

A POSSIBLE PROMOTION.

An American May Become General of the Ladies of the Sacred Heart.

Catholic Columbian.

A recent item of religious intelligence states that, in consequence of the death of Madame Lebon, the late superior-general of the Order of the Ladies of the Sacred Heart, the duties of her office devolve for the present on her first assistant, Madame Jones, who now resides at the convent of the order which is located at Kenwood, just outside of Albany, N. Y.

The Order of the Ladies of the Sacred Heart, which is represented in very many of our American dioceses, and whose members enjoy a well-merited reputation of being admirable educators, their academies ranking very high in the estimation alike of Catholics and non-Catholics, was founded November 21, 1800, when Mother Barat, with four associates, pronounced their vows in a little chapel in the Rue de Touraine, at Paris.

The Ladies of the Sacred Heart were first introduced into this country through the instrumentality of the Right Rev. William Dubourg, the third prelate of New Orleans, who, pending a visit that he made to France, en route from Rome, where he had just been consecrated, called at the mother-house of the order in Paris, and accepted the offer of Madame Barat, who, at the entreaty of one of the nuns, consented to send a band of her daughters to the New World.

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Mother Duchesne remained at the head of her order in this country up to 1840, when she resigned in favor of Mother Gallitzan, a lady of noble Russian parentage, who had joined the order in France fourteen years before that date, and who signalled her entrance into office here by founding the house which the order opened in New York, in Houston street that same year.

There is something in Catholicism so poetic and attractive—I was about to say so material—that it will ever exercise a charm over the minds and hearts of men. The soul finds a delicious repose in the silent chapels, before the lighted candles, in the suave atmosphere where sweet smelling incense and harmonious music mingle. It nestles close to the bosom of a celestial mother, where it feels itself immersed in sentiments of humility, is filled with filial love and made capable of lifting its thoughts to the Redeemer Himself.

From her headquarters at Manhattanville, Mother Hardy labored to spread the institute of the Sacred Heart in all directions in her district, and her labors were attended with signal success. She saw new convents opened at Cincinnati, Detroit, Philadelphia, Rochester, Albany, Providence and Boston, all of which are now flourishing establishments, the schools at Clifton, Grosse Point, Kenwood and Eden Hall being renowned throughout the entire country.

Her successor at Manhattanville, which is the head of the Eastern province, was the zealous Mother who is now mentioned a possible successor to the late general superior, Mother Lehon.

Madame Sarah Jones, singularly enough, obtained the foundation of her education at a private day school,

which a Protestant lady, Miss Seton, formerly taught in the building on Houston street, New York, wherein, in 1840, Mother Hardy opened the first Sacred Heart Convent in Gotham. Another noteworthy circumstance is the fact that her sister, who is an Episcopalian, is at the head of a community of women who style themselves the Sisters of Mercy of the Episcopalian Church. To Mother Jones' administration the order is indebted for the great advance it has made in the eastern province of recent years, and it was under her wise and far-seeing direction that, after the destruction by fire of the old Manhattanville convent the present magnificent establishment at that place was built. The headquarters of the western province of the order are at Maryville, St. Louis, and that of the southern one at New Orleans.

After her retirement from the head of the order which she introduced into this country, Mother Duchesne, who, in 1840, was succeeded by Mother Gallitzan, continued to reside at St. Louis. When the society, at Bishop Rosati's request, though, decided to establish a mission among the Potawatomesis this venerable Sister went out with some of her companions and toiled there faithfully until her failing health induced the present titular of St. Louis to order her return to St. Charles, where she died in 1853, after twenty-four years of unceasing efforts in behalf of her order in the United States, mourned by more than three hundred nuns of the Sacred Heart then domiciled in the several houses of the society in the country. During the closing years of her life she frequently expressed a desire to establish a convent in South America; but though that happiness was denied her, her prayers must have been heard for she had the consolation of knowing, before her death, that one of her associates had been chosen and sent, with a number of other Sisters, to found a house at Santiago de Chili.

