

THE NEW YEAR IN IRELAND.

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No country in the world has better reason to look forward to at least a partial fruition of its hopes in the coming twelve months than has Ireland.

It is true that Mr. William O'Brien, notwithstanding the protests from both sides of the Atlantic, has insisted upon carrying out his determination to retire from public life.

What stories could the old walls tell of the tiny village that once nestled in their shadow, its people turning to the monks for succor and comfort no less in bodily than in spiritual woe.

The situation now confronting the Irish Nationalists at Westminster is essentially different. Their support is now imperatively needed, not only by the Liberals, but by the Unionist Government itself.

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Should Mr. Balfour deem it indispensable for the success of his fiscal programme that the life of the present Parliament should be prolonged beyond the present year, it is, not only possible, but probable, that he would seriously entertain a Nationalist proposal for some form of Home Rule.

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And so day by day he fought and won his battles, granting himself over less leisure to work out the sketches for his great altar-piece of the "Ascension."

Clearly on the bare canvas stretched across the easel, his soul's eye saw the glories his brush would soon reveal—that wondering group of Olivet's steep side, the attendant angels, the opening heavens, and one Form shadowy and indistinct but glorious beyond compare.

The grateful daily petitions of our little ones, will we trust bring abundant blessings upon their kind benefactors and assure them a bright and prosperous New Year.

PIUS X. POPE.

ANGELICO==A MEDITATION.

Will you give me your hand and let me lead you away for a while from the smoke and bustle of the restless city, along lanes where thrushes are singing, between hedge rows where hawthorn is blooming and violets are hiding, till we come to an iron-barred gate set in a high stone wall?

Beyond it, overarched by the glad spring sky with its fleet of drifting cloudships, a monastery nestles amid guardian trees. Grim and gray it must have been in the distant days when the old monks builded—every stone a protest against the strange and evil world from which it was their haven.

Turning sadly from the wet canvas she suddenly bethought him of the waiting beggar and reproaching himself for his lack of thought, hastened down the winding stair, to the deserted courtyard. Eagerly he searched, anxiously he questioned, but the unknown suppliant had vanished leaving no trace.

That evening, when after their frugal meal the community assembled for their hour of relaxation, Angelico, too heavy-hearted for their genial companionship, sought solitude in a shady recess formed by a jutting, deep-set window.

Among the convent treasures are still preserved the missals upon which he wrought with patient care, copying the text in even Gothic lettering, then weaving with skillful brush the intricate Arabesque borders of crimson and green and gold.

In the community room yet hangs a canvas upon which he pictured the blind beggar kneeling before the white-robed Christ, his prayer, "Lord, that I may see," written in his clasped hands, his bent form, in every line of his eager upturned face.

Is it strange that there were days when their petty jealousies wearied, their garrulity irritated, and he wished with the petulance of youth that it were sometimes right to have the pleasant things of life?

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At weary last dawned a bright day, when, no smallest duty unfulfilled, Angelico stood before the canvas, brush in hand, ready to set his imprisoned fancies free.

So golden and fleeting the moments sped, his grateful task seemed but begun when the door softly opened and a lay-brother entered the room to tell of a man resting in the courtyard who craved speech of Angelico.

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In him the man who that morning had craved speech of Brother Angelico.

Horror stricken the young monk listened to the brother's tale, then shaking off the chill fear that numbed his every nerve he cast himself at the Superior's feet, crying: "My Father, 'tis surely some dreadful error! In the uncertain light they have thought the man dead, when perchance he but lay in a deep swoon from which our skill shall soon recall him. Oh, hasten! hasten! lest we come too late and I go forth marked with the brand of Cain."

With many a whispered prayer the monks hastened to the infirmary. Tenderly they gazed upon the quiet form lying on the humble pallet, but no hand was raised in gentle ministrations. Death had already laid his waxy mask over the wan, spent face, the weary feet had come at last to a peaceful bourne.

