

OUR CATHOLIC AUTHORS.

A PLAN OF EXTENDING THE INFLUENCE OF THEIR WRITINGS.

Catholic Reading Circles—Powerful Words of Rev. Wm. Barry, D.D.

The interchange of thought among Catholic Reading Circles has fostered a desire for accurate information about Catholic Authors whose works, whether original or translated, are now published in the English language. It was urged by the Columbian Reading Union that a complete list of our authors and their works would show forth the influence Catholic thought has exerted on modern literature. As the work advanced it became evident that such a list would have a standard value for librarians and buyers, if restricted to those writers who had published a volume. Then came the labor of ascertaining the books now in print, which was found a most difficult task on account of the apathy of certain publishers that give little heed to any movement in favor of authors.

The Catholic World has printed, during the past three years since 1890, many letters in aid of the undertaking from various parts of the United States, from Canada and Great Britain. Cordial thanks are due to all who have willingly taken part in gathering data about authors and books from the wide area of the English-speaking world. A considerable expenditure of money will be required to fully complete, in a comprehensive way, the study of Catholic authors as planned for the Columbian Reading Union. The sample pages appended will indicate, better than any description, the value to librarians and readers of a complete list of Catholic authors.

No one has pleaded the cause of Catholic writers with greater ability than the Rev. William Barry, D.D. He demands for them recognition, as exponents of saving truths, religious, philosophical, scientific, political, and social. This recognition should come first from their own fellow-Catholics, and with recognition, honor and support. The time has come to spread the best literature we possess. Indications are not wanting that the era of materialistic and agnostic science is passing away. Blank unbelief cannot satisfy the mind. In this transitional period our writers have a great opportunity to expound with average literary power, in language not above the common mind, the true principles of religion, of philosophy, of moral and social science.

"If St. Augustine has taught many centuries, and Cardinal Newman a whole generation, it was not because one was Bishop of Hippo and the other Cardinal of St. George, but because they were Newman and Augustine, with the Catholic Church behind them to secure their freedom by guarding them against error. The greatest name in Catholic literature, if it is not Shakespeare, is Dante. Can we say, then, that only the clergy need concern themselves to show forth religion in its most taking form? The laymen of to-morrow will be trained in our schools, the priest in our seminaries. If literature is to flourish, the roots of it must be planted in both these wide fields. Would it not be a grand thing if from the beginning it were admitted on all hands that the career of a Catholic writer is not only honorable, but worthy of reward; that it can be made such only by the multitude of Catholic readers, eager and willing to accept what he offers them, and prepared to pay a price for it, as they are prepared without grudging to support church and school now? It depends on Catholics themselves, on the wage-earners in this democratic time, who can spend their earnings how they will and where they will—on them it depends whether we shall have a literature not unworthy of the faith and of the nation we would win to the faith. Numbers are not wanting to us, nor material resources, nor talent, nor industry in those who possess talent. Why, then, should we fail? We shall not fail. But, if we are to succeed, literature must be recognized amongst us as a sacred calling, with its own place and prerogatives and a befitting sustenance."

It has been estimated from reliable sources of information that thousands of dollars are annually expended by Catholics, especially in the rural districts, for ponderous subscription books. Unscrupulous

agents grossly misrepresent the value of such publications, and even attempt to get from priests an endorsement of their fabulous prices. Efforts are made to establish the impression that the sale of these books in some way is an aid to the church. To counteract the designs of avaricious publishers engaged in the nefarious work of deceiving simple people, there is need of an organized movement to secure the best books of our Catholic authors at reasonable prices. In this movement Catholics having wealth and leisure can find ample scope for intelligent zeal. The intellectual defence of the truth under existing conditions requires a wider diffusion of Catholic literature.

Though our Catholic authors represent the highest culture of mind and heart, we know that this highest culture is not always the most profitable in dollars and cents. The authors of lofty mind can always claim the attention of those who are identified with the progress of the world; and it is the duty of every one endeavoring to raise the standard of civilization to utilize all available forces which remove ignorance and foster the growth of high ideals. For this reason there is a direct duty on the head of the reading public to patronize the best in literature and to be vigilant in searching out the deserving authors. This duty is sadly neglected when people blindly follow a defective stand of criticism, and give public honor and wealth to writers of shallow books.