In 1858, the year that Chicago welcomed its first Ladies of the Sacred Heart, a convent was founded by Madame Hardy's directions, at Havana, in Cuba; and it may be here remarked that at the time when the lamented Archbishop Labastide of Mexico City was driven from his See by the influence of the secret societies that dominated the government of Mexico, he found a refuge at the Convent of the Sacred Heart, Manhattanville.

The Sisterhood brought hither from France three-quarters of a century ago, has since spanned the whole country with its establishments and rendered invaluable educational services to the American Catholic Church. It has convents by the Atlantic, and others of its foundation look westward on the Pacific. The great lakes no less than the Gulf of Mexico are witnesses to the work which its devoted members are accomplishing, and among the graduates of its academies are some of the most talented, prominent, and better still, the noblest of American women.

Mother Jones will willingly acknowledge that should the mantle of Mother Barat, Mother Goetz and Mother Lebon fall to her, it will not be unworthily worn.

Power of Catholic Worship.

There is something in Catholicism so poetic and attractive—I was about to say so material—that it will ever exercise a charm over the minds and hearts of men. The soul finds a delicious repose in the silent chapels, before the lighted candles, in the suave atmosphere where sweet smelling incense and harmonious music mingle. It nestles close to the bosom of a celestial mother, where it feels itself immersed in sentiments of humility, is filled with filial love and made capable of lifting its thoughts to the Redeemer Himself.

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ABRAM J. RYAN.

A Memory of the Poet-Priest of the South.

Catholic Columbian.

It might be a decade of years ago that, in a Southern city, within sound of the storm waves of the Gulf of Mexico, a vast throng filled a theater one evening in the early spring. An intense, eager, enthusiastic audience, drawn together by the magic of two names—Robert E. Lee and Father Ryan. A commemorative service was being held in honor of the dead soldier, and the poet-priest was to read a memorial poem. Think of what that meant to that people, just passing out of the shadow of defeated hope—the meaning and the magic of those two names, Robert E. Lee, the Sword of the South, and Abram J. Ryan, the Song of the South.

The curtain is up, some preliminaries are gone through, some explanation of the occasion is given; and then we are aware that Father Ryan has walked out upon the stage. I say, when the society, at Bishop Rosati's request, though, decided to establish a mission among the Potawatomesis this venerable Sister went out with some of her companions and toiled there faithfully until her failing health induced the present titular of St. Louis to order her return to St. Charles, where she died in 1853, after twenty-four years of unceasing efforts in behalf of her order in the United States, mourned by more than three hundred nuns of the Sacred Heart then domiciled in the several houses of the society in the country.

By no means a handsome presence and yet far removed from the commonplace is the picture before us. The strong, well-knit figure does not show to full advantage, from its careless, stooping carriage. The form is more sinewy than robust; the slow walk more suggestive of abstracted thought than weariness. The fine head is almost leonine in its suggestion of strength; and the tawny mane of clustering, straggling curls tossed back does not, in heated moments, lessen the impression. The broad brow, full over the temples, the square jaw, the clearly-chiselled nose, the firm, habitually compressed lips, evidence the virile genius of the poet; as the delicate chin and soft, almost feminine outline of throat, testify to the tenderness that attunes its rugged harmonies. Thoroughly unconventional is the man before us; but I question if any accepted standard could so impress the hushed, expectant audience as did that strange, out-of-date character.

I say "out-of-date" because I believe Father Ryan was the last poet—the lone survivor of the lost tribe of bards who flung customs and conventionality to the wind, and dared to be as free as air. Our poets are conventional as well as our poetry. They are as faithful to their barber and their tailor as bankers or merchants. But our dear, unkempt Father Ryan! How near he came to the traditional ideal of the poet, the bard of ancient days, who was expected to be totally unlike his fellow-men, in all small matters of dress and manner; and who generally realized these expectations.

But I am keeping you longer than Father Ryan keeps his audience. His small roll of MS. is unfolded; and that clear, ready voice, we know so well, is giving out his burning verses. Now the paper is laid down: and the white, finely moulded hands become eloquent as interpreters of the stirring lines:

But Oh! if in song or speech, My voice could over the ages reach I would whisper the name of Lee.

"You think of his Tomb— Would it of marble white! For Wrong, a spectre of Death and Doom, An Angel of Hope for Right."

