

Can Hove with the Editor

IRISH HISTORY

The Irish are historically, perhaps, the most interesting people in the world. This origin is lost in the mists of antiquity. They are said to be of Celtic stock, but this really means only that they were members of that great family of peoples that occupied Central and Western Europe before the historic westward migration of the Teutonic races. As was mentioned in an article upon this page some months ago, there seem to be reasons for supposing that these Celtic races themselves migrated from elsewhere, subduing and to all intents and purposes exterminating the aboriginal people, possibly the descendants of the Troglodites or cave-dwellers, but this is only a surmise based upon the fact that there were such cave-dwellers and that there is some evidence of a Celtic migration. These are Irish traditions of the arrival in the island many centuries before the Christian Era of immigrants from Southwestern Asia. As long ago as the time of Plutarch the antiquity of the Irish as a nation was recognized. That distinguished writer says: "They derive their history from remote antiquity, so that no other nation is now compared with them." The Irish chroniclers tell that in the reign of Eochy I, who lived more than a thousand years before Christ, "society was classified into seven grades, each marked by the color of its dress, and that in this classification men of learning; that is eminent scholars, were by law ranked next to royalty." Ollav Feola, who was one of Eochy's successors and a contemporary of David, King of Israel, established what was known as the Feis Tara, or the Triennial Parliament of Tara. This parliament consisted of three houses, the subordinate princes and chieftains constituting one, the law-givers, priests, judges, scholars and historians another, and the military commander the third. The title of the Monarch was Ard-Ri, and under him were subordinate kings.

The population of Ireland was not at this time homogeneous. The Firbolgo were one of the races. Not very much is known about them, except that according to the Irish Chronicles, a party of them in 1900 B.C., or eight or nine centuries before the date usually assigned to the siege of Troy, sailed from Ireland to Greece, where they remained for some time, finally returning to their own country. Another branch of the primitive inhabitants was known as the Danaans. The Milesians are said to have been descended from a king who ruled in Spain several thousand years before the Christian Era, and their arrival in Ireland is put at a date as ancient as the Jewish exodus from Egypt. Between these various tribes there was almost continual strife although they seem to have formed no difficulty in uniting against a common invader. They were exceedingly warlike, and were the only people in Western Europe upon whose shoulders the yoke of Rome was not laid or who were able to keep their country from being overrun by the Norsemen.

The Irish as a race were always imaginative and inclined to superstition. Christianity, a religion of mystery, greatly appealed to them, and in no part of the world was its introduction attended with less friction than in Ireland. St. Patrick flourished in the fifth century of our era, but he was not, as has often been stated, the first to preach Christianity to the people. The religion had already obtained a foothold when this remarkable man appeared on the scene. His work seems to have been to eliminate the remnants of paganism from the people as received by those who had adopted it, and to spread it into parts of the island to which it had not as yet penetrated. He established schools and monasteries and laid the foundation of education so broadly and well that in the century after his death Ireland became the chief seat of learning in Western Europe. The Rev. A. J. Theband in his history of Ireland lays stress upon the fact that Irish scholars in such great centres of learning as Bangor, Clonfort, Armagh and Commaroie, pursued their investigations along independent lines and were not influenced by the subtleties of Greek philosophy which was created so much friction in the Christian church in the East. Teachers sent out from these schools carried Irish ideas and Irish conceptions of Christianity to France, Germany, Switzerland and even to Northern Italy. He says they never announced a doctrine that met with condemnation or even criticism from Rome. The schools referred to even throw open to all who cared to attend them and very many students came over from England. Indeed it seems as if the effect of Irish culture had very much to do with shaping the whole trend of religious thought in Western Europe and perhaps it is not going too far to say that while in Ireland itself the people remained faithful to the Roman Catholic idea of Christianity, the influence of the teaching of the schools prepared the way for the movement, headed by Luther, Knox, Latimer and others, whose names are associated with the reformed religion. This suggestion will not, perhaps, be acceptable to many members of the Roman Catholic church and yet the fact remains that the movement for reform was confined almost wholly to those countries where Irish scholarship shaped the thought of students. One material difference between Ireland on the one hand and England, Scotland, France, Germany and Switzerland on the other arose from the fact, here mentioned out of its historical order, that

the Irish schools did not accept "the revival of learning," as it is called, or in other words the new impulse given to human thought by the Crusades and the rediscovery, so to speak, of the ancient classics. Elsewhere in Western Europe the full force of this movement was felt, and its effect upon men, who learned from the Irish schools, or from others established in England and on the continent by Irish missionaries, that independence of thought was not only justifiable but praiseworthy, was to lead them to assert independence of papal authority in matters religious as well as political.

