

SOME SPECIMENS OF IRISH WIT.

Keey and Redolent of the Old Sod.

The New York Sun of the 19th ult. has a delightful review of what must be a charming book. We take the liberty of quoting it entire:

It is long since we have seen a book so full of entertaining matter as the Seventy Years of Irish Life, by W. R. Le Fanu (Macmillan's). This volume is stuffed as full of anecdotes as a Christmas pudding is with plums. We will first tell the reader who the author is, and then proceed to give some samples of the good things set before him. Mr. W. R. Le Fanu, who is now some seventy-seven years old, is a younger brother of Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu, well-known as a writer of novels and Irish ballads. At the time of our author's birth his father was a chaplain to the Royal Irish Military School in the Phoenix Park, Dublin, but ten years later he was appointed Dean of Emlay and Rector of Abington in the county of Limerick. Here the boy William received his early education under a private tutor until he entered Trinity College, Dublin. After graduation he became a Civil Engineer, and during the greater part of his life was employed in connection with Irish railways until he ultimately received from the Government the post of Commissioner of Public Works. The nature of his vocation brought him in continual contact with all classes of people, and some of the witty sayings in this book are taken directly from the lips of peasants and car drivers.

TRYING TO KEEP UP HIS COURAGE.

It is asserted that in giving answers the Irish peasantry, as a rule, have no great regard for facts, but like to make the reply which they think will be more agreeable to the questioner. For example, our author tells us that a poor Italian organ-grinder, weary after a long walk, asked a peasant whom he met near Carricktuohil, how far he was from Cork. "Just four short miles," was the answer. "What do you mean?" said a priest, who happened to pass at the time, "by deceiving the poor fellow? You know well enough that it's eight long miles." "Sure, your reverence," said the other, "I seen the poor boy was tired, and I wanted to keep his courage up. If he heard your reverence—but I'm pleased to hear he didn't—he'd be downhearted entirely."

Another story illustrating the same propensity is said to be well-known in Kerry. An Irish gentleman was shooting with an English friend, a Mr. B. They had very little sport. So Mr. B. said, "I'll ask this countryman whether there are any birds about here." "No use to ask him, said his companion, "he'll only tell you lies." "I'll ask him at all events," said Mr. B. "My good man, are there any birds about here?" "Lots of birds, your honor," said he. "Tell me what sort of birds." "Well, now, your honor, there's grouse, and woodcock, and snipes, and ducks, and tillabines, and all sorts of birds." "Ask him," whispered the Irish gentleman, "whether there are any thermometers." "Tell me," said B. "do you ever see any thermometers about here?" "Well, now, your honor, if there was a nice frost the place would be alive with them." Many years afterward, as our author drove with his wife from Killarney to Kenmare, he told her the story. She said she could hardly believe it. He said: "I'll try with this boy, and you'll see he'll say much the same." So he said to the bare-legged boy, who was running along beside the carriage, "What is the name of the little river near us?" "Tis the Finnhyr, your honor." "Are there any fish in it?" "There is, your honor." "What sort of fish?" "There do be trout and eels, your honor." "Any salmon?" "There do be an odd one." "Any white trout?" "There do be a good lot of them." "Any thermometers?" "Them does be there, too, your honor, but they comes up later in the season than the white throats."

WIT IN THE WITNESS BOX.

If any one doubts that the Irish peasantry are largely endowed with mother wit he should hear the answers which some of them make in the witness box to cross-examiners. Our author was present when a very bullying counsel named Freeman was completely put out in his cross-examination by a very simple answer. A countryman who was a witness was asked, "So you had a pistol?" "I had, sir." "Who did you intend to shoot with it?" "I wasn't intending to shoot no one." "Then was it for nothing that you got it?" "No, it wasn't." "Come, come, sir, on the virtue of your solemn oath, what did you get that pistol for?" "On the virtue of my solemn oath, I got it for three and ninepence in Mr. Richardson's shop." At another time the same counsel said to a witness, "You're a nice fellow, ain't you?" Witness replied, "I am, sir, and if I was not on my oath I'd say the same of you." Another instance of the Irish peasant's gift for repartee. It seems that one Judge Burton, who was a very old and wizened little man, was trying a case, when another very old man, a peasant scarcely able to walk, came into court to give evidence. Instead of going to the witness box he went toward the passage leading to the bench. One of the counsel called out to him, "Come back, sir; where are you going? Do you think you are a judge?" "Indeed, sir," said the old man, looking up at Judge Burton, "indeed, sir, I believe I am fit for little else."

