

LITERATURE.

"The Enchanting Gaelic Siren."

The Poems of David O'Bradur. Part I. Edited with introduction, Translation and Notes. By Rev. John C. MacElean, S. J., Dublin, Irish Texts Society, London, Dublin, Nott.

In construction and development the poems of the Gael are unique. Their verse forms as well as their source of inspiration are indigenous and they are the only ones in modern literature that are altogether of native growth and never found need to borrow of any.

The claim is a large one and seems well sustained. The most competent Celtic scholars now agree with Zausser that the Celt taught Europe to rhyme. "The form of Celtic poetry," says Zausser, "is more ornate than the poetic form of any other nation, and even more ornate in the older forms than in the modern; and from this greater ornamentation the Celtic poems at the decay of the Roman empire passed over into the song not only of the Latins but of other nations, and remained in them."

The continental Celts exercised the initial influence, but as their languages died out and the Irish missionaries and scholars entered the field, the more intricate metrical systems of Greek and Latin, which had been completely replaced by the rhyme and accentuation of the Celtic, "this form," says Zausser, "speaking of the Latin rhyming of the Anglo-Saxons," was introduced among them by the Irish, as we see the arts of writing and painting and of ornamenting manuscripts, since they themselves made use in their poetry of nothing but alliteration."

Final rhyme, assonance and accentuation were the gifts of the Irish, or at least of the Celt, to modern verse, but the Gaelic metrical systems had much that other tongues seemed unable to assimilate. The elaborate complexity and intricate subtlety of the Irish poetical code, the marvelous syllabification of music by the cunning grouping of consonant and vowel and the interlacing of harmonies from word to word and line to line, attained such perfection as early as the seventh century that the foremost continental scholars have pronounced it not only unequalled but undreamt of by other nations.

This education had been going on without interruption for a thousand years in the Bardic School, an unique and widespread institution, which, since the days of St. Columba, was endowed by King and chief to give public instruction to all comers in poetry, history and law. Entrance was by examination, and it took the student from twelve to twenty years to pass through the numerous grades of bard and file (the higher class of poet) and reach the rank of Ollave, who, among other accomplishments, was master of 350 metres. The bardic families were hereditary, but the rule of their colleges to receive no student from the neighboring territories, thus necessitating travel and intercourse between clans and provinces, tended to break down sectional prejudice and create a national unity of thought and sentiment in which local attachments were submerged, St. Columba loved Darry mach, but Erin and her people more. "Carry my heart to Erin," he sang, "seven times may she be blest. Carry my blessing across the sea; carry it to the Irish." Irish nationality is as old as the herds.

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You don't eat and can't if your stomach is weak. A weak stomach does not digest all that is ordinarily taken into it. It gets tired easily, and what it fails to digest is wasted.

Among the signs of a weak stomach are unconscious after eating, flatulence, nervous headache, and disagreeable belching. "I have been troubled with dyspepsia for years, and tried every remedy I heard of, but never got anything that gave me relief until I took Hood's Sarsaparilla. I cannot praise this medicine too highly for the good it has done me. I always take it in the spring and fall and would not be without it." W. A. Nozzer, Belleville, Ont.

Hood's Sarsaparilla

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though he recognized "their sweet art and good invention," advised their extirpation because they were "tending for the most part to the hurt of the English or the maintenance of their own lewd liberty."

Individual bards and local schools survived the ruthless uprooting of the system, and in the seventeenth century, which witnessed the passing of Clan and Brehon and the crumbling of Gaelic civilization, broke forth into probably the richest, certainly the most spontaneous and patriotic, outburst of classical Gaelic song. There are extant some 30,000 lines from this period, chiefly in the D'Yeevee or Shaysa metres of seven or eight syllables to a line, quatrains of twenty-eight or thirty syllables whose law required a pause at the end of the second line and a complete thought of every stanza.

Not "to convey music in words" but to rouse the people to defence of their faith and nation, to solace them in their woes, and scorch with satire the renegade, apostate and oppressor, was the object of the new school of bards. Of these the most noted and characteristic is David O'Bradur. Born about 1630, he lived through the Cromwellian and Williamite wars, stood with Sarfield on the walls of Limerick, saw two occupations, three expropriations and the final defeat, subjection and impoverishment of his countrymen.

Reared in affluence and dying (1698) in direct poverty he shared their feelings and fortunes and interpreted their every note in triumph, indignation or sorrowing song. Learned like the older bards in native and foreign literature, he led to the best tradition of the old while he became the principal founder of the new and popular school which was destined, despite protracted physical enslavement, to keep alive the national spirit. The present volume contains the poems written before 1666; volumes II and III will deal with the feats of Sarfield at Limerick and Aughrim, and the griefs and hopes of B-in when the flight of the "Wild Geese" left her a prey to the boisterous stranger who hunted down priest and bard and all who were loyal to her past.

O'Bradur's work and story, as compounded in the comprehensive introduction and luminous explanatory notes of Father MacElean, throw a new light on the most pathetic chapter of Irish history, and will also reveal to outsiders the secret springs of the Gaelic revival. The editor's excellent translation gives some idea of the poet's thought but, he confesses, "the chain of alliteration which binds together for the ear every word connected by sense, and the constant recurrence of vocal assonance and consonantal correspondence, which arouses the

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them alive. In these tales of preternatural occurrences this quality was never displayed by him to greater advantage, because nowhere in fiction is there such a need of it as in stories like these. He carries us to extremes of unreality by extremes of realistic manner. He contrives to pass off his wild fancy on the credulity of a broad learning, a technical knowledge of useful crafts, and familiarity with the life and customs of many lands.