Often the statement is boldly proclaimed that Catholics have no literature. Such an opinion should compel us to exercise pity for the one who holds it, because it is an indication of the most deplorable ignorance. Publishers outside the church have discovered many of our glorious classics containing the highest and best Christian thought, and have made no apology for daring to send forth to confiding readers mutilated editions of books written by Catholic saints and scholars. Our heritage in literature is so valuable that pirates have boldly seized upon our treasures. Vigorous protest should be made when heretical editors pick and choose at random unauthorized selections from Catholic literature.

After the process of writing a book, then comes the long period of delay during which the publisher is entertaining the MSS. and deciding whether it will suit his patrons. It is just here that the Catholic reading public has failed to materialize sufficiently to show a ready sympathy for writers of knowledge and merit. The publisher is not able to determine in advance the needs of his customers; he needs evidence to be convinced that the reading public exists and demands Catholic literature. Sometimes the publisher is accused of driving a hard bargain with authors, by demanding more than a reasonable share of compensation for his services in launching a book upon the market. Authors have been required to bear the whole expense of printing their books, and to pay the publisher a very liberal percentage on sales. Incompetent publishers and librarians are the chief obstacles to the success of many writers, because they deprive readers of the opportunity to see and enjoy important works.

THE CATHOLIC WORLD FOR APRIL.

A great range and diversity of subjects is the most notable feature of the April issue of The Catholic World magazine. Theology, literature, biography, topography, education, sociology, poetry and fiction are all distributed in satisfactory proportion throughout.

The foremost article is bound to command widespread attention. It is an exceedingly able statement of the Church's position, in the past as well as now, towards not only the problems but the facts of the labor question, by the Rev. Dr. O'Riordan, Ph. D. Walter Lecky's Adirondack sketch, "The Coming of Hiram Jones's Day," will be recognized as a life-like rendering of present-day experiences in remote districts. Very Rev. Augustine F. Hewitt, D. D., contributes a masterly article entitled "The Broad Church Position Untenable," in reference to the Parliament of Religions. Rev. Walter Elliott continues the absorbing narrative of his missionary experiences. An article on "Garaontie," by Jane Marsh Parker,

revives the memory of a truly great Christian Iroquois, and the sketch is splendidly illustrated by Mr. J. E. Kelly. Professor Seton furnishes a profound article on "The Pathology of the Will," and reminiscences of old Detroit, by Richard R. Elliott, furnish an interesting chapter of colonial history. Many noteworthy facts in the life of Aldus are recalled in an article entitled "A Prince of Printers," by Marion Ames Taggart. The position of Catholic education in Mexico is lucidly explained by the Rev. Kenelm Vaughan. Eliza Allen Starr writes pleasantly of Notre Dame, Indiana, under the heading "A Western Educational Centre." Helen M. Sweeney contributes a pointed story, headed "Was She Right?" The poetical contributions include "At Eastertide," by Magdalen Rock; "Two Little Sisters of the Poor," by John J. O'Shea; and "La Gloire," Rev. H. E. O'Keefe, C. S. P. The book notices are of more than ordinary interest, dealing with many new publications in a searching and outspoken way. A large space is devoted to the editorial notes on contemporaneous events.

GERALD GRIFFIN.

THE LEADING IRISH NOVELIST OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.

Gerald Griffin is an instance of another one of those young men who attained fame early in life and died early, a "man of promise."

In 1823, when only twenty years of age, he went unknown to London. His father had emigrated to America, and he was to be the architect of his own fortune. For three years his life was a prolonged struggle, first for recognition and then for existence itself.

Still, a spirit like Griffin's knew no compromise with fortune. He resolved to succeed or perish, and it is questionable if the latter fate would not have been the most probable had the clouds which obscured his early prospects not been suddenly and unexpectedly dispersed. His occasional sketches in the newspapers and periodicals at length attracted attention, a proposition to write a series of tales illustrative of Irish peasant life, made to him by a London publishing house, was accepted, and "Holland-Tide," his first sustained effort, appeared in 1826. This work gained for the author moderate pecuniary compensation, and, what he more valued, the applause of the metropolitan critics. "Tales of the Munster Festivals" soon followed. Griffin's abilities as a novelist, so long unrecognized, were universally admitted, and his personal independence as a writer fully assured. He had now discovered his true vocation; so abandoning, not without regret, the dramatic muse, he concluded to devote himself to prose fiction. From this time until 1836 he was ever busy with his pen, producing in succession his masterpieces, "The Collegians," "The Duke of Monmouth," "The Invasion," and several other shorter, but not less meritorious and artistic, volumes, so well known to the English-speaking public. Abandoning his residence in London, he availed himself of the earliest opportunity to hasten to his old home, where, surrounded by the love scenes of his boyhood, he spent the leisure hours snatched from labor, in social and friendly intercourse with his relations and neighbors.

