novels a correct person to follow? The disciples of the Mutual Admiration Society in American Letters will vociferously answer yes. Old fashioned people may have another way. Scattered here and there, possibly few there are who hold that Hawthorne was a better novelist than Howells is, that Holmes' poetry is as good as Boyesen's, and that Emerson's criticisms are more illuminative than James'. Be this as it may, Boston is a charming place to all those who had the good fortune to have been welcomed by its warm-hearted citizen, Boyle O'Reilly. To those who knew his struggles, and the earnest striving, until his weary spirit sought its final home, for Catholic Literature in its true sense, the charm but increases.

It was owing to his kindness that I found myself one blustering, raw day, ringing the door-bell of an ordinary well-to-do brick house. Houses now and then carry on their fronts an inkling of their occupants. A door was opened, my card handed to a feminine hand; the aperture was not as yet wide enough to catch a glimpse of the face. The card was a power. Come in, said a woman's voice, and the door was wide open. I followed the guide and was soon in a plain, well furnished room, in presence of a motherly looking woman. She was knitting, at least that is part of my memory's picture. Near her hung a mocking-bird, whose notes now and then were peculiarly sad. Despite the graceful lines of the cavalier Lovelace, iron bars do a prison make for bird and man. And the songs sung behind these bars are but bits of the crushed out life. I was welcomed, and during busy years have held the remembrance of that visit with its hour of desultory chat and a mocking-bird's broken song. The motherly looking woman, with her strong Celtic face freshly furrowed by sorrow, in the loss of beloved children, was a charming talker and a good listener, things rarely found in your gentle or fiery poetess. She had just published, under the initials M. A. B., a volume of children's verse, and as is natural with an author, who has finished a piece of work, was full of it. The pretense of some authors that they are bored to speak of their own books is a sly suggestion to praise them for their humility. Mrs. Blake—for that is the motherly-looking woman's name—spoke of her work without any hiccoughing gush or false modesty. Her eyes lit up, and the observer read in them honesty. She was deeply interested, as all thinking women must be, in the solution of the social problems that have arisen in our times, and will not be downed at the biddance of capitalist or demagogue. With her clear cut intellect she was able to grasp a salient point, purposely hidden by the swarm of curists with their panacea remedies, that these problems must be solved in the light of religion. Man must return to Christ, not the "cautious, statistical Christ" paraded in the social show, not

"The meteor blaze that soon must fall, and leave the wanderer blind, More dark and helpless far, than if it ne'er had shined."

but the Christ of the Gospels, the Bringer of peace and good-will—the Bearer of burdens, the soul-guider. Christ, loving and acting, as found in the Catholic Church. Hecker had begun the preface of his wonderful book with a truth, "The age is out of joint." Problems to be solved and lying around them millions of broken hearts. "The age is out of joint." Who will bring the light and rightify the age. Mrs. Blake has but one answer. Bring the employers and the employed nearer the Christ of the Catholic Church. This was O'Reilly's often expressed and worked for idea. It is the key-note of much of his poetry. It is the germ of his Bohemia. It was impossible to live as Mrs. Blake did on the most friendly terms with such a man

and not be smitten with his life-thought. In not a few published social papers Mrs. Blake has thrown out valuable and suggestive hints as to the best means of bringing the weary world under the sweet sway of religion. Her voice, it is true, is but one voice in the social wilderness, but individual efforts must not be thwarted, for is not a fresh period opening in which the individuality, the personality, of souls acting under the direct guidance of the Holy Ghost, will take up all that is good in modern ideas, and the cords of our tent be strengthened and its stakes enlarged. "What we have to dread is neither 'historical rancor' nor 'philosophical atheism,' nor the instinct of personal freedom." It is, in the words of Dr. Barry, that we should set little store by that "freedom wherewith Christ has made us free," and that being born into a church where we may have the grandest spiritual ideas for the asking, we should fold our hands in slumber and be found, at length, "disobedient to the heavenly vision." Against such perils Hecker, the noblest life as yet in our American church, made a life-fight. On his side was Boyle O'Reilly, Roche, Blake, Conway and Guiney. Nor pass such lives in vain. Mrs. Blake was born in Dungarvan, Co. Waterford, Ireland.

In childhood she was brought to Massachusetts. In 1865 she was married to Dr. J. G. Blake, a leading physician of Boston. She has made that city her home, and is highly esteemed in its literary and social circles. Among her published books may be mentioned "Poems," Houghton, Mifflin Co., 1882, dedicated to her husband; "On The Wing," a pretty volume of Californian sketches; "Rambling Talk," a series of papers contributed to the Boston journals.