"But Lee has a thousand graves In a thousand hearts, I ween; And tear drops fall from our eyes in waves That will keep his memory green."

"Ab! Muse! you dare not claim A soldier man than he; Nor nobler man hath less of blame, Nor blamless man hath purer name, Nor purer name hath grander fame, Nor Fame—another Lee."

How we listen! How we applauded! He is our voice, speaking our full heart's thought; or song, singing our sorrow, our echo, repeating what is in every soul to-night.

For what he said, the stanzas called "Sentinel Song," will repeat; but as you read them, at this day you miss the magnetism of the man. Father Ryan's personality strongly dominates his genius and that same personal power measured his popularity. I believe, it was Dr. Maurice F. Egan, who wrote, years ago, with that luminous, critical pen of his, that much of Father Ryan's reputation in literature was due to his personal popularity, the influence of the man drawing to him greater fame as a poet. I remember reading that criticism in a little heat of indignation, as if Father Ryan's poems needed any personal power, to win our admiration. Was he not our own poet-priest, the greatest living to our loyal minds?

We turn over the pages of his verses now, the gentle, sorrowful lines, very lovely gems of thought, shining out through the heaps of worthless pebbles piled up by the hasty, impetuous hand. But even as this little criticism comes across the pages, we catch ourselves listening to the lines, as he himself would read them; and they borrow a fuller melody, a more complete, entrancing harmony, as they come to us in the tones of that ringing, pathetic, persuasive, compelling voice; and we own to ourselves that the personality of the poet has indeed enriched the magic of his muse.

I have dwelt upon that scene, in the theatre, the night of the "Lee Memorial," as the best way in which I could picture just what Father Ryan was to the Southern people, just what niche was his very own in the worship of the South. It is easy enough to pick up his volume of poems or any characteristic one, and criticise it, find out the beauties and the flaws therein; but that would be little descriptive of the

poet-priest, as he lived and moved among us. That would carry little account of the intense, constant, affectionate interest and admiration that surrounded him. A clever woman once said, speaking of the immense throngs that would gather to listen, spell-bound, to the poet-priest, on any subject: "If Father Ryan would only get up and say, 'Baa! Baa! black sheep!' in that magnetic voice of his we would clasp our hands and exclaim, 'How perfectly beautiful!'" Of course, this was extravagant and extreme, but the grain of truth was not altogether missing. Besides what was said or written, there came the strong personal attraction of the man and the manner.

Of Father Ryan's literary claims, it seems difficult to classify them by any rhetorical standard, so much more was he the poet of the heart than of the head; the voice was so much more sympathetic than artistic. "What matters that?" you say; "poetry is purely and pre-eminently of the emotions, the more heart, the more sympathy, the better poetry." True; and yet poetry is an art as well; and the gem ever so pure, it misses much of its lustre if left in the rough. Father Ryan himself recognized this, but did not realize it sufficiently.

In the preface to his volume of poems, he gives the truest criticism of his own verses that I have seen; and nothing better or more justly critical can be said: "Little of study and less of art." "Incomplete in finish, though true in tone." "I cannot tell why, I have sometimes tried to sing," he says of himself. "He sings as a bird sings, because he cannot help himself," replied a sister singer, Pearl Rivers.

"Always in a hurry," and "souls are more to me than songs," are pithy sentences of his own that redeem his inartistic work from censure. Would we think a singer's notes were sweet if we knew the voice were a little strained in hushing sorrows to sleep? "Always in a hurry" because the sin and misery that needed lifting up, crowded the hours of the priest and left only moments for the poet. "Souls were always more to me than songs," Aye! the miseries, the defeats, the despair that darken life were always welcome to the glow of his great heart; and his songs were forgotten or hurried through in the overmastering realization of human suffering.

As "The Conquered Banner" was his great patriotic song, so "The Song of the Mystic" may be considered his best religious poem. It is not given to every poet to have two great themes, two intense sentiments, like two strong cords of his lyre—a double half-note—religion and patriotism—God and country.