QUICK-WITTED CAR DRIVERS.

Our author's works as an engineer involved much travelling by coach and car in country and in town, and many a quick-witted driver he has met. One old fellow drove him to his office on a

bitterly cold winter's morning. He arrived in a snowstorm, and never did he see, he tells us, such a picture of suffering from the cold as the poor old man. His whiskers and his beard were stiff with frost and snow, and miniature icicles depended from his nose. Having paid him his fare, Mr. Le Fanu said to him (a little unfeelingly, perhaps), "I hope the midges are not biting you this morning?" "Bedad, they are, your honor," he answered, "an it's what I think this heat (heat) will be for thunder." A friend of our author's, the Rev. Dr. Marshall, a well-known convert to Rome, who was a very large man, weighing about twenty stone, took a covered car from Dublin to Drimconrath. Before he got into the car he asked the driver to tell him what the fare was. "I have that to you, your reverence." "But how much is it?" "Whatever your reverence pleases." "That won't do. I shall not get into the car till you tell me the fare." "Get in at once, your reverence, for, if the horse turns and gets a sight of you, the devil a step he'll go at all."

JUDGE AND COUNSELLOR PART EVEN.

Many are the stories Mr. Le Fanu has heard of Irish judges and barristers in former days. One of the best was connected with a case tried in Limerick before Chief Baron O'Grady. A barrister named Bushe was making a speech for the defence, when an ass began to bray loudly outside the court. "Wait a moment," said the Chief Baron. One at a time, Mr. Bushe, if you please." The barrister waited for a chance to retort, and it came presently. When O'Grady was charging the jury, the ass again began to bray, if possible more loudly than before. "I beg your pardon, my lord," said Bushe. "May I ask you to repeat your last words?" there is such an echo in this court I did not quite catch them." A well-known Irish judge, the late Judge B., had an idiosyncrasy that sometimes had amusing consequences. This was that he frequently misunderstood, or pretended to misunderstand, what witnesses examined before him said. For instance, in the north of Ireland, the peasantry pronounce the word witness "wetness." At Derry Assizes, a man said he had brought his "wetness" with him to corroborate his evidence. "Bless me," said the judge, "about what age are you?" "Forty-two, my last birthday, my lord." "Do you mean to tell the jury that, at that age, you still have a wet nurse?" "Of course I have, my lord." Counsel hereupon interposed and explained. The most remarkable of the anecdotes recounted of this Judge is the following: At Clonmel Assizes several men were indicted for manslaughter. A witness was asked whether he could swear that one of the prisoners, Pat Ryan, had done anything to the deceased man. "Yes," he said, "when poor Ned Sullivan was lying on the ground weltering in his blood, Pat Ryan came up and gave him a wipe of a clay alpin on the back of his head."

AMUSING LETTERS.

Particularly from farmers who were borrowers, under the Land Improvement Act. Here is one which came from a man to whom Mr. Le Fanu had refused the second installment of a loan because he had misapplied the first: "Sir: I spent the money all right; send me the rest, and don't be humbling me any more. Send it at once, I tell ye. Hell to your soul! send me my money, or I'll write to Mr. Parnell about it. Yours affectionately, James Ryan." Here is one of these letters. It was from a small farmer, who had in his hands the remnants of a loan (eight pounds sterling), which he would neither expend nor refund. After many fruitless endeavors to make him do one or the other, a peremptory letter was sent to him, to which came the following reply: "My dear Secretary and Gentlemen of the Honorable Board of Works. Asking me to give back eight pounds is just like asking a beautiful and healthy young lady for a divorce, and she in the oughtmost love with her husband as I am with each and every one of ye. I am your sincere friend, James Clark." None of these letters is so laughable as a story which was told to Mr. Le Fanu by one of his colleagues at the Board of Works. An Irish gentleman had a splendid looking cow, but it kicked so much that it took a very long time and it was nearly impossible to milk her: so he sent her to a fair to be sold, and told his herdsmen to be sure not to sell her without letting the buyer know her faults. He brought home a large price which he had got for it. His master was surprised and said: "Are you sure you told all about her?" "Bedad, I did, sir," said the herdsmen. "He asked me whether she was a good milker." "Begorra, sir," says I, "it's what you'd be tired milking her."

IN A CHAPTER ON

SHOOTING AND FISHING.

