

THE EMERALD ISLE.

OR IRELAND FROM FAIRHEAD TO CAPE CLEAR.  
(Catholic Standard.)

THESE are few countries in the world that can furnish a richer store of materials for the historian, the philosopher, the poet, the man of observation, and particularly the thoughtful Catholic, than Ireland. To prove this we need only refer to Father Burke's Lectures. If we take history we shall find that the annals of Ireland furnish facts and incidents that teach us deep lessons on questions touching the variety of races, the methods of governing, the policy of statesmen, and the evils of oppression.

If we take poetry we shall find that Ireland furnishes many themes for the man instinct with poetic feelings. The early periods with their memories of the Kings, the Bards, the Warriors, the Saints, the Scholars and the People of ancient Erin, or the Middle Ages, replete with narratives of the gallant, long continued resistance of a Celtic race to the inroads of the Anglo Normans, full of tales of stately abbeys, lofty and embattled castles, mountain fortresses and secluded retreats; both these periods of history abound with the most picturesque and interesting narratives.

Coming down to more modern times we have the attempts to force the Reformation on Ireland, the Elizabethan devastations, the Cromwellian settlement and the Penal Laws. And even in our own days what scenes present themselves to the consideration of a thoughtful man. Is there any country in the world save Ireland, that could furnish more pathetic incidents to move the great heart of humanity? We see in Ireland a country that is inhabited by a bright, intelligent people, a people whose religious faith is strong, and whose domestic feelings are deep. Yet this people is doomed to see established in their very midst and supported by their funds, a Church, which they regarded not only as false but as anti-national, not only as heretical, but as alien. Their faith was outraged by its doctrines, their nationality offended by its origin, their poverty insulted by its wealth, their domestic feelings wounded through the operations of its laws. And this Alien Church was supported for three long centuries, it was imposed on the people by force, maintained by power, resisted with perseverance, and only overthrown a few years ago. During the period of its domination it produced the levies of tithes, and heartless evictions. What suffering was caused at various times by levies and evictions only God knows. But we know there has been enough to furnish materials for many a pathetic narrative.

But there are other events that can be described. The Angel of Death has moved over the green fields of Erin many a time and oft. The black year of Famine, when the land lay as if cursed by a malediction from Heaven, and the poor perished in thousands, has not yet been forgotten, nor yet the enormous Exodus which followed it and which swept whole legions of people over the Atlantic, some to die on the voyage, some to perish amongst strangers, some to be shipwrecked on bleak coasts, some to sink into the abysses of the ocean, but more, thank God, to reach the Land of Promise, and by their strong arms and willing hands to build up for themselves homes under the starry banner of free America.

But not only does the historian and the poet find ample material for the exercise of their respective abilities in the rich store of incident that Ireland affords, but also the philosopher. The social, moral, and economical sciences can gain much by a study of Irish peculiarities as developed under the peculiar circumstances of the country. Take political economy, for instance, and we see in Ireland how a country can be kept poor, how its resources can be left undeveloped, and how its manufactures can be repressed. It is a stern lesson, but one that ought to be studied by every Irishman and by everyone who is anxious for the welfare of the human race. Ireland has harbors, resources and a fertile soil, and should be wealthy. It is not so, and the reasons ought to be known.

The thoughtful Catholic should feel an interest in Ireland. Its Catholicity dates from the Council of Ephesus and is still active. The persecutions that religion has undergone in Ireland and the present state and condition of the faith in that country are both deeply interesting, and have been brought prominently forward by the late consecration of the Island to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, so beautifully illustrated by the poem of Denis Florence McCarthy, published three weeks ago in the 'Catholic Standard.' Ireland has a great part to play in the future of the Catholic Church, perhaps even greater than what it played in the past.

And what is the outcome of Irish history? Is the old race extinct or feeble? Has its nationality become a dream, and is its faith forgotten? Our readers know to the contrary. St. Patrick's Day was celebrated in every clime as the combined religious and national feast of the Irish people. When the faith and traditions of Ireland were insulted by the Keogh judgment, the whole country was in a blaze of indignation, and when an orator like Father Burke arises, who can touch the hidden founts of feeling, it is plainly seen by all that the old race still lives, and that the great Celtic heart still beats responsive to eloquent words, as its harp of old answered to the skillful hand of the bard.

For these reasons we propose, in this and the following sketches, to give accounts of the historical incidents, famous personages, celebrated places, scenery and legends of Ireland, together with the characteristic of its people.

THE PEOPLE AND THEIR ANTIQUITY.