THE EARTH

In some respects the Pacific Ocean is the most interesting part of the earth's surface, for there we can see the processes of Nature in her architectural aspects more distinctly than elsewhere. Mr. Napier Denison, in a recent lecture, told us that a distinguished English scientist had expressed the opinion that a new continent is forming between Asia and Australia, and there is abundant evidence in other parts of this great expanse of water that giant forces are and have been at work for a long time. Every little while the seismographs of the world record a great earthquake shock, and we are told that the scene of the disturbance was probably in the South Pacific Ocean. Charles Darwin, writing of his investigations among the coral islands, said there seemed to be evidence of a recurrence of such phenomena, but he was not in a position to establish it, except by inference. Today we have the advantage of knowing that the operations, which he supposed were necessary to account for the formation of the coral islands, are actually going on. The seismograph has proved the soundness of the investigator's reasoning. But whereas in the islands of Melanesia a continent seems to be forming, in what we call Oceania the process seems to be the reverse, and there is a subsidence of the floor of the ocean in progress, not indeed with uniform steadiness, but in the form of a series of convulsions occurring at irregular intervals. This observation is not accurate when applied to the whole water-covered region, for there are some islands showing that within the memory of living man there has been a slow sinking of the land. Evidently the whole ocean floor of the Pacific is in a state of unrest. The uplifting of islands reported from the neighborhood of the Aleutian Archipelago has its counterpart in the great upheavals in the Southern Hemisphere. In accounts of voyages written about half a century ago mention is made of islands lying to the south of New Zealand. Recent exploration shows that while some of them are to be found where they were reported, others have not been. We have therefore to choose between thinking that the mariners, who reported them, were in error, or that the islands have disappeared. In view of what we know has taken place in the Northern Hemisphere, there is no difficulty in accepting the latter explanation.

It is to this constant state of unrest that the existence of the coral islands is due. When we use the expression "coral islands," we do not mean that the islands are in every case composed of coral only. In the case of inhabited islands they almost always consist of rocks similar to those found on the continents. Only such things as atolls or reefs are formed exclusively of the products of these remarkable little creatures. An atoll is a more or less circular reef of coral surrounding a body of water. The work of the corals is a constant strife between the sea and the little animalculae. They build up and the sea breaks down. Referring again to Darwin, he says that the force of the ocean swell sweeping day after day, month after month, and year after year across the ocean would inevitably destroy anything that human ingenuity could construct, but the corals defy all the forces of nature and rear their structures in the very face of the power of the sea. At times the waves seem to get the upper hand, and hundreds of fragments of coral are loosened from the parent mass and flung landward, but as the years pass the little creatures win their way, so that in the course of centuries they have built walls capable of resisting the fiercest billows, and having their foundations deeply laid.

In this depth of the foundations we have an exceedingly interesting and instructive factor in connection with the structural processes at work in the Pacific Ocean. Coral can only live at a certain depth below the water; but it is found many times deeper than this maximum. The lower coral is dead. The inference is that it lived only at the depth that live coral is now found. Hence the inference of a subsidence, more or less regular, seems to be necessary. Let us now briefly and in popular language describe the process which Darwin suggests has been going on in the equatorial waters of the Pacific for many thousands of years. Imagine a mountain with not very precipitous sides raising its summit above the surface of the sea. Around this mountain a colony of coral animalculae settle and begin to build. As their work proceeds, the reef will form in time a barrier reef, and if the land remains stationary, the reef will not be extended far down into the water and will in time become attached to the shore. But let us suppose that as the corals build the land slowly sinks. The result will be that the reef will remain disconnected with the land and will grow higher and higher as the land upon which it rests sinks. Thus in process of time there will be formed a wall of considerable height

