

The Native Minstrelsy of Ireland.

By "CRUX."

It was originally my intention to drift away, at the point now reached, from the work so fully quoted in the first and second articles of this series; but, having been requested, for special reasons, to continue on that admirable essay for, at least, a few more paragraphs. Consequently, without any interruption, we will proceed with this review of Irish literature in its poetic or bardic branch.

Ossian's poems and Mangan's translations from the Irish, may be regarded as fair specimens of the old and later poets of Ireland. And as far as the latter are concerned, it may be well said of Mangan, what was once remarked of a celebrated French translator, that it is doubtful whether the dead or the living are most obliged to him. Ossian is stamped with the freshness of national infancy—the latter translations with the allegory of national prostration and trembling hope. And both are pregnant with the history of their respective periods. In the latter voice and pen are stifled; and the muffled wail of a trampled nation sounds like a death-knell upon the ear. We see the Penal laws in full operation, and the native population stricken to the earth, but still living in the hope of a better day. We see the national religion banned, and a price set upon the head of its priesthood. We become acquainted with the intrigues and struggles to get these priests educated in distant lands by the Garonne and Guadalquivir, and we see them consigned on their return in the fastnesses of the mountains, and the caverns of the rugged shore. Yet amid all these adverse circumstances, Ireland did not manifest an indifference to the spirit of song in this day of her dolor, nor a want of taste for its cultivation. Still was she, as in the olden time, the mother of patriot bards; and though a price was set on the minstrel's head as well as upon the priest's, every valley resounded with the praises of ancient heroes—elegies for the martyred brave—dark curses for the native traitor and the ruthless stranger—proud invocations of the Genius of Liberty—and passionate aspirations for the glory and independence of Erin.

And thus we perceive the existence of a native minstrelsy in Ireland, from the landing of the Milesians almost to our own time, in one unbroken wreath of song. We have sketches of more than two hundred Irish writers, principally poets from the days of Amergin, the chief bard of the Milesian colony, down to the beginning of the nineteenth century. Their poems are, in many instances, still extant, from the hymns of St. Columba to the lamentation of McLag, the biographer, and family bard of Brian Boru; and still downward to the dreamy allegory of the proscribed poets of the Penal Days. The stores of native minstrelsy which Ireland possesses, both in the memory of her people and the cabinet of the antiquarian, are astonishing, when we consider the characteristics of her history, and the condition of her people, for the last seven centuries. Rome had lost her ballads long before she reached the zenith of her power. Macaulay remarks that, in spite of the invention of printing, the old ballads of England and Spain narrowly escaped the withering blight of years and the Scott was but just in time to save

the precious relics of the minstrelsy of the Border. In truth, he adds, the only people who, through their whole passage from simplicity to the highest civilization, never for a moment ceased to love and admire their own ballads, were the Greeks. But we think Ireland equal to Greece in this respect, as far as the comparison can be instituted. Since the pagan days when Bride was the Queen of Song, her bards have been ever scrupulously venerated; and their productions cherished with a traditional love which Greece never surpassed; and her people have been as true to this ballad-worship in the days of her distress as in those of her glory. The influence of the old bards on popular tastes and habits is still observable. Not many years ago the rustic schoolmaster was elected by a species of poetic tournament.

The rage for street ballads is another trace of their influence. But this is the only point of resemblance between the present and the past. The street ballad of to-day will not bear comparison with the racy, vigorous minstrelsy of old. Nothing but the deathless love of song in the Irish could have saved the precious relics of her bardic muse from the hand of time, the torch of war and the still more destructive influence of foreign conquest. Seldom has the successful invader spared either the life or literature of the fallen land. The Caliph Omar burned to ashes the magnificent library of Alexandria when he captured that city. The Persians burned the books of the Egyptians, and the Romans of the Jews, the philosophers, and the Christians. The Jews in turn destroyed the books of the Christians and the pagans, and the Christians again, the books of the pagans and the Jews. The Turks destroyed the grand libraries of Constantinople; the Spaniards burned the books of Mexico; and such also was the fate of the national records, and literature of Ireland which fell into the hands of the English conquerors. Its ruin was inevitable, but the relics are numerous and beautiful, reminding us of the porticoes and stately columns which shine through the ashes of Pompeii.

