

THOMAS DAVIS.

Ireland's Great Journalist, Poet, and Patriot

Thomas Davis was born at Mallow, Ireland, in 1814, and died in his thirty-first year.

What might be called the public life of Davis occupied the short space of three years, from the founding of the "Nation" newspaper in 1842 to his death in 1845. Yet, short as was his life, and brief as was his time of labor for his native land, there are few names which shine more brilliantly, or whose memories are more fervently revered in all that grand muster-roll of Irish patriots. His fame was gained in Ireland, and in the cause of Ireland. By reason of conditions which have prevailed in Ireland for centuries many of her ablest sons have achieved their reputation in foreign lands; there was not a sufficient scope or apparent outlet for their talents in the land of their birth, so they had to go where more favorable circumstances prevailed. O'Connell's reputation was gained in Ireland, in the service of the Irish people, but his public life extended over a long period of years, and the people had time to accustom themselves to his name and personality. It is difficult to assign the particular reason why the memory of Davis is held in such high honor by his countrymen. It may be because of his gift of poetry, or because he was a recruit from the ranks of Toryism; or because of his singleness of purpose, his unworldliness, his probity, his high ideal of Irish nationality. Or it may be because of his thorough-going rebellious principles, his detestation of foreign rule, and his aim of bringing all Irishmen, the descendants of the Dane, the Norman, the Saxon, and the native Celt, into one great organization, that would disavow the rule of the alien. A poem he wrote illustrates his feeling on that point: "Boyne's old water, Red with slaughter! Now is as pure as an infant at play; So, in our souls It's history rolls And Orange and Green will carry the day."

This is a fragment of autobiography written by himself; "My father was a gentleman of Welsh blood, but his family had been so long settled in England that they were, and considered themselves, English. He held a commission in the English army. I am descended on my mother's side from a Cromwellian settler whose descendants, though they occasionally intermarried with Irish families, continued Protestants, and in the English interest, and suffered for it in 1688. I myself was brought up High Tory and an Episcopalian Protestant, and, if I am no longer Tory, it is from conviction, for all those nearest and dearest to me are so still."

Davis' gift of poetry was of a high order. Two of his poems, Irishmen will not let die so long as there is a spark of national feeling, and a pride in past achievements lingering in their breasts. The "Lament of Owen Roe O'Neill" is forcible and dramatic: "Did they dare, did they dare To slay Owen Roe O'Neill? Yes, they slew with poison him They feared to meet with steel. May God wither up their hearts! May their blood cease to flow! May they walk in living death, Who poisoned Owen Roe!"

"The Battle of Fontenoy" recites an incident in the career of the exiled Irish Brigade, who, after the defeat of James II, entered the service of Louis of France. It is a "rebel song," and, therefore, known only to the Irish, but it is the peer of the best war songs in the English language. It moves along in stately grandeur and soon breaks forth into a fierce enthusiasm that it is difficult to withstand. He does not underestimate the opponents against whom the Irish Brigade are pitted; "Six thousand English veterans, In stately column tread; Their cannon blaze in front; and flank; Lord Hay is at their head; Steady they climb adown the slope— Steady they climb the hill— Steady they load—steady they fire, Moving right onward still. Betwixt the wood and Fontenoy, As through a furnace blast, Through rampart, trench, and palisade Bullets showing fast; And on the open plain above, They rose, and kept their course, With ready fire and steadiness, That mocked at hostile force; Past Fontenoy, past Fontenoy, While thinner grow their ranks, They break, as broke the Zuyder-Zee, Through Holland's ocean banks."

On through the camp the column trod, King Louis turns his rein. "Not yet, my liege," Saxo interposed; "The Irish troops remain!" And Fontenoy, famed Fontenoy, Had been a Waterloo. Were not these callous ready then, Fresh, vehement, and true, "Lord Clare," he says, "you have your wish— These are your Saxon foes!" The marshal almost smiles to see How furiously he goes! How fierce the look these exiles wear, Who're wont to be so gay! The trawled wrongs of fifty years Are in their hearts to-day— The treaty broken, ere the ink Was dry, their plundered homes, their ruined shrines, Their women's pining cry; Their meekness hunted down like wolves; Their country overgrown— Each looks as if revenge for all

Rested on him alone. On Fontenoy, on Fontenoy, Nor ever yet above, Rushed on to fight a nobler band Than these proud exiles were."