The flaws in his work are those that might be expected from a hasty writer, from the singer whose songs struggled within and burst forth in his own impetuous way. No wonder the undisciplined voice falters sometimes, the notes jar a little or repeat themselves unconsciously.

But there are entrancing strains in the uncontrolled bursts of melody: "Yes, give me the land where the ruins are spread; And the living tread light, on the hearts of the dead."

"You think of the dead on Christmas eve, Wherever the dead are sleeping; And we, from a Land where we may not grieve Look tenderly down on your weeping."

"Night, be a Priest! put your star-stolen And murmur a holy prayer Over each grave, and for every one Lying down lifeless there!"

Misere! Misere! Lift your hearts in the terror dies! Up in yonder sinless skies The palms sound sweet and calm: The dead whose hearts were shiven."

Very low, in tender tones The music pleads, the music moans, "I forgive, and have forgiven" The dead whose hearts were shiven."

Even where the strain is so often repeated, as to become monotonous the music is not muse's. Father Ryan had, to the fullest, that sensuous love of sound, that attuned his music's ear, because of the Celtic blood that filled his veins. No poet, save Moore, can be more pleasurably read, line after line, page after page, for the mere music of his verse. A simple, inartistic strain, to be sure; but as winning as the tones and graces of childhood and as indescribable.

Throughout his work we cannot but perceive the urgent need of condensation; for many of his verses are mere repetitions. The thought, the figure, the melody, that pleased us at first sight, grows a little weak, almost hackneyed, when we are constantly meeting it. The best gems are buried in a rubbish of tautology, verbosity and mere senseless sound. Then, even with two great themes, he is one-toned, always sings in the most pathetic minor key. His patriotic muse holds ever the furled and drooping flag of a conquered nation. His religious muse chants ever the Requiem Mass.

But there are strong major chords in the grand scale of human emotions. A conquered people may fold the flag of a Lost Cause, and unfurl the banner of a New Hope. In religion we sometimes sing "Jubilate" and "Magnificat" as well as "Misere" and "De Profundis." The one note of sorrow too long sustained becomes a wearying tone; it matters not how sweet its early music.

Father Ryan, while disclaiming all attempt at rhetorical effect, was not without some effort in that direction; and in some cases with a marked de-

gree of success. I think there are few better results in this line than the fine climax in his poem, "The Sword of Lee."

"Out of its scabbard—never hand Waved sword from stain as free, No purer sword led braver band Nor braver led for a brighter land, Nor brighter hand had cause so grand, Nor cause a chief, like Lee."

We found our poet in the beginning of this little sketch at the height of his fame and the zenith of his poetic power, the idol of an enthusiastic people. Salute! We greet him in the midst of applause, admiration and affection. Vale! We leave him where life and fame and friends and genius have left him:

"A grave in the woods, with the grass overgrown There is not a name, there is not a stone: And only the voice of the wind maketh moan O'er the grave, where never a flower is strewn."

An humble, nameless resting-place, in the bleak, windswept plain of the Catholic Cemetery in Mobile, a brown, unlettered slab, but a few inches above the earth of a kindred color, marks the spot where the sweetest voice of Southern song is hushed in death, where the warm heart that throbbed to every human sorrow is stilled:

"There comes a silence o'er all," As I stoop to lay a few belated summer blossoms on the low grave, I seem to hear, from the tender, lofty spirit, weary and spent in the conflict with the harsh elements of life:

"Ah, me! no matter when I die, I will be sweet To leave the homes of men And rest beneath the sod: To kiss and kiss thy feet— In Thy Home! Oh, my God!"

M. E. HENRY-RUFFIN.

A Protestant Minister on Education.

Dr. Lyman Abbott, the successor of Henry Ward Beecher, is author of the following vigorous expression of the necessity of the moral factor in education:

"Development of intelligence without a concurrent development of the moral nature does not suffice, as has often been pointed out; intelligent wickedness is more dangerous than wickedness that is unintelligent. The devil knows enough. Sending him to the Public school will not make a better devil of him. Knowing how to make dynamite without also knowing what are the rights of property and the rights of life will not make the pupil a safer member of society. Skill in speech unaccompanied with conscience gives us only that product of modern civilization—an educated demagogue."

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