

IS IT A FACT?

Last week we referred to a small leaflet that has been compiled by some very queer character and which has for object to prove that St. Patrick was a Protestant, and that the Real Presence is a fiction. We had expected that this wonderful being, who proposes settling two such questions on two pages of a tract, would start out with some bold historical assertions or with entirely new Scriptural evidence. He does nothing of the kind. He makes use of that very peculiar method of argument used by men who have no evidence to adduce, by asking questions. Now any fool can ask questions; and very often a fool's question will puzzle a wise man. It is impossible for us to follow him through his whole list of interrogatories—to do so would require an entire issue of the paper—but we will take a couple of them as samples. The first question he asks is this: "Is it not a fact that St. Patrick never mentions the Pope of Rome in any of his writings?" Again he asks: "If St. Patrick taught the doctrines of Modern Romanism, how is it we find not a single mention in his writings of Purgatory, nor the Intercession of Saints, nor the Mass, nor Holy Water, nor Communion of any kind?" But here is the most striking of all the profound questions—Heaven help the poor man that conceived it: "How could St. Patrick have belonged to a Church like that of Rome, when his father and grandfather were ecclesiastics?"

There is wisdom, erudition, historical lore, all combined; and yet the possessor of so much learning asks questions, and, like Oliver Twist, still cries "for more." Suppose we were to propound a few questions equally as foolish and as misleading as those above given, would not our tract-writer fly into a holy rage? Let us, for amusement's sake, ask him the following: "Is it not a fact that St. Peter never spoke of the King of Greece in any of his writings?" "If Luther taught pure Protestantism, how is it that he never once referred, in any of his writings, to the Quakers, the Shakers, the Salvation Army or the A. P. Aists?" "If St. Peter were prince of the Apostles and first vicar of Christ on earth, how comes it that his father was a fisherman and his grandfather a Jewish priest?" Probably we would find the tract-writer asking for a judgment of interdiction against us on the ground of insanity were we to seriously seek answers to such questions.

The truth is that the learned questioner has been reading some pages from Henry Morley and has failed to understand them—hence his absurd ideas and nonsensical statements under the shield of interrogation marks. The same author, from whom these questions have been gleaned, or rather whose writings suggested them, says, in his preface to Aubrey De Vere's "Legends of St. Patrick," that "St. Patrick's great influence was not that of a writer, but of a speaker." Again, "St. Patrick did not attack heresies among the Christians; he preached to those who were not Christians the Christian faith and practice." In fact, St. Patrick's writings consist of three small Latin pieces, and two of these are only ascribed to him. They are all in the Book of Armagh and cover only a few pages. They are a "Confession," a "Letter to Coroticus," and a few "Dicta Patricii." The Book of Armagh is in Trinity College, Dublin, where our friend can examine it when next he visits the "Isle of Saints." The "Confession" is in very unpolished Latin, and the writer calls himself "indoctus, rusticissimus, imperitus." However, St. Patrick takes the trouble to tell

his readers that he prepared himself for his mission by giving four years to study at Auxerre, under the great Germanus, and that he then went to Rome, with the priest Segitus, and with letters from Germanus to Pope Celestine. Surely it was not in his capacity of Protestant minister that Pope Celestine received him and gave him his mission!

The same author, referred to above, says: "St. Patrick addressed the ruling classes, who could bring with them their followers, and he joined tact with zeal; respecting ancient prejudices, opposing nothing that was not directly hostile to the spirit of Christianity, and handling skilfully the chiefs with whom he had to deal." . . . "His time was occupied in preaching, travelling, administering sacraments and building churches." The eminent Irish scholar, Mr. Hennessy, has translated one of the two existing books of Colgan's "Tripartite Life" of St. Patrick. The work was long lost, but the books of it were rediscovered. Thus ends the "Tripartite Life." "After these great miracles, therefore, after resuscitating the dead, after healing lepers, and the blind, and the deaf, and the lame, and all diseases; after ordaining bishops, and priests, and deacons, and people of all orders in the Church; after teaching the men of Erin, and after baptizing them; after founding churches and monasteries; after destroying idols and images of Druidical art, the hour of death of St. Patrick approached. He received the Body of Christ from the Bishop Tassach, according to the counsel of the Angel Victor."