Beside him through the long night, Angelico kept vigil, and when the morning sun was high, kind hands made for him a resting place among the sleepers on the hillside, and the quiet current of the monastery's life, stirred for a brief space by his coming, flowed on peacefully as of yore.

But for Angelico the glory of life had faded. Self-exiled from the dream-world where of old he dwelt with his bright fancies, he sought in rigid fulfilling of duties once so irksome, a brief forgetfulness of the sorrow that gnawed his heart.

At last one night when, tired of body and heavy of spirit, he lay upon his pallet wrapped in fitful and broken slumber, there came to him a strange, sad dream. He saw himself, old and foot-sore and very weary, dragging himself with painful steps along a stony road upon which the noonday sun beat with pitiless glare.

Thus musing, he gazed out with unheeding eyes upon the peaceful beauty of the night, the tall pines like grim sentinels guarding the graveyard on the hill, the velvet darkness of the sky thickly sown with golden points, the thin line of the crescent moon climbing swiftly out of the west and silencing peals after peak of the rugged building with faint, uncertain radiance.

At last, with heavy steps he turned to rejoin his brethren. A moon-beam falling slantwise through the casement clothed him in a mantle of light, and as he paused a moment, startled by an unwonted stir, he might have been some heavenly visitant, so tender and earnest the pale young face, so deep and dark the eyes, so golden bright the curls shining halo-like about the shaven crown.

crifice of innocence and faith upon her shrine, can scarcely understand the far other aims and values prevailing in Angelico's world.

Were there in our sane age some genius mad enough to sacrifice art—sacred art to an unrecognized standard of right, how many lands would be stretched out to bar his way, how many voices raised in indignant protest.

But in that cloistered world no voice deterred the artist from making atonement in what, with reason good or ill, he deemed the only way. Still, that he might not hastily renounce a work about which his very heart strings twined, the Superior exacted the painting of yet another picture to set within the empty niche that loomed above the great white altar. In the accustomed work Angelico might once again find joy and peace and if, his task completed, he still should seek the thorny path of renunciation, he would not journey forth in ignorance of the cost.

The cost we dimly guess as we gaze to-day with misty eyes upon the wondrous altar-piece, knowing that Angelico came to the fulness of his power in the moment when he laid aside the art which had been life's crown and glory.

And yet of all his works it is the least ambitious. Not the splendid "Ascension" of his youthful dreams is shrined to-day above the Gothic altar, but the piteous human ascension in virtue of which Angelico claimed kinship with the desolate group on Olivet's steep side across whose musings broke the angel's clarion call to a new life.

Fear of the hostile world that waits their coming, dread of the strange new ways their feet must tread, infinite yearning, haunting sadness, and over all the faint dawning of a great peace. Something of all this we read in the pictured faces, but the spell of the canvas is subtle and elusive.

Of the after years there is scant record. Tradition has it that Angelico's days were spent among the solitudes of the North garden which blossomed in wondrous beauty beneath his care, the passing of the peaceful seasons marked only by the blooming and fading of lovely old-world flowers.

Came at last a year whose dreadful memory tradition yet keeps fresh, when grim Pestilence stalking through the land invaded the peaceful village that nestled in the shadow of the monastery walls. Like frightened children its people fled for aid to their strong, brave helpers, and splendidly the monks gave battle, wrestling for each precious life or speeding with faith's sweet comforts the passing soul.

Deep in the massive oak frame of the great altar an unknown hand has carved the question, "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" and though Angelico so long has slumbered in the graveyard mid the pines, across the centuries we seem to catch his splendid, silent answer.

—Maud Regan, in the Rosary Magazine.

HAVE PATIENCE STILL.

O Father, when my heart grows lone, And I would be where all is rest, I give Thee thanks, my thought is known

Thou Thee, whose will is always best, For I am weak, and human pain Has ever pressed upon my way, And, wearied oft, with stress and strain, My burden at Thy feet I'd lay!

Yet, I, again, am glad to bear Whatever cross Thy love may send, For well I know didst Thou not care, No grief would e'er on me attend. So, Father, should my heart complain, Because sore-crushed beneath its load, Have patience still; Thine ire restrain, And help me on the weary road! —Amadeus, O.S.F., in St. Anthony's Messenger.