Thus, in one of these stories, "The Screaming Skull," which is quite as gruesome as its title sounds and might be harrowing reading in the late stillness of the night, it is curious to note the effective way in which the author applies his special knowledge of seamanship. It is used just as tellingly and with more scope in "Man Overboard," but here the atmosphere is American instead of English, as in the preceding tale. When the story-teller shifts his scene and takes us with him, into Calabria, in "For the Blood is the Life," the interest awakened by his story is not unmixt with admiration for his versatile genius.

He does not shirk the difficult requirements of the ghost story. He gives us first-hand information in the easy phases of an adept. He takes his time, and, with the leisurely manner of one who is sure of his ground and of his audience, spins his marvelous yarns with so much dignity and painstaking attention to small facts, that conviction becomes a duty for the reader as skepticism becomes a frivolous impertinence. We should conjecture that these tales will become a permanent addition to our already rich literature of the weird.—J. J. D., in America.

I cured a horse of the Mange with MINARD'S LINIMENT. CHRISTOPHER SAUNDERS, Dalhousie.

I cured a horse, badly torn by a pitch fork, with MINARD'S LINIMENT. EDW. LINNIEF, St. Peter's, C. B.

I cured a horse of a bad swelling by MINARD'S LINIMENT. THOS. W. PAYNE, Bathurst, N. B.

Home-seekers' Excursions. The Grand Trunk Railway has issued a circular authorizing all Agents in Canada to sell Home-seekers' Excursion Tickets to points in Western Canada. This is interesting information for those desiring to take advantage of these excursions on certain dates from April to December 1910.

Wandering Ghosts.

(By F. Marion Crawford, New York. The Macmillan Co., Price \$1.25 net.)

This collection of weird tales will probably serve to keep alive their distinguished author's name and fame longer than will many of his numerous novels. Strange stories of the preternatural and uncanny import are not capable of effective telling by every unskilled novice in the art of fiction. The thin and unsubstantial subject matter of the story seems to demand in the treatment sturdy vigor and painful minuteness of detail such as only masters can give. All the classic ghost stories have been written by men who have won great reputations in other lines of fiction.

The unsubstantial fabric of the plot calls for a corresponding proportion of solidity in the handling of it. The ghost story in its perfection is not a sparkling narrative, with a tremor in every line or on every page. Of all stories it must be most matter-of-fact and slowest in its movement; tiresomely so, indeed, with just enough interest to sustain attention till the last crumbing page. Persons of a flighty, flibberty-gibbet cast of mind can never enjoy the delicate flavor of a first-class ghost story.

It is too tartuous and lengthy in its stately approach to the horror at the end; it piles up an Ossa of dry and barren details a Pelion of more dry and barren details; it out-Defoes Defoe in an almost maniacal regard for small things like the shape of a pebble or the exact tint of a whisp of straw. The hasty reader, who is seeking for anguish in a crude state, had better go elsewhere. He probably prefers a three-ringed circus to a play of Shakespeare. He does not understand that fine art which patiently and quietly works downward through the intellect and the sense to the emotion, evoking it at last with the strong concurrence of mind and imagination.

For what was all this elaborate preparation? Was it not, by amassing a wealth of realism and adducing facts which no one could deny, to create an atmosphere of credulity and lull the mind into a state of unsuspecting acquiescence? The artful story-teller has been winning our confidence by so much evident respect for truth and so many flattering appeals to our own experience that when he suddenly springs his surprise, we are taken off our guard, and become ready victims for illusion, have been hypnotized into a mental condition which confuses the jings between the possible and impossible, the probable and the improbable, the real and the unreal.

The successful narrator of uncannily happenings must be a master of realism. The realist in fiction has the best chance of succeeding in that most unreal of romances, the ghost story, or fairy tales and accounts of disembodied and troubled spirits.

The truth indicates how mistakenly the word "realism" may be applied. Surely "Robin Crusoe" is not more realistic than Scott's fine ghost story, "The Tapestry Chamber," or his other one, "Aunt Margaret's Mirror," which Tennyson declared to be "the finest of all ghost or magical stories." Marion Crawford has never been associated with any of the so-called schools of realism in fiction; yet we doubt whether any of the leaders in realism could equal him in reproducing, when occasion demanded, photographic accuracy and multiplicity of salient features. Realism is more correctly a point of view than a mode of writing.

The genius of Crawford was of a kind to revel in the ordinarily tedious work of arranging for the plausibility of his story by a careful preparation of its setting in the order of time and place. His was a remarkably active mind; its curiosity was tireless and, in its range, unusually wide. Add to this a retentive memory, tremendous physical energy, experience uncommonly varied, and a feeling of art which he may well have inherited, and which he certainly cultivated with industry, and it is easy to surmise that, in spite of his over-productiveness, his fiction will always possess an intellectual superiority over that of most of his contemporaries.

This ground quality of mental grasp and range gives certain solid attributes to his most extravagant romances, which may be the means of keeping

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