Mr. Le Fanu tells us that, in his active days, the snipe shooting near Killarney was particularly good. Lord Kenmare, he says, had kindly given him leave to shoot over all his property there, except the woods and coverts. So did Herbert of Muckross over all his, with the exception of one estate, which he preserved for himself and friends who might be staying with him at Muckross. There is reason to believe, however, that this preserved estate was sometimes visited with poachers from Killarney, for as our author was shooting on the adjoining land, his attendant, one Callaghan McCarthy, said to him: "Your honor might as well try that other bog beyond there." "Callaghan," I said, "don't you know I have not leave from Mr. Herbert to shoot there?" "What matter, your honor?" replied he. "Sure, you might as well shoot it as any other blackguard out of Killarney." At Millville, some twenty miles west of Tralee, Mr. Le Fanu had some of his best shooting days. One evening however, he sank nearly to his middle in a bog, and but for the help of the man who was carrying his game bag, might not have pulled himself out. He was nearly in as bad a plight, he tells us, as the gentleman about whom a girl called out to her father, "Oh, father, father! Come out quick and help Mr. Nitegan. He is up to his ankles in the bog!" "Well, Mary," was the answer, "what harm will that do him?" "Ah, but father, sure his head is downward," said she. It appears that the peasantry in most parts of Ireland admire no woman who is not fat and plump.

THE HIGHEST COMPLIMENT

they can pay a lady is to tell her she is growing fat. At his fishing quarters in Kerry the author had a good example of this. On his arrival an old woman said to his wife, "Ah, then, ma'am, you're looking grand entirely, God bless you! and you're fallen greatly into meat since last you were here." Another time, at Glenstal, the author's wife went to see the wife of the game-keeper, Mrs. Neal, who was

very fat, at least three or four stone heavier than Mrs. Le Fanu. "Ah, then, ma'am," said she, "I'm proud to see you looking so well and so fat." "Well," said my wife, "I don't think you have much to complain of in that respect, Mrs. Neal." "Ah, ma'am," said she, "how could a poor woman like me be as fat as a lady like you?" Small or thin men are not admired either. The author has heard of a sturdy beggar who said to a pale, emaciated youth, who would not give him anything, "Bad luck to you, you deserter from the churchyard." Mrs. Le Fanu was told by Mrs. Martin of Ross that some time ago, as she was going out for a walk, a poor woman was at the hall door, with whom she had the following conversation. The poor woman began: "Ah, then, ma'am, God bless you! and won't you give your poor widdy something?" "But you are not a widow." "Begorra, I am, ma'am, and a very poor widdy with three small children." "But, my good woman, I know your husband perfectly well." "Of course you do, ma'am; but sure, that poor little insignificant craythur is not worth mentioning."

WE MUST STOP OUR BORROWING

from this delightful book with the following story which our author heard at Killarney and which shows how differently an Irishman and a Scotchman will take a joke. An Englishman who had been fishing the lower lakes said to his boatman: "An extraordinary thing happened to me some time ago. I lost a pair of scissors out of my fishing book at the end of the lake. The next year I was fishing here again, and hooked and killed a very large pike. So I opened him, and what do you think it was?" "Begorra, then, your honor, I'd think it might be your scissors, only for one little thing." "What is that?" asked the other. "It's only just this, your honor, that there never was a pike in any of the Killarney lakes since the world began." Afterward the same Englishman tried the same story on a gillie in Scotland. When he asked him: "What do you think was inside the pike?" the gillie replied: "Your scissors and nae gus, and the Duke of Argyle—and he's a far greater man than the King—would not have insulted me sae. I'll fish nae mare wi' ye," and off he walked.

AN IRISHMAN AND A SCOTCHMAN

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THE SAME EVERYWHERE.

There are not many things which strike the intelligent Catholic with a sensation of deeper surprise and wonder than the position occupied by the many good men and women who are still content to remain outside the Church. That the bad, the careless and the idle should remain where they are is easily intelligible. The Church of God is repulsive to the profligate and the immoral because she requires a strictness of life which such people cannot endure. The careless and the idle hate her, because she has a coherent system. The ideal of a Church for such people is one where interesting sermons are preached, where there is much talk of the "higher life," but where definite faith is unknown—where, indeed, it is denounced as slavery binding down the human intellect. Until such people can be made to comprehend that, whatever else the Church may be, it must from the necessity of the case have some settled dogmas: it is mere waste of time to reason with them.