THE POPE AND THE BLIND.

The following touching scene in Rome, is recorded by one of our exchanges.—

One of the most famous of the many charitable institutions of Rome is the blind asylum attached to the historic Church of St. Alexius, on the Aventine. For many years past a part of the fees received at the Vatican have been devoted to the maintenance of this institute, so that it may be said in a special sense a Pontifical institution. Last week the superiors addressed a petition to the Holy Father asking him to grant the consolation of his poor blind children of being admitted to his presence.

The request was granted the day it was made, and within twenty-four hours afterward a singularly touching scene took place in the Loggia of Raphael. One noticed the absence of the usual cheering and commotion which attend the appearance of the Holy Father. The four or five score of blind men of all ages had to be told by the guides that the Holy Father was already among them. Then one of them stood out a little from the rest and delivered a brief address, in which he said that though they were deprived of the happiness of seeing the face of the Holy they knew it was one to be loved and revered.

His Holiness was deeply touched and the tears stood in his eyes when the group began to sing with exquisite feeling the Pope's hymn and the "Ave Maria." After giving each of them his ring to kiss, and bestowing medals on all present, he spoke to them encouragingly and expressed his great satisfaction at the wonderful progress they had made in the different trades and occupations they had learnt in their home. Then he retired to his apartment, while his blind visitors were led carefully down one of the great staircases of the Vatican.

THE CHURCH IN SCOTLAND.

The Catholic Church is making rapid strides in Scotland. Scarce a week passes that the erection of a church, school or presbytery cannot be chronicled. Irishmen and Irishwomen are truly fulfilling their mission—that of spreading the light—in the "Land of mountain and brown heather"—the land of their adoption. Looking at the subscription lists in the different parishes, the names of Irishmen figure prominently.

Within the past few weeks in St. Patrick's parish towards the erection of a high altar, a prominent Irishman in the person of Mr. James Grant, J.P., subscribed \$500; Mr. Peter Maguire, \$500; Mr. T. Colgan, \$250, etc. In St. Andrew's Cathedral parish, Mr. Dominick McCreadie subscribed \$500; Mr. Edw. McLaughlin, \$500; Mr. Hugh Boyle, \$500, etc.; while another Irishman who has withheld his name, has given \$2,500 to the seminary, Bearsden.

Another fact worthy of record is, that bigotry is largely on the wane in Scotland. Whether this is due to the largely increasing Irish population and the prominent position as citizens in which they have placed themselves, or to the broadmindedness of Scotchmen in this twentieth century, we cannot tell, but the fact remains that Catholic Irishmen are daily being more respected and considered and placed on equal footing with their Scotch fellow-townsmen. This is only as it should be, and Irishmen have themselves to thank for this change in the times in Scotland.

A further evidence of this change of spirit in Scotchmen was to be found in the reception accorded to Mr. T. P. O'Connor, M.P., on his recent visit to Glasgow. Coming as he did, on the invitation of Scotchmen, to lecture to the Scotch Society of Literature and Art in Glasgow Athenaeum on "Parliament and its Personalities," his reception was most cordial, and the impression he made a lasting one. Speaking of Mr. O'Connor's lecture to a leading Glasgow merchant, who was present on the occasion referred to, he said: "I was simply entranced with your countryman's eloquence, and so were the vast crowd who listened to him. It was the greatest treat I ever listened to."

Whatever you may have in your purse, carry hope in your heart and spend it freely.

No true man believes that it is not possible to do great things without great riches.

Card of Thanks.

The Sisters of Charity of St. Patrick's Orphan Asylum desire to warmly thank their many friends who so generously remembered the orphans on Christmas day.

To one, and all, we return our most appreciative thanks, and such a return as lies in our power we gladly and unflinchingly make in all our devotions.

The grateful daily petitions of our little ones, will we trust bring abundant blessings upon their kind benefactors and assure them a bright and prosperous New Year.