Her sketches are the agreeable jottings of a highly cultivated woman; seeing nature in the light of poetry rather than science she has made a series of charming pictures out of her wanderings. They are not free from sentiment,—illusions if you will, but that is their greatest charm. "The world of reality is a poor affair." So many books of travel are annually appearing,—books that have no excuse for being other than to prove how widespread dullness and incapacity is, that a trip with a guide like Mrs. Blake has but one failing,—its shortness. Neither in her travels nor in her literary articles does Mrs. Blake body forth her best utterance in prose. These must be found in her earnest social papers, where her woman's heart, saddened by the miseries of its fellows, pours out its streams of consolation and preaches (all earnest souls must be preachers nowadays) the only and all sufficient cure—the Church.

An extract from one of these papers will best show her power. She is portraying the Church manifesting itself in the individual as well as the family life, pleading for the central idea of her system. "Jesus Christ is the complement of man,—the restorer of the race. The Catholic Church is the manifestation of Jesus Christ."

"There are alas! too many weaknesses into which thoughtless and opportunity lead one class as well as the other. But still there is to be seen almost without exception, among practical Catholics, young wives content and happy, welcoming from the very outset of married life the blessed company of the little ones who are to guard them as do their angels in heaven; proud like Cornelia of their jewels; gladly accepting comparative poverty and endless care; while their sisters outside the Church buy the right to idleness and personal adorning, at the expense of the childless homes which are a disgrace and menace to the nation. There is the honor and purity of the fireside respected; the overpowering sweetness and strength of family ties acknowledged; the reverential love that waits upon the father and mother shown. There are sensitive and refined women bearing sorrow with resignation and hardship without rebellion; combating pain with patience and fulfilling harsh duty without complaint. In a tremendous overproportion to those who attempt to live outside its helpfulness, and in exact ratio to their practical devotion to the observances of the Church, they find power of resisting temptation in spite of poverty, and overcoming impulse by principle. Can the world afford to ignore an agency by which so much is accomplished?"

"So much for the practical side, which is the moral that particularly needs

pointing at this moment. Of the spiritual amplitude and sustaining which the Church gives there is little need to sneak. Only a woman can know what Faith means in the existence of women. The uplift which she needs in moments of great trial; the sustaining power to bear the constant harassment of petty worries; the outlet for emotions which otherwise choke the springs, the tonic of prayer and belief; the assurance of a force sufficiently divine and eternal to satisfy the cravings of human longing—what but this is to make life worth living for her? And where else, in these days of scepticism, is she to find such immortal dower? It is a commentary upon worldly wisdom, that it has attempted to ignore this necessity, and left woman under the increased pressure of her new obligations, to rely solely upon such frail reeds as human respect and conventional morality. She needs the inspiration of profound conviction and practical piety a hundred fold more than ever before. The woman of the old time, secluded within the limits of the household, surrounded by the material safeguard of custom, might lead an untroubled existence even if devotion and faith were not vital principles with her. The woman of to-day, harassed, beset, tempted, driven by necessity, drawn this way and that by bad advice and worse example, is attempting a hopeless task when she tries the same experiment."

The poetry of Mrs. Blake is rational and wholesome. She knows her gifts and is content to use them at their best, giving us songs in a minor key, that if they add little to human thought, yet make the world better from their coming. In the poems of childhood she is particularly happy. She knows children, their joys and sorrows, has caught their ways. Her's is a heart that has danced in the joy of motherhood and been stricken when the "dead do not waken." She is our only intelligent writer of children's poems. The assertion may be controverted. A hundred Catholic poets for children may be cited writers "of genius profound," of "exquisite fancy," "whose works should grace every parish library." I quote a stereotyped criticism, a constant expression with Catholic reviewers. I laugh, in my hermitage, and blandly suggest, to all whom it may concern, that insanity in jingles is not relished by sane children. I speak from experience, having perpetrated a selection from the one hundred on a class of bright boys and girls. Peaceful sleep, and, let us hope, pleasant dreams, came to their aid. Shall I ever, Oonus, forget their faces in the transition moment from dullness to delight. Let us cease cant and rapturous criticism. Catholic literature, to survive the time that gave it birth, must be built on other foundations. Hasty and unconscious productions must be branded as such. We must have, as the French so well put it, a horror of "pacoille" and "camelotte." "If my works are good," said the sculptor Reide, "they will endure; if not, all the laudation in the world would not save them from oblivion." The same may well be written of Catholic literature. Whether for children or grown-up men or women, as a Catholic critic, whose only aim has been to gain an audience for my fellow Catholic writers whose works can bear a favorable comparison with contemporary thought, I ask that the best shall be given and that given, that it shall be joyfully received; that trash shall not fill the book-cases, lie on the parlor-tables, be puffed in our weeklies, and genius and sacrifice be forgotten. I ask that the works of Stoddard, Johnston, Egan, Roche, Azarias, Lathorp, Tabb, Reppler, Guiney, Conway, Blake, find a welcome in each Catholic household, and that the Catholic press make their delightful personalities known to our rising generation. Of their best they have given. Shall they die before we acknowledge it.