His prose writings are, if anything, superior to his poetry, and he was not afraid to speak out, whether in denunciation of his country's rulers, or in reprimand of rash allies. This is bold writing for the year 1842, in Ireland:

"You raise five millions a year from us, and you spend it on English commissioners, English dockyards, English museums, English ambition, and English pleasure. With an enormous taxation, our public offices have been removed to London, and you threaten to remove our Courts of Justice and our Lord Lieutenant, the poor trappings of old nationhood. We have no arsenals, no public employment here. Our literary, scientific, and charitable institutions, so bountifully endowed by a native Legislature, you have forced away, till out of that enormous surplus revenue raised here, not £10,000 a year comes back for such purposes, while you heaped hundred upon hundred thousands into the lap of every English institution. For national education you dribble out £50,000 a year—not enough for our smallest Province. Will you redress these things? No, but you boast of your liberality in giving us anything"

This is a rebuke to some who took vengeance into their own hands. "The people of Munster are in want— will murder feed them? Is there some prolific virtue in the blood of a landlord that the fields of the South will yield a richer crop where it has flowed? Shame, shame, and horror! Oh, to think that these hands, hard with innocent toil, should be reddened with assassination. Oh, bitter, bitter griefs, that the loving breasts of Munster should pillow heads wherein are black pots and visions of butchery, and shadows of remorse! Oh, woe unutterable, if the men who abandoned the sin of drunkenness should companion with the devil of murder; and if the men who last year vowed patience, order, and virtue, rashly and impiously revel in crime."

These few extracts from a short paper on "The State of the Peasantry," show us with what effect a master can use the language, and betray a strenuous feeling, that if opportunity offered would express itself in notes. "In a climate soft as a mother's smile, on a soil fruitful as God's love, the Irish peasant mourns. He is unconsolated. Faith in the joys of another world, heightened by his woe in this, give him hours when he scarcely looks down on the torments that encircle him—the moon on a troubled sky. . . . Consider his griefs— they begin in the cradle—they end in the grave. Suckled by a breast that is supplied from unwholesome or insatiable food, and that is fevered with anxiety— reeking with the smoke of an almost chimney-less cabin—assaulted by wind and rain when the weather rages— breathing, when it is calm, the exhalations of a rotten roof, of clay walls, and of manure, which give him his only chance of food—he is apt to perish in his infancy. . . . Advancing youth brings him labor; but youth and manhood leave his roof rotten, his chimney one hole, his window another, his clothes rags (at best ruffled by a holiday catamore) his furniture, a pot, a table, a few hay chairs, and rickety stools—his food, lumpers and water—his bedding, straw and a coverlet—his enemies, the landlord, the tax-gatherer, and the law—his consolation, the priest and his wife—his hope on earth, agitation—his hope hereafter, the Lord God."

His address before the Dublin Historical Society, of which society he was president, is worthy to be read and pondered upon by all young men:—"Gentlemen, let the Purists and Calvinists pour out their gloomy and often hypocritical invectives against the weakness of man; I have no sympathy with their declarations; the path of reasonable virtue may be narrow; but they make it a sword-bridge.—God made it wider. He made man, and the path of his pilgrimage or triumph. He limits our aberrations as He steers the courses of the sun—to no unvarying road—employing our errors to instruct us, justifying his attributes to Himself, and ultimately to us; and He so made man that 'to step aside is human.' Do not, therefore, suppose me a pedant in morals, when I tell you that to spend the noon of life in trifles or indulgences is for a feeble and degenerate mind. God forbid that we should so sin against human nature as to become cold, gloomy, and ambitious. No! I rejoice that is not the side we err to. But, gentlemen, a manhood of pleasure precludes an old age of care, a death of contempt. In that dangerous time, therefore, ere professional business, like a mentor, comes to our aid, how useful such societies as this must be in leading the mind from frivolous thoughts to grave studies, and preparing the spirit for stirring scenes; even then as an occupation of so much time otherwise likely to be 'loosed away, a membership of our society is useful. It is perhaps more useful in this way

than as a school of oratory; whether it shall be a school of eloquence or eloquently depends more on the management of it; but whether well or ill-used, it teaches things which a citizen should know."

Davis died on the eve of the great Irish famine which precipitated an abortive insurrection, resulting so disastrously to those engaged in it. Ireland, the country he worked for, had changed since that day. She has been depleted by one-half her population; her laws are said to be more justly administered, by the people are not yet reconciled to the rule of the alien; and the end no man can foresee.

JW O'CONNOR.

CHILDREN'S CORNER

WHY SOME MEN FAIL.

My song is this; why some men miss, In life their chosen goal— They seek to fill, with half the will, A plan that needs the whole.

