

nation with a sense of its own dignity ; they have promoted the pride of race and inspired the race with ardor ; they have taught the people to con the noble lessons of the past, and through their fiery and pathetic effusions the Irish people has, in no small degree, come to knowledge of itself and acquired solidity. Their work is great, I repeat, but they are neither pedants nor precisians, and their great performance is not literary but patriotic. That much made clear, I can return to my subject.

Poetic inspiration, or artistic inspiration, may be defined as a vehement love of beauty—the sexless, intellectual, æsthetic beauty of the Greek—which God, at rare intervals installs into the minds of a few ; the poets and artists of every land. It was this love that Louis Pasteur meant, when speaking of the ideal in terms not often used by men of science, he beautifully said : “ Happy is he who has a God in his heart, an ideal of beauty, to which obedience is rendered ; the ideal of art, the ideal of science, the ideal of country, the ideal of gospel virtues, these are living sources of great thoughts and great actions.” Again, when Cardinal Newman taught that, “ Poetry is the perception, and the poetic art is the expression of the beautiful ; for vice can be rendered attractive solely by enduing it with some of the attributes of beauty,” the great Englishman still further illustrates the notion of the great Frenchman. All that is strongest and truest in poetry is an inspiration ; that is, it holds within itself a thought or a teaching not consciously created, not even mastered, in its inception by the mind that brought it fourth, but susceptible of growth, and further illumination, even to the poet himself, who was the chosen instrument of his message. Thus all the true poets must have moments—brief spells—when they are also seers, as in the olden times they were denominated. Wherever any object takes such a hold of the mind, by which it seeks to prolong and repeat the emotion to bring all other objects into accord with it, and to give the same movement of harmony sustained or continuous, or gradually varied according to the occasion, to the sounds that express it—this is, if not poetry, poetic sentiment, or the raw stuff out of which poems are made. There is no truth cognizable by man which may not shape itself into poetry. Wherever the sensations, thoughts, feelings, of men can travel, there the poet may be at their side and