Since the reign of Elizabeth Ireland produced twenty-six poets in the Gaelic language. Some of these were of a high order, and of distinguished attainments. The lives of the bards would form no inconsiderable portion of Irish history, from the influence which they exercised in the direction of its events, and in stimulating the spirit of resistance. The strains of O'Gulne, the bard of Shane O'Neill, often flung the stirrup-lancer of Ulster like a falling rock upon the armies of Elizabeth and gathered round the national standard the hesitating chiefs of the North. Angus O'Daly's war song of the Wicklow clans prompted the O'Byrnes to many a fierce raid, from their mountain fastnesses, against the clan London of the Pale, carrying destruction across the English Border, under the chieftainship of the famous Feagh MacHugh. The martial muse of O'Mulcovry, the bard of Briefny and laureate of Ireland, summoned Clan Connaught to the battle field against the invader, and helped to inspire that determined and protracted struggle which ended only with the death of Bryan O'Rourke. But there is one serious drawback observable in the strains of these an-

cient bards, and a glance at titles of their productions will render it apparent. Their sympathies were more national, not that they loved Ireland less, but that they loved their Sept more. We have appeals to the O'Neills and O'Donnells of the North, to the O'Neills and McCarthys of the South, to the O'Moore and O'Byrnes of the East, to the O'Connors and O'Rourkes of the West; but unfortunately, seldom an appeal to the spirit and energies of universal Ireland, except when some great victory inspired the national voice, and lifted it up to higher hopes and grander aspirations. But this is scarcely to be wondered at, when we consider the rivalries of the clans, and the constant struggles for ascendancy and personal aggrandizement—the natural result of the feudal system upon the warm and impulsive character of the Irish people.

Passing over some apt quotations from Mons. Thierry concerning the minstrelsy of ancient Ireland, we come to another phase of the subject.

The calumnies uttered against the character of the bards may be easily traced to the political influence which they exercised over the people. When the sword of O'Neill was broken, the minstrelsy which had made it start from its scabbard still lived and moved the pulse of the nation's heart. When the battle-axe of Tyrconnell had rusted, the strains which once nerved the arm of the fierce gallowglass still hung on the people's lips, and kept alive the spirit of national resistance. The warrior's strength died with him; but the poet's power ever stirs like an immortal prophecy. The bards of Ireland were persecuted because they excited hopes of national independence, as the ancient minstrels of Spain sang her struggles against the Moor, or the minstrels of Scotland the Border-battles of the Percy and the Douglas.

It has been well said that poetry has an influence not to be measured by arithmetic, nor expressed by syllogism. And we know no instance in which this is so true as with reference to Irish minstrelsy. Great poets are the legislators of the empire of the heart. The poetry of Spain flung back the Moor from the Astorian mountains to sigh for his fallen power by the banks of the Guadalquivir, and the fountains of the Alhambra. Centuries of suffering, instead of crushing the national spirit, but kindled it into higher resolves, and prompted it to deeds of nobler daring. Religion is ever a powerful element in a national struggle, and no unfeeling source of poetic inspiration. When Tasso lived, Europe throbbed from end to end with religious excitement. The sword of the Ottoman was at her throat, and her own members were arrayed against each other, while she trembled for her safety on the brink of ruin! It was then that the victory of Lepanto burst like an inspiration over the religious genius of Tasso; and the moral grandeur of his muse, in which he almost stands alone in his glory, shows how much religion may effect for poetry. Ireland had all the benefit of this inspiration in her warfare and in her muse, and though it has failed to secure for her what it did for Spain, the enthusiasm which it evoked has preserved the same faith unsmiled—the same feeling unsubdued.

The Doukhobor Exodus

(By an Occasional Contributor.)

It appears that the now famous band, or tribe of Russian fanatics, known as the Doukhobors, have undertaken to "trek," as they say in South Africa, and their intended course is towards the Yukon. Why they should go north to such a cold climate, when they are unwilling to prepare for even the comparatively mild winter of Manitoba, is something that no person can understand, and possibly they do not know themselves. The story of their movements has been concisely told, in an interview, by a gentleman who is conversant with these people and their peculiarities. He states the matter thus:—