They sow the seed on mount and mead And wait to see it spread; While, half concerned, they leave, unturned, The clod upon its head.

They waste in play the light of day, Knowing that there will come, At even-fall, the welcome call To rest the unearned crumb.

Thus down the tide of life they glide, In poverty and pain, Leaving undone, from sun to sun, The things that lead to gain.

But when the last lone hope is past, No more to light their way; And all is lost—they learn the cost Of doing things half-way.

—Success, for March.

FLOATING BOTTLES.

An excellent article on the work of the Hydrographic Office appears in the Windsor Magazine, in which some curious facts are recorded of the many derelicts and other "wanderers" that float about the ocean. "After reports of daily observations, one of the most fruitful sources of information to the Hydrographic Office is the sealed bottle. Every captain, before starting on a voyage, is furnished with a number of bottles, with a printed form for each, in which is to be entered the time and place at which the bottle is cast overboard, and, in case it is recovered, also the time and place of the recovery. Full directions for its use are printed on the form in seven different languages—English, French, German, Dutch, Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese—so that into whatever hands the bottle comes, the purpose of it can scarcely fail to be found out. The name of the captain, the name of the ship, and the time and place of setting the bottle afloat having all been duly entered, the form is sealed up in the bottle and the bottle is picked up and opened, the form—well preserved, if the sealing has been careful—is taken out, the entry of the finding made in the same manner as the entry of the casting overboard, and the form transmitted either to a convenient United States Consul, or directly to the Hydrographic Office at Washington. The special purpose of the sealed bottle is to be indication of the strength and direction of the ocean currents. When a bottle is cast loose on the water, the currents, of course, take it up and carry it in their own direction, at their own rate of speed. With the time and place of starting and stopping all accurately recorded, many valuable inferences are possible regarding the course and character of the journey. And very curious and romantic the journey often proves to be. Sometimes a captain, on finding a bottle, opens it and makes the due record in the form, and then, recasting it, casts it overboard for a second journey. Bottles have been recovered that have floated over 4,000 miles, and others that have been in the water over a year. Some have followed tortuous courses; some have gone straight across the Atlantic in the wake of the ocean liners; some have been picked up in mid-ocean, some have been found scraping up and down rough beaches, and some have even been found in the bellies of sharks. Many are lost, of course, but it is often marvellous the way in which they survive delay and disaster, and turn up to report their story for record in the charts which the Hydrographic Office is always busy compiling out of this, as out of other, information."

THE GULF STREAM'S COURSE.

Professor Nansen has made the following statements with regard to the results of the experiments conducted during his last expedition on the Michael Sars, which has lately returned to Norway. "The Gulf Stream, he says, is subjected to great changes, and very little is as yet known as to its strength in winter. It was much

weaker on the Norwegian coast this year than usually is the case, and the temperature was consequently lower. At the same time a very warm summer has been experienced in the west of Iceland, and the current that passes there was warmer this summer than usual. In general, the warm water coming from the Atlantic into the northern regions this summer appears to have had a different distribution than its usual one. This is most important as regards the climatic conditions on the coasts which the stream passes.

It is generally admitted that the Gulf Stream considerably affects the climate of the western coast of Britain and Norway, of Iceland, and possibly even of Spitzbergen. The effect is most marked in winter. While the harbors of the Baltic are icebound, those on the western coast of Norway, even as far north as Hammerfest, are always open to shipping. In Great Britain the lines of equal temperature in January run nearly north and south, instead of almost east and west, as in July, so that anyone in Middleborough would find a warmer climate in midwinter by going to Whitehaven than by travelling due south to an equal distance. This also is one of the reasons why Aberdeen at that time is much warmer than Vienna. The late eminent mathematician, Dr. W. Hopkins, estimated that without the Gulf Stream the mean annual temperature of Carnarvonshire would be seven and a half degrees, that of the north of Scotland fully twelve degrees, and that of Iceland as much as twenty degrees lower than at present.

From the Gulf of Mexico, where its waters are raised to a warmth of seventy-seven degrees Fahrenheit, and in summer up to eighty-three degrees Fahrenheit, it issues like a huge river of warmer water flowing over the vast mass of the cooler ocean beneath. As it issues from between Florida and Cuba it is equivalent to a stream about fifty miles broad and more than a hundred fathoms deep, which is then flowing at a rate of from three to four miles an hour. Gradually it spreads out like a partly opened fan, the more eastern part losing itself in the Atlantic, the western and stronger flowing steadily in a north-easterly direction, and fended off from the American coast by the cold current which is returning southward from Arctic regions. Thus it plays on Northwestern Europe like a stream flowing from a hose, and the water, which has left the Gulf of Mexico in the hot summer months probably comes near to the other side of the Atlantic in the winter season. The amount of heat which it transfers was estimated by the late Dr. Croft as being equal to what is received from the sun by rather more than a million and a half square miles at the equator.

