

Poet's Corner.

ASSAROE.

BY ANTHONY M'NEELY.

Back through the misty, vanished years my heart flies evermore;
To early scenes of childhood's days by Ballyshannon's shore;
Where Erne's laughing waters seek the chasm far below,
And sparkle onward to the sea by Abbey Assaroe.

Its shattered walls are lonely now; the stillness of the tomb
Has reigned around its trampled fane through centuries of gloom;
For, oh! it felt the heat and power of Ireland's ruthless foe;
Razed are the walls Tyrconnell built round Abbey Assaroe.

Along the banks of Erne to the cascades of Belleek
The fond old tongue of motherland the prattling infants speak,
And saintly clerics come to pray, and kneel in joy or woe,
Above the graves where slept the brave in Abbey Assaroe.

Fair are the glens and heathy hills fanned by the ocean breeze,
As the bright Summer sunbeams woo and kiss the rowan trees;
The swelling tide, outspreading wide, doth proudly ebb and flow,
And grand and fair the loved scenes there, round Abbey Assaroe.

Back, back again in memory round Erne's banks I stray.
And muse and dream amid the haunts of childhood's happy day;
And as I see the mountain soar, and watch the waters flow,
I sigh to rest and hope to sleep near Abbey Assaroe.—Exchange.

THE POLITICAL ASPECT IN FRANCE.

LOVERS of liberty and lovers of France cannot behold that Republic, after passing through the trying ordeal from which she has just emerged, without mingled feelings of joy and admiration. With noble patience, exercising an unexampled self-restraint, displaying heroic calmness and forbearance, she has walked like the martyrs of old over red-hot ploughshares, and with the sword of Representation has given the death blow to monarchical despotism amidst the world's applause. It was with heartfelt thankfulness and unmixed delight that I heard of the peaceful and decisive triumph of parliamentary principles last October, and of the success which had attended the silent expression of the people's will. It was a trying moment for France when she saw her most cherished institutions threatened, and when under the free folds of her Republican flag acts of tyranny were perpetrated and legal coercion practised, which were almost without parallel in the days of the monarchy. It was demanded of her that she should return a Chamber, like our last Irish Parliament, to strike the knell of its own doom, or if not absolutely to legislate itself out of existence, to hand over to Napoleon Quatre its liberties, privileges, and mission. *Le spectre rouge* was flaunted in her face, and it was told her that if "social order" was to be maintained Frenchmen must use a little self-denial, and give up the idea of free Parliamentary Government. Republicanism, it was averred, was not consistent with Catholicism, and that if the Revolution was to be overcome, if infidelity and socialism were to be swept out of France, the nation must put on the iron glove of monarchy. It was thought that thus all sincerely religious people would be placed upon the horns of a dilemma. It was hoped that the sophistry would be undetected, and the fraud unexposed, until the honest Catholics of France had sacrificed their freedom, under the delusion that by so doing they were saving their faith. An attempt was made to place the issue before the electors as one between the Church and the Revolution, between Marshal MacMahon and "le lion" Gambetta, as M. Louis Veuillot calls him. But for once Frenchmen went to work with prudence and moderation, flung passion to the winds, and brought reason to bear on the subject, and the consequence was they saw how falsely the question had been stated, how artfully the intriguers had planned a *coup d'etat*, and they went and, under the threatening eye of a gendarme, recorded their votes for liberty and constitutional government.

Whatever may be M. Gambetta's faults, however dangerous his principles yet announced may be, there is no use denying the fact that he is now the popular tribune in France, and that his counsel to the nation all through the crisis was both sensible and patriotic. He everywhere inculcated confidence in pacific and constitutional action and submission to the law. He never questioned the right of Marshal MacMahon to appeal to the constituencies, but he stated his firm determination to abide by the result of that appeal whatever it should be. So far he must necessarily have the confidence of all lovers of Parliamentary institutions. The appeal was made; France spoke, but still for a while her voice was disdained; until the honest heart of the soldier President at last felt a pang when the scales were removed from his eyes, and he saw how he was enticed upon perilous quicksands, and without the path of strict legality; and immediately, like a pure souled patriot, he sprang to obey the clearly defined will of his country, and spurned the *mal conseils* incessantly poured into his ears by the worshippers of kingly pomp. He thought it no humiliation to avow before the world his complete submission to the new parliament, and to affirm his confidence as the nation's representative in the stability of Republican institutions. This triumph of moral force and constitutional action will unmistakably cause a great revolution in the minds of Frenchmen. They will see that that which they formerly endeavoured to win with rifle and barricade can now be obtained by the magic power of the voting paper, and that the voices of their parliamentary representatives, clothed in their *habits noirs*, are more effectual to strike down tyranny whenever it presents itself than the arms of a whole people aroused at Freedom's watchword.