"There seems to be a general movement from all the villages, and their population was, in every case, very much depleted. In some I would find only a few families, while in one the only living thing to be seen was a dog. It was impossible to judge whether they intended to come back or whether they considered it immaterial what became of their worldly goods. I looked into the communal granary of one village and found one thousand bushels of grain, besides flour. At length I came to a village, forty miles from Yorkton. About five thousand Doukhobors were congregated in the village and little knots were gathered, all discussing one matter earnestly. I was informed the people had gathered here "to make a big prayer," preparatory to going on a pilgrimage looking for Jesus." There were women, children and old men assembled there, as well as the younger men, and all appeared to have their minds centered enthusiastically on the one subject. Last Thursday I returned to Yorkton, and about twenty-five miles from that town I passed a large body, comprising probably 1,100 Doukhobors, heading toward the south. They were straggling along for two miles, carrying their sick and children. Their provisions consisted of a peck of bread for each person. I found the bread to be of the very coarsest kind, made of whole wheat, bran and all. It was as hard as bread can possibly be and they ate it, after dipping it in the water in the sloughs. They were barefooted, and wore nothing but cotton clothing, as their religious principles prevented them from wearing woollens or any other animal products. Their provisions cannot possibly last them for more than a few days, when they will be absolutely destitute."

There is something very mysterious and strange about these people. That they are a most undesirable class of immigrants no person will deny. As to their religious convictions, it seems to us that they are queer mixture of Protestant Christianity and of Paganism of the Oriental stamp. This perpetual seeking for the Lord savors very much of Protestantism, while their migratory propensities ally them with a race from which they not improbably sprang. It must be remembered that they are Russians; and Russia is the land of strange mixtures as far as population goes.

Possibly some of our readers will recall De Quincey's famous history of "The Flight of a Tartar Tribe." It is one of the most graphic pieces of composition that ever came from the pen that traced the "Confessions of an Opium-Eater." He tells of a Chinese tribe that at the beginning of the 17th century found its way across the Russian steppes and finally settled on the banks of the Volga. After one hundred years of residence in Russia, under the sway of the Czars, the children of this Tartar tribe suddenly conceived the idea of going back to China. So secret were their preparations that even the watchfulness of Russia's authorities failed to discover the plot. One morning they vanished, to the number of one hundred thousand. They fled southward. The Russian and Cossack soldiers found about twenty villages deserted. Over the Siberian steppes and then over the Tartar plains and the vast desert extending to the Chinese wall, they left a track marked by the bones of mules, horses, cattle, men, women and children. They left the banks of the Volga on the 3rd February, and reached the Ely river, the Chinese boundary on the 12th September. They were pursued through the frozen regions of the North by the Cossacks, and were met at the end of thousand Doukhobors were congregated who took them to be invading enemies, and attacked them furiously. In fine, of the one hundred thousand, not more than thirty thousand reached the home of their forefathers. It seems to us that the spirit drove this Tartar tribe, backwards and forwards, in their "Anabasis and Katabasis," as De Quincey calls it, must have been the same that is now driving the Doukhobors from land to land.

An Instance of What Some Converts Have to Endure.

The following advertisement appeared in a New York daily paper:—
Wanted—A position as teacher of French or as a companion in a family of respectability, by a young lady who has been turned from her home on account of embracing the Catholic religion; the highest references exchanged. Address W. T., 258 "Herald."

It is a general rule not to believe every advertisement that appears, particularly in the Want Column of the daily press; but this one seemed so unique that I thought it worth while to look it up. Sure enough, it did not state the truth or probably one-tenth of the truth. Behind those few fugitive words is a history of petty persecution—a soul full of trouble, years of affliction from the dearest ones on earth, and well-nigh a broken heart. She was a young lady of twenty-three years. Her family is one of wealth and social position. Her father is a lawyer of distinction. When she was young she was sent to a convent to be educated. Her father knew that there was no place where his daughter would grow up in an atmosphere of virtue and where her character would be so well developed as under the training of the devoted teachers she would have in a convent. He, however, laid the most solemn injunction on the Sisters when he placed his daughter with them that they should not in any way influence the young lady in her religion. He need not have been so explicit and exacting in his instructions, for the Sisters make it a rule, anyhow, not to interfere in any overt way with anyone's conscience. The young lady remained some years in the convent, and after graduation went to her father's home. She did not forget the quiet, peaceful, edifying, religious atmosphere of the convent. It was a picture of an earthly paradise in the young woman's mind. As she entered society the contrasts were continually forcing themselves on her soul, and an eager longing for the peace and virtue of a Catholic life, with the sacraments and Holy Communion, was awakened in her soul. She could not resist it.

When she informed her parents of her purpose of becoming a Catholic the storm burst upon her. In deference to their wishes she postponed her reception into the Church, but her determination to become a Catholic was unalterable. As the days went by the persecution began; it continued in a thousand and one petty annoyances, dark looks, denunciation of things Catholic, and those secret heart-thrusts from the ones she loved best. All this made her life almost unbearable in her own home. Finally, she became a Catholic. Then, in solemn conclave, the alternative was given to her to leave the house and be disinherited and disowned forever, or to repudiate the Catholic Church.

