

THOMAS MOORE.

ANY one who wishes to form a correct idea of Moore must first convince himself that in all modern history there has been no more anomalous nor contradictory character than he. An Irishman, an advanced patriot, an English snob, a Catholic writer, with an over-liberality of practice, not to say utter indifference, the greatest lyricist that ever wrote, the most trifling great man of whom we have any record, very commonplace, a magician; a Colossus and a pigmy; out-Anacreoning Anacreon in verse, and practically abstemious; immoral as Catullus in fancy, and a model son, husband and father; in fine, the most inconsistent, lovable, whimsical, dreamy, practical *fameur* that ever haunted the loftiest heights of Parnassus.

Some have tried to institute a comparison between Moore and O'Connell, contending that Irish patriotism and Catholic rights were served by the poet as much and even more than the Tribune. This is a comparison between Blondel and Cœur de Lion. There was a river in Monmouth and one in Macedon. There have been many absurd parallels made by men, but this is the absurdest of all. The class inimical to Ireland's rights, religious and political, wept over Moore's beautiful songs, but it was the sentiment of the lyric not the Cause it sang that moved their hearts. They would have shed the same tears had Moore sung, in like strains, the woes of a people that had disappeared from history two thousand years ago. When the gentle harp shall rend the elements and cause the earth to tremble like a great storm, then, but not till then, shall Moore equal O'Connell as a benefactor of the Irish race. The hand that wrote "Our Prince's Day," was not created to touch the deepest chords of the Celtic heart; that privilege belonged alone to the uncrowned monarch of suffering humanity everywhere. Moore's influence upon O'Connell's destined work, was but the sparkling flash of light that beautifies the irresistible movement of a mighty river.

We shall take Moore as he is, without drawing ill-digested parallels. There is gratitude due to the Irish bard because

he was, after all, an Irish bard, and shed lustre upon the land of his birth. At the period when he was born, 1779, the shadow of an infamous penal system lay heavy upon Catholic Ireland. We are told that the Act of 1793, which opened Trinity College to Catholics was a "Relief" Bill. No doubt; to relieve Catholics of their faith and train them for the despicable role of pampered apostates—traitors to God and Country. England has relieved Ireland often in a similar manner. The Trinity College training of Moore was the cause of his after life. We are told by a neighbor of his in England that even in his old age he attended, indifferently, the Protestant and Catholic Churches, and allowed his children to be educated in the religion of Henry and Elizabeth. The poison of Trinity College left its mark after all.

We do not care to dwell upon this side of Moore's character, nor are we much attracted by that weakness of the Irish bard to which Byron refers when he says:—"Tommy who loves a lord." One thing we must in justice say for him,—he recognised this a defect in his conduct. Speaking to Scott, he said he envied his rugged, independence of mind, and regretted the circumstances that made himself rather a troubadour of the *boudoir* than the echo of a nation's voice—the pulsation of a peoples' heart. We have no doubt that Moore's natural disposition was noble, but early education and questionable social influences perverted it in a large degree, as it has perverted many a smaller mind but better Irishman and Catholic than Moore.

The great and indisputable claim of Moore, as has been said, to the gratitude of Irishmen lies in the fact that he was the splendid dawn of the modern era of Irish literature. The Penal laws which made education a crime, deprived Irish genius of the means of making its impress upon the Sixteenth and succeeding centuries. Hence, the soul of old Erin was as mute as the harp of victorious Brian. It spoke, it is true, from time to time, in the halls and councils of the stranger—the intellect of Ireland became an alien to country and religion,—but it had no Celtic signification; it was merely the echo of the pride,