This heat is slowly radiated by the broad layer of flowing water as it journeys from the boiler in the Gulf of Mexico to the refrigerator in the Arctic seas. But Professor Nansen's observations suggest that the current does not always follow precisely the same path. That, indeed, is only to be expected. While its general direction will be constant—for that depends on great physical causes—minor variations are possible. If, for instance, the southward flowing Arctic currents be a little stronger than usual, they will push the Gulf Stream rather more to the east, and then Iceland will suffer. If the observations were taken over a sufficiently wide area of North Atlantic, and for a long enough time, it might be possible for to prophesy the direction which the Gulf Stream would follow in its journey across the Atlantic, and the places on which it would have the greatest influence at any particular time—in other words, to foretell what kind of a season the farmer might expect.

QUEEN VICTORIA AND HER LITTLE ARTISTS.

When her children were in their short frock and knickerbocker days, the Queen made them write a little diary of their doings, which she passed upon nightly in the royal nursery. Often the youngsters were hard up for "copy," and used to appeal for help to the members of the household. They repaid their helpers by giving them sketches made by themselves, which differed in no way from the dogs and horses and houses of the ordinary child. One of the household, now dead, preserved some forty or fifty of these alleged drawings, and, not long since, and enjoining magazine made his widow a handsome offer for them. The Queen heard of this, and sent for Lady H—

"Please do not dispose of them," Her Majesty said; "I cannot bear to think of things that have so many tender and sacred associations passing into hands other than ours." It need hardly be added that the Queen's wishes were honored, and Lady H— furthermore, gave the album which contained the nursery relics to the mother of the little artists.

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A DETECTIVE HORSE. A writer in the Herald and Presbyter, who once lived in California gives the following strange story: "My health failed me in Washington, I was so much confined; and I thought I would go and ranch it in California in the mountains. So I went, purchased land, then returned for Mrs. H. I was appointed mail deliverer in the mountains, and on one of my routes the mail could only be delivered on horseback. I hired a trusty young man of my acquaintance for this route. He chose from my horses a hardy little mare; he was very fond of her and treated her like something human; and she, as was proven, was equally fond of him. He was always on time on his route, but one day he failed to return; so the next day a search was begun for him, and they found him murdered, his mail-bags gone, but his horse standing by him whinnying in a mournful way to call him to get up and go on with her. She would not let anyone near the body until I came. We then raised him up and laid him on her back and bound him there; she went carefully home with him. We had in the neighborhood and surrounding country a band of thieves and cutthroats. It was nothing unusual to hear of some robbery, and murders also. I first ascertained if any of them was missing, and one living not far from me was. I determined to hunt him and prosecute the case. I accordingly offered a liberal reward for the missing man and in about two months he was apprehended and brought in, and as the posse was coming with him one of my men had brought the little mare out to water. She raised her head, sniffed the air and looked around the crowd; her eyes fell on him, and, breaking away from the man who had her, she made for the murderer with mouth open, ears laid back, and a more frightful creature I never saw, and they had all they could do to keep her from killing him there. He confessed his guilt before he was executed. The little mare was the only witness besides God of the murder."

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AN ARMY KITTEN. One evening toward the close of the war, while Union soldiers lay in camp on a hillside near the Staunton River, in Virginia, the cry of "Halt! Who goes there?" from a sentry, started every tongue to his feet, and several of the more curious ran to the guard-line to find out what the trouble was. A minute later all knew that the night visitor who had been challenged was no enemy. A little girl, about ten years of age, holding a white kitten in her arms, came forward into the light of the fires, conducted by two soldiers, who had told the sentry to pass her in, and who looked as proud as if they were escorting a queen. The whole regiment gathered, including the colonel himself, to look at the child, and hear her tell her story. A very short story it was, scarcely a paragraph; but there was matter enough in it for a full chapter. She lived near by, with her father, who was sick and poor; and they were Northerners, she said, and "Union folks." Her mother was dead and her brother had been killed while fighting in the Federal army. She "wanted to give something," and, when the Union soldiers came, she thought she would bring her pet kitten and present it to the colonel. The colonel took the little girl in his arms and kissed her, and said he was not a bit ashamed of his weakness. He accepted the kitten with thanks, and its innocent donor was gallantly waited on to her humble home, loaded with generous contributions.

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