At the early age of thirty-two, Griffin had attained the summit of his worldly ambition. In a few short years he passed through all the vicissitudes of literary life, rising from the depths of despondency to the pinnacle of well-earned and enduring fame, neither soured by suffering nor unduly elated by popularity, when, to the surprise of all, he quietly abandoned the honors so eagerly sought and so bravely won. After long and earnest deliberation, he entered himself as a postulant among the Christian Brothers, one of the humblest and most self-denying of the orders of the Church, where even his name was no longer to be mentioned, and in which, in the simplicity of his heart, he hoped that even his very existence would be forgotten by the outside world. This change of life took place September 8, 1838, and Brother Joseph (his name in religion) continued a devoted, obedient member of the order, and an indefatigable teacher of children, till his death, which occurred on the 12th June, 1840, in the North Cork Missionary.—*Catholic Citizen of Milwaukee.*

POPE PIUS IX., AND SIR HARRY VERNEY.

Many interesting anecdotes of the late Sir Harry Verney have been told within the last few days, but one which Mr. Alexander Devine contributes to the Manchester City News will probably be new to most readers. One of Sir Harry's famous exploits was his riding across Argentina, and thereby hangs the tale. One day his attention was drawn to a figure lying on the roadside some miles from Santiago under the shelter of a rude hut of leaves and branches. "Pulling up, he discovered a priest, who turned out to be in a high condition of fever. Verney obtained assistance, had the prostrate man carried to his own rooms, and practically nursed him into convalescence and eventual recovery. After some months of friendly intercourse and companionship, the two separated, and probably never thought to meet again. Many years passed, so many that the majority of men had lived their lives and died, but the two who had met under such striking circumstances still lived, the one Sir Harry Verney, the other no less a person than Pio Nono, Pope of Rome." Sir Harry Verney, being in Rome subsequently, decided to pay a visit to the man he had befriended so many years before. By-and-by he was face to face with the Pope, and the usual compliments passed. Presently, "the Pontiff bowed as much as to say, 'Our interview is now over.' But so far the talking had been all on one side, and Sir Harry felt that his turn had come. So drawing himself up he said, 'You don't remember me, Holy Father! No,' said the Pope, eyeing him curiously. To which the baronet rejoins, 'Do you remember the young English officer who met you on the roadside at Santiago, over forty years ago?' At these words it seemed as if the whole incident recurred to the mind of the Pope, for, with a look of undisguised pleasure and cordiality, he rose from his seat and warmly shaking his old companion by the hand, conducted him to his own rooms, where they remained talking and laughing over their odd experiences for nearly two hours."—*N. Y. Catholic Review.*

ANTIQUARIAN EXHIBIT AT THE GESU CHURCH.

One of the most interesting features of the Montreal Exhibition of September, 1892, was the exhibit of the Antiquarian Society, and notably that portion of it loaned from the archives of St. Mary's College. As many were disappointed at being unable to examine in detail this collection, to which valuable additions have been recently made, the Rev. A. E. Jones, S. J., archivist of St. Mary's College, has consented, by special request, to place his maps, documents, autographs and precious books once more before the public, on the evening of April 10, 11 and 12, from 8 to 10, in the Library Hall, under the Gesu Church. An antiquarian, referring to the collection, today, said: "Canadians in general do not sufficiently appreciate the wealth of historical materials to be found in the province of Quebec, but no one who has seen this collection can afterwards imagine that Canada is without an interesting history, and no doubt many of those who visit the Library Hall of the Gesu next week will be inspired with a desire to make themselves more familiar with the stirring events of early Canadian history."

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"Slow times, these," remarked an idle workman to a hungry tramp. "Slow times!" growled the latter. "I never knew so many fast-days."