These series of sketches, brought to an end, done at odd moments stolen from the busy life of a country doctor, in the wildest part of the Adirondacks, is lovingly dedicated to the friend who wrote for me and other wanderers—Idyls of a Summer Sea—to Charles Warren Stoddard.

WALTER LECKY, Hermitage, '94.

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CATHOLIC SUMMER SCHOOL.

LEO XIII. APPROVES OF AND BLESSES THE INSTITUTION.

Worcester, Jan. 24, 1894.—The many students and friends of the Catholic Summer School will be pleased to learn that yesterday a cable from Rome was received at Plattsburg, announcing that Bishop Gabriels, in an audience with Pope Leo XIII., had obtained from His Holiness a formal approval of the Catholic Summer School.

I am proud to transmit this good news to all who are interested in our work and especially to the students of the school.

They will hail the news with joy, as another evidence of the unceasing interest with which the great Pontiff watches the intellectual movements of the age and especially in the Church in America, which claims so large a share of his love and pride.

This word will give cheer to our students and courage to our leaders. We never had any doubt as to the ultimate success of our movement. We are now certain of success, as God's blessing is on it in a marked degree, in the blessing of His Vicar on earth, to whom our school has pledged its best love and strongest loyalty.

Our hearts fill with gratitude to God for this unexpected blessing, coming to us just when our hands are lifted to lay the foundations of our material structure.

We earnestly pray that the school may be always true to the ideals placed before it, that it may be a blessing to our people and a pride to our Church and country.

In God's name, under the inspiration of the immortal Leo XIII., let all unite to make it worthy of the people who have called it into existence, worthy of our bishops who have commended it, and worthy of the Pontiff who stretches forth his hand to help and guide us in its work, as an aid to our Church and our citizenship. (Signed)

THOMAS CONATY, President C. S. S. of A.

A SISTER'S FUNERAL.

The funeral of Sister Ste. Aldegonde, of the Congregation of Notre Dame, took place at the old Mother house, St. Jean Baptiste street, and was largely attended by relatives. Sister Aldegonde was known in the world as Mary S. Murphy, sister of Rev. John Marie Murphy, of the Trappist monastery, Oka; the Murphy, Bros., Montreal, and Mr. J. B. Murphy, of Kingston, Ont. She was born here in 1835, and took holy orders at the age of twenty years. During her long religious life she occupied various important positions, notably superioress at Stanstead, Brockville, Peterboro, and also acted as assistant to the superioress of Mount St. Mary's convent, Montreal. Only ten days ago she returned to Montreal from Providence, R. I., where she filled the duties of superioress. Her request was that she should die in Montreal. She was held in the highest esteem by thousands of pupils who were taught by her. Rev. Father Thibeault, chaplain of the Congregation, officiated, assisted by Father Quinlivan, parish priest of St. Patrick's; Father Toupin, of St. Patrick's; Father Lonergan, of St. Bridget's, and Father Lamarche, chaplain of Ville Marie.

THE POINTE AUX TREMBLES BAZAAR.

A bazaar to aid in paying off the debt incurred by necessary improvements and repairs at the convent of Notre Dame, Pointe aux Trembles, will be held in the hall of the convent from Feb. 1st to 6th. A conference by Rev. Father Lacasse, O.M.I., will be given on Friday evening, 2nd. Concerts of a high order on 3rd and 5th. The bazaar to close with a grand banquet and musical entertainment, 6th. Admission to the concerts 25 cents, to the banquet 50 cents. Refreshments served at all hours.

Sleighs will be at the terminus of the street cars (Longue Pointe toll gate) every evening at 7 and 7.30 and will return after the evening's amusement.

SPRING TIME COMING.

Before the advent of spring the system should be thoroughly cleansed and purified by the use of Burdock Blood Bitters, which purifies the blood and cures dyspepsia, constipation, headache, liver complaint, etc.