standing like a rampart around the mountain, and this rampart, built up in part by pieces of gravel thrown upon it by the waves, will become a barrier reef. In the course of centuries the winds and tides will carry dust, vegetable matter and the thousand and one varieties of flotsam and jetsam to the reef, so that a soil will be formed. Birds and winds will carry seed to the soil, and thus the reef will become covered with vegetation. Just here a word may be said as to the immeasurable effect of the wind in this work. There is no air so pure that it does not carry some dust. Possibly one blowing across the ocean is freer from it than any other, but even that carries a burden. It picks it up everywhere. When it blows upon the sails of a ship or even upon its solid woodwork, it picks off a few minute particles. If we let a flag fly indefinitely it will wear out, and this only means that infinitesimal particles of its material have been carried away by the wind. So from thousands upon thousands of sources the wind gathers dust, and when it meets with obstruction deposits some of it. A very little dust on a coral reef would furnish a foothold for some sort of a plant, and thus the work of soil-making would be begun, for the decaying vegetation would add to it, and when once a beginning had been made, the work would go on continuously, unless interrupted by some catastrophe, and even then it would be at once resumed. But let us suppose that the mountain continued to sink beneath the water. In this sinking process the accumulated weight of the coral might have an accelerating effect, but be this as it may, there would come a time when the top of the mountain would disappear. But the coral animals would keep on building without the slightest intermission, and long after the top-most rock of the topmost peak had disappeared, the encircling ring would keep on growing higher and higher, although never, of course, rising above the surface of the water, for corals cannot live out of water. The reefs above the water would be formed as has been stated. Thus we would have not an island surrounded by a reef of coral, but a body of water so surrounded, or, in other words, an atoll. If the water of the ocean were drained away and we could look at what we call an atoll, we would see a rampart of coral possibly several thousand feet in height, with its outer side very precipitous, and its inner side gradually descending to the sloping sides of a mountain, whose peak would be perhaps hundreds of feet lower than the top of the rampart. It would resemble a round bottle cut across at a distance above the indent from the bottom, the outside of the bottle representing the coral reef, and the indent representing the mountain, which has sunk below the surface of the sea. A bottle, cut in this way, and placed in the water so that the top of the outside would be just above the surface, would represent an atoll. If the cut were made at a lower point, so that the indent would come above the sides, we would have a representation of a barrier reef. It may be added that the breaks in barrier reefs or atolls are found to correspond to valleys in the mountain which they surround, the bottoms of which were too deep to permit of coral living upon them.

"THE ANCIENT SACRIFICE"

The authorship of the 51st Psalm is attributed to David, King of Israel, and is said to have been written by him after Nathan had proved him for his crime against Uriah, whose wife he coveted. The reproach was a terrible one, and if you care to read it, you will find it in Chapter 12 of II. Samuel. It is well to realize the circumstances under which such psalms as this were written, for in them we may find the explanation of what may otherwise be liable to doubt. In the 17th verse of the Psalm occur these words: "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart thou wilt not despise." It is this that Kipling had in mind when he wrote:

"Still stands the ancient sacrifice,
A humble and a contrite heart."

The words quoted from the Psalm are frequently misused. They are represented as setting forth what ought to be the normal condition of those, who would live in harmony with God. Hence it is alleged that they discountenance the idea of goodness being associated with lightness of heart, cheerfulness, optimism and rational amusement. But this meaning can only be put upon them, if we wrench them away from the circumstances that gave rise to them. The doom which Nathan had pronounced upon David and his family was a terrible one; but when the King repented of his sin, the prophet said to him that while he personally might escape the consequences of his sin, the child which the wife of Uriah had borne to him should die. The story goes on to tell us of David's pathetic grief, how he lay upon the ground, refusing to eat, until word was brought to him that the child was dead. Then he arose and to his astonished servants said: "While the child was yet alive I fasted and wept; for I said, Who can tell whether God will be gracious to me that the child may live? But now that he is dead, wherefore should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me." When we remember these things, and that it was under such circumstances that David employed the words quoted from the Psalm, we begin to get a new idea of their weight and meaning. We realize that they are not a law laid down for

the guidance of future generations, but the outpourings of a soul torn with anguish. There was nothing that he could do. He stood as most of us have at one time stood, helpless in the presence of death. He realized that there was nothing he could offer to God but the sacrifice of a broken and contrite heart. When he exclaimed, "Thou wilt not despise these things," he was not asserting a principle in theology, but only giving expression to the surcharged feelings of his soul. Read the lines of the Psalm that precede the quotation. In them David prays to be delivered from the consequences of blood-guiltiness. He calls upon God to help him to praise Him. He declares the worthlessness of mere formal sacrifices. He finds hope and comfort only in the thought that if he can bring himself to an appreciation of his own unworthiness, he will not be wholly despised.