The Catholic Church has nothing to fear from freedom and free institutions, and those who aver that she does not love both, libel her fair name. She was the nurse of freedom, as well as the protectress of learning, through the ages of mediæval darkness, and her voice ever rang out in no uncertain tones against the "weaponed arm" of oppression. And now, though—

"Tortured and torn by Persecution's rage,
And bound with chains in cruel vassalage;
Tho' all the Caesars on her shrine have trod,
Still, still she shines, the beacon of a God."

A politically and morally educated free people is what the Church desires, and to train up which is the one grand object of the noblest minds in her fold. Nothing, therefore can be more false and criminal than to say that the Catholic Church is a foe to Liberty.

Were the Empire in France possible, without despotism, secrecy, and plotting, there is good reason to think that Frenchmen themselves—as well as most observant, thinking foreigners—would prefer it. But though the young, honest, and gifted Prince, who would ascend the throne in the event of a re-establishment, might entertain large and enlightened views which were foreign to the mind of his father, and though he might at first determine to loyally, hold the crown for no personal interest or gratification, but for the good and welfare of the whole of his subjects, yet the influence of evil advisers might at any moment overcome all his good resolutions and make him embark on a career of combat against the institutions which would limit and watch the exercise of his power. It is this consideration which has made the majority of the professional and commercial classes Republican, and which secured the safety of the Republic in the crisis through which it has just passed. And should the lessons which they have recently learned sink indelibly into the minds of Frenchmen, and the nation become inured to the machinery of Parliamentary Government, the new France now arising may survive the intrigues of the factious, and live on in increasing vigour and unimpaired beauty, as the home of liberty and the mother of the arts.

W. J. N.

Auckland, April 25th, 1878.

OUR INDIAN POSITION.

THE number of British troops in India may be estimated as follows: British soldiers, 60,000; other British born subjects, 70,000; in all 130,000 men in 240,000,000 inhabitants of India.

A very high military authority, commenting on this, writes as follows:—

"I look upon our position in India as most critical, and if Russia ever made a serious advance we should in all probability be turned out before she arrived at the Gates of the Empire. We are doing nothing to improve our communications with our Eastern possessions; but Russia is pushing forward a rail between Tiflis and Teheran, which will be carried on to Herat which latter valley will then form a new base of attack. To meet this we ought to push on to the head of the Persian Gulf by the Valley of the Euphrates; but the power of doing this will have passed away when Armenia forms part of the Russian Empire, which it is about to do with the sanction of England so far as I can see."

Another authority adds:—

To me Armenia appears at least half of the Eastern Question, on account of our through express route to India being to Constantinople by existing railways across Europe. Constantinople through Anatolia to Diarbekir and Mosul, and skirting the hills—say 100 to 150 feet above the plain—on *left bank of the Tigris*, to Bussorah; thence by steamer *in meantime* in 84 to 87 hours to Kurachee—later by railway throughout. A branch railway from Alexandretta (Scanderoon) by Aleppo to join main line between Mosul and Diarbekir. Mosul appears to be only 350 to 400 feet above the sea, about 500 miles distant as the crow flies, showing how very level that country is."

For the moment the most prompt and practicable method of effectually securing a speedy route to India is the obtaining a territorial interest in the Suez Canal, either alone or jointly with France. A pamphlet is about to be published on this subject, which from the proof we have seen is well worthy of the serious consideration of both English and French Governments.—Home Paper.

THE POPE AND THE IRISH M.P.'S.

A MEETING of the Catholic Members of Parliament was held at Westminster, on Monday, 25th February, to consider an address of congratulation to the Holy Father, on his elevation to the Pontifical Throne. The chair was occupied by Mr. A. M. Sullivan, and there were also present Sir J. M. McKenna, Mr. O'Clery, Mr. Gray, Mr. D. M. O'Connor, Dr. Ward, Mr. Collins, Mr. O'Shaughnessy, Mr. Biggar, Mr. Kirk, and Mr. Redmond. Mr. O'Clery briefly submitted the object of the meeting. It was decided that the following telegram be despatched to the Cardinal Secretary of State:—

"The Irish Catholic members in the Parliament of Great Britain and Ireland humbly present to the Holy Father, Pope Leo XIII., the expression of their homage and congratulation on his elevation to the Pontifical Chair. They desire for his Holiness many years' reign over the universal Church, and pray for themselves and for Ireland, their country, the Pontifical Benediction."

The following gracious reply has been telegraphed from the Vatican:—

"Rome, 27th Feb.—To Chevalier O'Clery, Member of Parliament, London. The Holy Father has received, with especial gratification, the felicitations and good wishes of the Irish Catholic Members of the Parliament of Great Britain and Ireland.

"His Holiness returns them his heartfelt thanks, and bestows, from the bottom of his heart, his Benediction on each one of them, and on Ireland, their country.

"P. LABAGNI, Pro-Secretary of State."