

IRISH LITTERATEURS IN LONDON.



HAVE met many, very many indeed of Ireland's gifted sons and daughters in the Saxon land, toiling in the literary fields from the Tyne to the Thames, for the living denied them in their own poor country, and keeping pace in the great struggle with their more favoured English brethren—a fact which proves the truth of the old saying—"Give the Irish but half a chance and they'll show they are second in nothing to the children of any other land." In every department of literature—history, fiction, poetry—the drama—Irish writers have come well to the front. In the great, modern Babylon, the maelstrom which attracts so much of the talent of the world, the children of Ireland are not behind in the swift race for fame. Many of them have made names which shall go echoing down thro' the aisles of time, till MacCaulay's New Zealanders shall stand on Westminster Bridge, and sigh for the glories of departed greatness.

Foremost among Irish literary men in London I place William Edward Hartpole Lecky, whom the press of the world has acknowledged the greatest living historian. His "England in the Eighteenth Century," is a masterpiece of its kind, written in a calm, philosophical and unbiased spirit, which the most captious critic cannot carp at. Mr. Lecky, unlike most of our modern historians whose chief aim in history compilation is to pander to the bigoted tastes of a prejudiced public, presents events to the reader, not in an ideal way from his own standpoint, but as they really happened, without exaggeration or diminution. Truth is the impelling motor which seems to guide Mr. Lecky's pen. Although in sympathy with his native land, in what she has suffered at the hands of her Saxon taskmasters, he is not in accord with the majority of his countrymen in the present Home Rule struggle they are waging.

W. E. H. Lecky was born in Dublin about fifty-six years ago, and is an alumnus

of Trinity College, or "Old Trinity" as it is called,—that time-honoured institution which has been the *Alma Mater* of so many of Ireland's distinguished sons. In figure he is a striking personality among men; he stands about six feet four inches in his stockings, is stooped in the shoulders owing to his giant stature, and walks with a rapid shuffling gait. I have met him often in the halls of the British Museum. He always carries a lot of books, school-boy fashion, under his arm, and has that far-away look about him, as if his thoughts soared back from his present surroundings to the dim and dark old times of which he writes. A Cockney will point him out and tell you:—"There goes 'Lanky Lecky,' the great Irish historian."

The present Chairman of the Irish Parliamentary Party—Justin McCarthy is also an historian as well as a novelist. He is too well known at this time of day for me to say much about him here. Personally Mr. McCarthy is one of Nature's gentlemen,—bland, suave, quiet and no more fitted to lead a turbulent party, which counts in its ranks such mischief-brewers as Tim Healy and Dr. Tanner, than what he is suited to take the place of Garnet Wolsley, and lead the Queen's troops on the tented field. Undoubtedly Justin McCarthy has made a great name as a literary man, and to one work alone may he attribute his fame. His "History of Our Own Times" has been a noted success. A little story hangs around that work. When it was first written its author brought the manuscript to Mr. Cassell, of the firm of Cassell, Petter, Galpin & Co., of Paternoster Row and offered him the copyright, but Mr. Cassell was only willing to give him a nominal sum of £600, which Mr. McCarthy would not accept. Taking the manuscript under his arm he trudged onwards to Chatto and Windus, of Piccadilly. Mr. Chatto suggested a change in the title page. McCarthy had named it "The Victorian Era." With quick perception he saw the wisdom of Mr. Chatto's