The intense humanity of this all is what makes it of value to us, who look to the Scriptures for guidance in our everyday life. David said these things not because he spoke by divine inspiration, but because in the depths of his great, but passionate, heart, in the recesses of his mighty, but often perverted, intelligence he knew them to be true. His words were the words of a man, and of a man who had been guilty of conspicuous and dreadful wickedness. Their value is that they hold the mirror up to the secret recesses of his soul. They teach us that no matter how great may be our power and prosperity, we are as the dust when we transgress the laws that ought to govern our relations to our fellows, that is, if we can feel and suffer. God was not merciful with David; the child did not live; the sacrifice of a broken and contrite heart was of no avail. He had to face the consequences of his wrongdoing, and he found comfort only in the thought that he would one day follow the baby boy into the unseen world.

And so the lesson of the story is not that by being sorry we can escape the consequences of wrongdoing, but that notwithstanding we recognize our own unworthiness, notwithstanding we realize that we have sinned, notwithstanding we offer to God "the ancient sacrifice," we cannot escape the consequences of our ill deeds. Sorrow for wrong done in the past is good, but it is not enough. As the plow and harrow prepare the soil to receive the seed that shall in good season bring forth abundantly, so sorrow and repentance prepare the heart for the reception of the germ of a new spiritual life. Religion is not merely negative; it demands of us positive action. It is not enough that we should regret having done wrong; we must strive to do good. It is not sufficient that we should realize the folly of being ruled by our physical passions; we should seek for strength from spiritual sources. Out of the travail and anguish of repentance a new birth may come; if it does not, the agony through which we have passed will have been in vain. Thank God there are millions of witnesses to the possibility of this new birth.

Stories of the Classics

(N. de Bertrand Lagim)

V. Helen of Troy (Continued)

Now some old stories tell us that those twenty long years of preparation for and the besieging of Troy were spent by the heroes in vain, inasmuch that Helen never reached Priam's kingdom, but that the ship in which she sailed was blown by adverse winds to the shores of Egypt. King Proteus of that country, having learned of the treachery and faithlessness of Paris, detained Helen and drove the Greek warrior away, forbidding him to return under pain of death. Thus did the lovely wife of Menelaus, "the beautiful, the inviolable, sit all day among the palm groves, twining lotus flowers for her hair, and learning how to weave rare Easter patterns in the loom" until her husband, returning from the long and cruel war, was guided by propitious breezes to Egypt, where he met and claimed his long lost wife.

But we find it easier to accept the oldest stories of all, and believe that while the patient Greeks fought without the city, and their ships lay at anchor in the blue water just beyond, that Helen sat within the gates, her heart grieving for those who suffered in her cause, praying to the gods for the safety of him who loved her. Our mind's eye lives to dwell on that fair picture of the ageless and lovely lady, the long war over, going forth in her fluttering white raiment, her whiter arms outstretched to meet her wronged lord.

But we are in advance of our story. When Menelaus returned and found that his wife had fled with Paris, his grief and anger were boundless. He sought his brother Agamemnon, King of Mykenae, and husband of Clytemnestra, Helen's sister, and it was decided that, with the aid of other Greek ships, an attack should be made upon Troy.

Ten years were spent in preparation. Agamemnon was to take command, and the gallant army, when it was at length assembled, included nearly all of the heroes of Greece with their followers. There were Odysseus from Ithaca, whose wife was the lovely and devoted Penelope; Ajax, that mighty warrior whose end

was so pathetically tragic; the wise and kindly old Nestor; Achilles, beloved of the goddess Athene, a youth of great strength and wonderful beauty, of fierce temper, and stubborn pride; Patroclus, Achilles' dear friend, a man of unmatched faithfulness and bravery, and scores of others, one hundred thousand men in all and nearly twelve hundred ships.