An Island so beautiful must have been early inhabited, but by what race of men, and in what stage of civilization are questions of the deepest interest and of no less obscurity. That it was before the Christian era seems admitted by all the learned men. The traditions, annals, genealogies, and legends of Ireland give details of many events, which reach back to the most remote date known to colonization, viz: Noah's Flood! But, however absurd this may appear to a sneering critic there must be some truth underlying all these details. Two things are certain as regards Irish History—and the first is that Ireland was very early peopled, as early, if not earlier, than Great Britain, and that it possessed inhabitants that had obtained great proficiency in some of the arts of civilization. This is manifest by two facts: its

early architecture and its primitive religion. In Ireland there can be shown ancient remains which, in point of strength or vastness, are not to be excelled by those of any other country, save probably those of China. The Cyclopean remains of the fortresses of Aileach, Cahir Conree, Dun Aengus, at once impress the mind with awe and veneration. The beholder will be skeptical indeed when he is told that barbarians or savages raised these mighty piles. Aileach, once the royal fortress and oft the royal seat of Ulster, the Acropolis of Derry, Columbville (Londonderry), is on the top of a mountain eight hundred feet above the sea level: Cahir Conree is situated on the top of a hill in one of the most mountainous parts of Kerry, and Dun Aengus overhangs the Atlantic, above which it is perched on the top of one of the most precipitous cliffs of Arran. The stones composing these structures, albeit not hewn or polished with the labor shown in the monuments of Rome or Egypt, from their vast masses, must have required, on the part of those who quarried them and raised them to their present positions in these mountain citadels, a knowledge of mechanics unsurpassed by the most learned engineers or builders of the present day.

In Aileach there are gateways, doorways, ramparts and galleries passing through the middle of its mighty walls. Under its shadow must have risen one of the ancient cities of Ireland, one of the Regias, perhaps, of Ptolemy. There are scores of gigantic earthworks throughout the island, some of them capable of holding small armies, and constructed with a skill unexcelled by anything of the kind, whether ancient or modern. Leaving the military monuments of our pagan forefathers, we come to the funereal, and we find that the pyramids of New Grange are only excelled in size by the pyramids of Egypt.

As regards its early religion, we find that in Ireland there are traces of sun worship, of sacrifices, of every early tradition. And these two facts, *mysterious and ancient buildings and early religious traditions*, prove the early settlement of the land which was anciently known as Ogygia, or Inisfail, or Eire, or as the "Isle of Mists," and more recently as Ireland.

HISTORY OF OUR SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST.

By the Abbé J. E. DARRAS.

(Translated from the French for the NEW ZEALAND TABLET.)

16.—RATIONALISTIC CRITICISM.

THESE is in the perusal alone of the Gospel such harmony of tone, such exquisite simplicity, combined with a majestic loftiness of style, that no further demonstration is needed to bring conviction to the mind. It is the peculiar characteristic of the Word of God to carry with it its own light, and to require no justification other than itself. Evidence here is so obvious that it needs no proof to demonstrate it. Hence it is in vain for Rationalism to tell us that the Canticle of Mary is "one of those conventional processes which form the essential feature of the apocryphal Gospels." 1. In vain to seek to persuade us that we have before our eyes "a worthless legend, a puerile amplification." 2. Is it true that in the Old Testament a God-Saviour of the world, was promised in Eden, foretold by all the Prophets, expected by all succeeding ages? This fact cannot be denied unless by annihilating history. It is true that Jesus Christ has been adored for the past two thousand years as Saviour, as Son of God in eternity; as the Son of Mary in time? Unless by denying one's own existence, this fact cannot be contested. Now in order that a single human brow should be bent in prostrate adoration before Jesus Christ (and it is by thousands of thousands that His adorers are counted) the history of Jesus Christ must needs have been surrounded by uncontested signs of credibility. The more pages you pluck from His divine history, the more possible will you render faith in His divinity. The miracle of having believed without proofs, would then surpass, in an infinite proportion, the proof of the miracles which you deny. Thus you think you have said all by rejecting the "Magnificat" as the work of a forger; annihilated all by ranking the narrative of the Visitation among the fallacious inventions of an apocryphal writer. Nevertheless, by withdrawing these pages you have but multiplied inextricable difficulties. Let us suppose then, if you will, that St. Luke did not write this passage; that it is the production of an unknown pen, in the second century of the Christian Era. It will be necessary for you at least to date the work, though you may not be able, in your hypothesis, to name its author. Let us take the second century, but not going further back than the year 150, for at that epoch, Celsus, the pagan was acquainted with the Gospel of St. Luke. He read it then, even as we read it to day; and if he had suspected the imposture of a legendary, he would not have failed to notify it. Now, your apocryphal writer of the early part of the second century puts in the mouth of Mary, a prediction—clear, precise, positive: "All generations, says the Virgin of Nazareth, shall call me blessed!" To ascertain if this prophecy has been realized, you have but to open your eyes to-day, and behold what passes around you. The entire world resounds with the praises of Mary; and you will have it that an obscure legendary should have guessed that it would be so, eighteen hundred years ago, at a time too, when the world adored the divinity of the reigning Caesar, and burned incense plentifully upon all the altars of Venus! It is to be too lavish of the gift of prophecy, to attribute it so liberally to all the unknown powers of the 1st Age of the Christian era. If it is so easy a thing to prophecy, why do not the learned men of our day, who are not apocryphal writers, exercise the gift of prophecy? And when, by chance, any of them does attempt it, how is it that it always fails to be verified? The prophetic faculty outstrips all the efforts of science,—all the inspirations of human genius. The most common-place intellect cannot mistake it. Here is the reason that men have believed, do believe, and even to the end of time, will believe in the Gospel. The prophecies, with which it abounds, have their verification everywhere; their control is in such a manner within the reach of all understandings, that, to establish their reality beyond a doubt, it suffices to hear them enunciated.

(1.) Vie de Jesus, Introd., page xli.

(2.) I bid.