Let us ask a question! Is that the life-work, or is that the death of a Protestant? The questions asked by the sage expounder of Irish history would lead one to suppose that St. Patrick had written volumes. The fact is that he wrote scarcely anything; and what he did write was not of a controversial nature. If these people would have a little more respect for the Faith St. Patrick planted they would show more common sense. Next week we will deal with other questions from the same source.

THE IRISH LANGUAGE.

On the deck of a steamer, out on the broad bosom of Lake St. Peter, when silence reigned on flood and hill, broken only by the plashing of the prow through the waves and the labored puffing of the great engine, we recalled those lines, penned in the years now dead, by that gifted poet and Irish-hearted historian, McGee:

"'Twas but last night I traversed the Atlantic's furrow'd face;
The stars but thinly colonized the wilderness of space—
A white sail glinted here and there, and sometimes o'er the swell
Rung the seaman's song of labor, or the silver night-watch bell;
I dreamt I reach'd the Irish shore, and felt my heart rebound
From wall to wall within my heart, as I trod that holy ground."

Something like the spirit of the dead bard came to us, and visions such as he beheld, when dreaming of the "Ancient Race" and conjuring up scenes from "beyond the misty space of twice a thousand years," floated around us. Soon the picture changed and we beheld, as it were, rising out of the misty distance where lake and sky blended dimly, a panorama of Irish history. The peaks of the far away past towered grandly skyward and were radiant in the sunlight of fame, and away down the declivities of years the mists hovered thickly around the mountain's breast; and below the valleys were dark, for the stray beams from above, that stole at intervals through the few rifts in the clouds, were dimmed by distance, broken and feeble. Yet those rays tipped with splendor the summits of the Round Towers, gilded

the shattered remains of a nation's desolate grandeur, and imparted to the valleys and streams a faint lustre sufficient to tell the people of the land, that away beyond the blackness of the storm-shrouds there flashed a light calculated to illumine a whole continent—a whole world.

Ploughing its way inland a great ocean steamer hove in sight; in the gathering gloom its apparently increased proportions loomed phantom-like against the sky; its signal light's flashed streaks of quivering fire along the rippled surface of the lake; and with the advent of this disturber the vision vanished—even as the fog that but recently curled along the north shore of the river. But, unlike the pictures that come to us in dreams, that mountain, with its gloomy base, its cloud-engirdled breast and its sun-lit summits, remains fixed in memory, and will so remain.

This is but a faint image of what the Irish—or Celtic—language is; and of its history. In the ages long gone, when the full floods of learning and freedom flashed upon the hill-tops of Irish history, there was a sublime grandeur about the race. The Island was the refuge of science, when driven by barbarism from Europe; it was what Dr. Johnson called "the quiet home of sanctity and learning;" it was the conservatory of great deeds, noble records, just laws, sublime poetry and pure religion. The laws were written in a language soft, harmonious, powerful and exact; they were chanted by bards filled with all the combined genius of the improvising poet and the inspired musician; the teachings of the masters were embalmed in the Celtic tongue and transmitted from tribe to tribe and generation to generation. The "Senchus Mór," compiled in the fifth century, was the embodiment of the lofty principles that came down from Druidical times, and the grandeur of which—even though of pagan origin—was such, that they dove-tailed into the precepts of Christianity that the great Apostle of Ireland brought with him to the land.