A brave show this great fleet made upon the water, the sunlight bright upon white sails and glinting upon shining armor. With hopeful hearts the warriors saw their native shores vanish and turned eager eyes to the distant horizon, which should hold for them glory and fame, and riches beyond guessing. Only the heart of Menelaus was heavy with a sorrow which he could never hope to quite overcome, until the gods had translated him to the blessed islands, and the abode of the "golden-haired Phadamanthus, and Achilles, youthful, hopeful and brave of heart, was wont now and then to fall suddenly thoughtful, for the gods had warned him that, though he should win undying glory before the walls of Troy, yet it would only be at the cost of his life, that he must die, a victim of his own valor, for long life and peace were his only if he remained behind.

Agamemnon, a little spoiled by the flattery of such a host of heroes, had grown rather boastful of his prowess and ability, and had thus aroused the anger of the goddess Artemis. A storm suddenly overtook the fleet, which scattered the ships, and drove them in every direction but the right one. Then occurred a tragic episode that has been the theme of many a pathetic drama and poem, namely, the sacrificing by Agamemnon of his lovely daughter Ephenegia to propitiate the wrath of Artemis. The goddess accepted the tribute, the storms ceased, the winds changed, and the ships sped on their course.

Hector, the noblest son of the aged King Priam, stood upon the walls and saw the first glimmer of the Greek sails. Odysseus and Menelaus, special envoys, had been sent ahead by Agamemnon, admitted through the gates, and had demanded that Helen should be returned to them. The demand had been refused, and now the attack upon Troy was to be made. Hector descended from his watching tower and led his army outside the walls to repel the invaders. It had been foretold that the first Greek to land should be slain, and the name of Proteus has come down to us as being that of the hero who offered himself as the sacrifice. Hector met him as he came ashore and killed him.

But though the Trojans drew first blood, the Greeks had a speedy revenge, Achilles especially proving his wonderful strength and prowess, slaying an almost unbelievable number of men, and putting the Trojans to rout again and again.

There came a time, however, when Achilles would not fight. He was angry, the gods had caused him to be angry; it was part of their plan that he should withdraw for a time from the field of action. Thereupon he and Patroclus, and the fair Trojan Brisies, whom Achilles had taken captive, kept to the great chief's tent, where the young girl, in love with the Greek hero, strove to appease his anger, and Patroclus used every means in his power to persuade him to return to do battle. But Achilles was obdurate and he would not fight, nor would he allow his legions to take part in the siege. Finally Patroclus, seeing the Trojans win one victory after another, could endure it no longer. His importunities prevailed, and his chief consented reluctantly to allow him to depart. Patroclus with Achilles' followers was able to exert the extremity of ruin, but himself fell a victim to the sword of the valiant Hector.

Homer has most beautifully related the tragedy which followed—how, Achilles, aroused to action by the death of his friend, rushed headlong into the fight, and drove the Trojans within their walls. He has made us see that last pathetic parting between Andromache and Hector, when the latter, bidding goodbye to his wife and his little son, goes out to meet the great Greek warrior, never to return. We will not dwell upon the pathetic end of him who was one of the noblest characters in all ancient history. Commentators have said that he had but one equal in true knightly qualities, our own great King Arthur. He dies by the hand of the greatest living warrior, who, whatever his virtues may have been, must always stand abased in our eyes for the dishonor he heaped upon his slain rival, in spite of Hector's last pitiful request that his body might be given back to Troy. Even in dying the great chief thought of her who knew

"Nothing of this great disaster—none had brought her tidings true,
How her spouse had rashly tarried all without the city gate
Weaving of a costly garment, in an inner room she sat,
With a varied wreath of blossoms brodering the double border;
And unto the fair-haired maidens of her household gave she order
On the fire to place a tripod, and to make the fuel burn,
For a welcome bath for Hector, when from fight he should return."

Private Barter, who has just joined the Grenadier Guards, is only 18, but he stands six feet eight and a half inches in his stockings, and, according to the Daily Mail, is still growing. He is said to be the tallest soldier in the British army. Barter has smoked since he was fourteen years old.