In her own conscience there was no choice. She went out of her father's house to face the world with only a few dollars in her pocket and no friends to turn to in a great, heartless city. She accepted a small room in a boarding house and set herself with courage born of her reliance on God and her conscience to earn her own living.

The advertisement in this paper was almost the last resort. She had only a few dollars left. All this happened in New York in this age of enlightenment and our boasted atmosphere of civil and religious liberty, and in a devout Protestant family who still believe in the right of private judgment.

It is only another instance of a deep-rooted antagonism to the Catholic Church, and another evidence of the fact that the movement which has for its object the explanation of the truths of the Catholic Church is necessary in all parts of the country. If this can happen in the city of New York where there are so many intelligent Catholics of social position, what might not happen elsewhere? But if the doctrines of the Catholic Church are presented in so attractive a way that their reasonableness is evident there will be less bigotry, and antagonism such as this young lady has suffered from will be a thing of the past.

The following letter has this moment been received in the mail:—

"My dear Father Doyle:—

"In loving gratitude to Almighty God for the great gift of our faith and for the opportunity of practising it in all places where I have been in my worldwide travels, I enclose my check for five hundred dollars for the Catholic Missionary Union. You will kindly credit this to a 'Chicago Gentleman' and leave my name out."
A. P. DOYLE.

RECENT DEATHS.

MRS. OWEN MCGARVEY.—It is with sentiments of deep regret and of sincere sympathy that we record the death of one of Montreal's old and most highly respected and universally-beloved citizens, in the person of the late Mrs. Owen McGarvey. The parishioners of St. Patrick's missed a familiar face and an unfailing presence at all the services of the Church, especially at Grand Mass each Sunday and Holyday, when the late Mr. Owen McGarvey was called to his reward, and now that his beloved, faithful and devout

partner in life has been summoned to follow him beyond the tomb, the same feeling will be manifest—for she too, was an equally faithful and constant attendant in the church that they both loved so well. Mrs. McGarvey was a model woman in every acceptance of the term. In domestic life, as a parishioner, and as a member of charitable associations her death has created more than one void in our midst. The vacant chair by the home-hearth, the unoccupied place in the family pew, and the empty seat in those assemblies where the faithful and charitable ladies of our nationality congregate to perform works of untold merit, will long speak eloquently to all who knew her, of the virtues of the deceased, and will, at the same time, preach silent sermons in which each one will hear an invitation to remem-

ber her goodness and to pray for her soul.

The funeral, which took place on Tuesday, from her late residence, Lagauchetiere street, to St. Patrick's Church, was very largely and representatively attended. Apart from her immediate surviving relatives and the great concourse of friends and acquaintances, the various orders in the city were represented, while all the schools and academies sent their contingents to swell the number of mourners and to bear testimony to the worth and merits of the departed lady. The chief mourners were Mr. J. Cooper, of Lindsay, Ont., her brother; Mr. Owen McGarvey, of Ottawa, a nephew; Mr. William McNally, her son-in-law, and the latter's two sons. The surviving children left to mourn the loss of such a good mother, are

Mrs. William McNally and Miss Annie McGarvey. In extending to them this humble expression of our condolence and sympathy we desire to unite with them and with the Church, of which she was such an exemplary and faithful member, in a prayer for the repose of her immortal soul.

MRS. O'REILLY.—The oldest woman in Montreal passed away on Sunday evening last at her residence, 644 St. Antoine street. Mrs. O'Reilly was in her 94th year, and was hale and hearty up to an hour before her death, which was as sudden as it was unexpected. She was born in Cavan, Ireland, and came to Canada 75 years ago. She had been a resident of Montreal for over a quarter of a century.—R.L.P.

Great Mind Small in

Mr. William Mathewson, the "Saturday Evening" made a study of a subject not fall to interest all scores of examples other we could furnish selected as illustrations attention, still he has to subject so well that it would either amplify or cut has given the public. Vore, simply reproduce interesting sketch with it private introduction:

"One of the natural men is that curiosity regarding the personal those persons who have tall high above their ever we read or hear of and especially when we with his history, we form a picture of his future to which the contrast man is often very ing. Often we refuse the strange, unsatisfying our own fond creation, the great man is found one—the intellectual giant dwarf. As a rule, timate the height and