The people were ripe for the Truths of the Gospel, and no sooner did they hear the wondrous message from the Tiber, than by the streams of Ireland arose monasteries and homes of learning, churches and convents, until there was scarcely a district that had not its abbey and its shrine. Civilization, bleeding and crushed upon the continent, fled for refuge to the saintly asylums of Erin. And from out those houses of piety and of erudition the missionaries and educators of Europe went forth to instruct the nations of the then known world. "From the peaks of the Alps to the banks of the Loire" they travelled; they snatched up the torch of Faith from beneath the hoof of the barbarian's charger, and before he could trample it in the dust, they waved it aloft in the cities of the world. From Iona to Bobbio, from Oxford to Paris, they taught—and the great ones of the age bowed before them and their science. That was the glorious period, when the sun shone grandly upon the higher summits of Irish history, when the language of the Celt was the medium of education, and when the lord and the peasant, the priest and the bard, the law-maker and the law-expounder all spoke and wrote the sweet, soft Celtic—the rich old Irish tongue.

But as we descend the slopes of time we meet the gathering mists on the brow of the hills and the clouds of the Pale collect around the breast of the mountain. Century after century, and still the storm wafts cling to the declivities of the past and darkness falls upon the valleys of the future. The few stray beams that come through the bogs are

broken and scattered almost as soon as they flash upon the scene below. They are but shafts of the olden Celtic light that have penetrated the gloom of years; but they suffice to show us what a brilliancy there is beyond, were we but able to drive away the clouds and allow the full glow of the past to stream down upon the present, to light up the future. At times it would seem as if the Irish race were destined to behold the disappearance of those dark and fierce tempest clouds and to live again in the enjoyment of that daylight of learning and greatness. Governments may rise and fall, party may succeed party, political enactments may take place, legislative changes may come; but the race cannot assume its rightful position if deprived of its literature, its history and its early laws; no more can it form a solid nationhood if dispossessed of its language. It is in the revival of the Celtic tongue that we behold the rejuvenation of the Irish race. Already a few beams from that far away source of national light have flashed upon the men of the present; by increasing those rays, by multiplying them, eventually the mists on the breast of the mountain will become absorbed, and when legislative autonomy will be enjoyed by the people, the greatness of their past will come to them in an uninterrupted flow.

There are a few, to-day, both in Ireland and America, who are working hard to revive the study of the Celtic language. Theirs is no easy task; in this age of rush and electric movement men find little time to devote to such a grand purpose, but they should not be discouraged. It may take years, generations perhaps, to awaken the olden tongue; but once the work is accomplished, the future children of the race will reap the benefits. There are mines of literature—the rarest, the richest, the grandest—buried away in the sarcophagi of the past and embalmed in the Celtic language. When the day comes that the olden medium will be revived there will be a resurrection of the nation; its spirit will again walk abroad, as of old, inspiring the peoples of the world with ideas, sentiments and conceptions that are little dreamed of to-day. The clouds will roll off the mountain-side of Irish history, and from the far away heights will descend the unbroken light of an almost forgotten erudition; the hills and valleys of the land will grow radiant in the contact; the ruins of a former greatness will glow—like the walls of Muckross at sunset—and the Guabre Towers will preach sublime lessons, drawn from the distance of ages, for the edification and glory of the future Celts.

This is not mere imagery, nor is it the pencillings of the imagination. Let our Irish people encourage, each according to his means, the men who seek to rescue the language from the dead, and eventually the race will reap the benefit, and the world at large will bless the preservers of a million treasures that are to-day buried under the debris of centuries.

MR. J. F. HOGAN, M. P. for Mid-Tipperary, has been in Montreal for some days. He is on his way to the West and thence to Australia. It is his intention to return to London in time for the opening of the next session. Mr. Hogan proposes writing a series of articles on the colonies for the London Reviewer. He is the author of some very interesting and well-written books; amongst them the "History of the Irish in Australia," "An Australian in London," and "The Last Explorer." Mr. Hogan—unlike the Siamese twins of anti-Irishism, Goldwin Smith and Geo. W. Smalley—has strong faith in the ultimate and early success of the Home Rule movement. And he is in a position, as an active politician, to know something about the subject.