With those good and serious persons,

who love truth for its own sake, the case is far different. It is impossible not to feel the deepest sympathy for them, and pity for their errors, and yet in the great majority of cases it is, humanly speaking, impossible to help them. They cannot, by any means we command, be led to see the Church as she is. This is often painfully demonstrated by books of foreign travel in those parts of Continental Europe where the teachings of the new religions are never received. We are about to make a long quotation from a book which was published but a short time ago. Its title is Way-faring in France, by E. H. Barker. We know nothing whatever of Mr. Barker's history beyond that his book discloses. From its pages we gather that he is a learned and cultivated gentleman, who though without any of the old-fashioned prejudices against Catholicism is, at the same time, almost entirely devoid of sympathy with it. Yet ever and anon we come upon pages where except for a slight blunder here and there, we might imagine that a Catholic was discoursing with us. The passage we are about to extract not only gives a true picture of what may be seen any day in Brittany, but also indirectly shows how very far the author must be from realizing what must be the effect of unsullied faith, not only among the Celts of Western France, but everywhere else throughout the entire world, where the truth is received in childlike simplicity. Mr. Barker is speaking of Plogoff in Lower Brittany: "The next day was Sunday, and the bell for the first Mass began to ring soon after 5. The church was in the middle of the cemetery, and here, as the day was breaking, I saw kneeling at the foot of the grave mounds some twenty or thirty women, their heads covered with black cloth hoods that fell far over their shoulders. At the foot of the great crucifix that rose above all the same crosses around it, like an ancient pine left standing in a young pine wood, knelt two men bare-headed. There they knelt these men and women on this grand October morning, before the shadows of night had fled from the churchyard, them-

selves like darker shadows. Their only movement was that of their lips as they prayed, and of their fingers as the rosary beads slipped through them; and the hard granite or wet sand was under their knees. A sight like this makes one realize the fervor of the early Christian age, and the little faith that remains in the modern world. Piety is a great comforter of these poor fisher people on the rude coast of Finistere. They bear with patience the trials of their daily life—the want of food and fire in winter, the disappointments of the fishing season, the hardships and danger of depending upon the uncertain sea—because their hope rests on an eternity of peace, when the ever-moving water, or the churchyard turf shall have covered them. (p. 239). This is a most lovely description. None, whatever may be his faith, can read it without feeling his heart warm to those simple and pious Breton fisher folk, but it is passing strange that Mr. Barker should think that he has come upon something singular. Does he not know that go where you will, throughout the wide world, where Catholic civilization is permitted to develop freely, devotion of a kind identical with what he saw in Lower Brittany must grow up? Scenes like that which he describes were to be seen in every English churchyard until that upheaval called the Reformation swept away faith, hope and charity from the hearts of the people, and compelled those who still remained faithful to their God to worship in secret. We have heard that devotions identical in spirit with what Mr. Barker witnessed, may be seen any day among the Catholic Indians; such is certainly the case in Ireland. In England, living as Catholics do among Protestant surroundings, the manner in which devotion presents itself is somewhat different, but the spirit is the same. We know a little church in an Eastern County, where the mission is very poor, and where consequently little is to be seen beyond the bare necessities for worship, but the doors of that humble dwelling are always open from early morn till dusk; yet enter it when you will, there is always some one, generally four or five persons, praying before one of the altars. Nearly all the Catholics of the place we are speaking of are very poor people. The trials of daily life, we have no doubt, press on them as heavily as they do on the inhabitants of Finistere.

We have given but one example,

because it alone is very familiar to us

from personal observation, but we

know well there is nothing singular

about it. In almost every Catholic

Church in Britain the same faith and

devotion may be seen.—"Eborac" in

the New Westminster Month.

Meeting The Preacher Half Way.

Dr. Wayland tells a story of a young clergyman who preached a strong temperance sermon. When he had finished a deacon said to him: "I am afraid you have made a mistake. Mr. Jones, who pays the highest pew rent, who contributes liberally to the Sunday-school, and all home and foreign missions, is a wholesale distiller; he will be very angry."

The minister said: "I am sorry;

I will go and explain it to Mr. Jones,

and remove any unfavorable impres-

sion, and tell him I did not mean him."

Accordingly, he waited upon Mr.

Jones, who, in addition to the profes-

sion of distilling, also carried on a

good many other amusements, and was

not distinguished above other men as

being an ascetic.

The pastor expressed his deep re-

gret to Mr. Jones for anything he may

have said in the sermon which might

hurt his feelings—he was extremely

sorry indeed, he did not mean any-

thing by it, and hoped Mr. Jones would

not feel hurt about it.

He was somewhat relieved when,

with a jovial air, Mr. Jones said:

"Oh, bless you, don't mind that at all.

It must be a mighty, blamed poor ser-

mon that don't hit me somewhere.

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