

JOHN BOYLE O'REILLY.

(From the *Lynn Transcript*.)

I HAVE just this minute laid aside a volume of poems—"Songs, Legends and Ballads,"—and somehow it seems as if I felt the physical presence of the author near me, so thoroughly am I imbued with the magnetic power one gathers from the works of John Boyle O'Reilly. It is impossible to be with the poet for any length of time and not feel the element of strength which is stamped so forcibly upon the man, in physique, in mind, in face; lifting one up to his own mental height, and sweeping one along in the rapid flow of ideas, the manly handling of topics, as, fired with the enthusiasm over some theory or determined purpose, O'Reilly points out, clearer than you have ever been shown before, the right or wrong of some movement, the meanness or grandeur of a deed. If it were in my power, or I felt at liberty to repeat in his own words some of the noble thoughts that have entered my soul from the poet's lips, I should make this sketch a most interesting one. But I must be confined to my own words, my own thoughts of the man whom I admire and love, and who if not now known as one of our greatest poets, sometime will be, and certainly is our strongest, having as well humanity and sympathy throbbing in every verse as in his warm generous Irish heart.

Undoubtedly the most powerful poem Boyle O'Reilly ever wrote is one that has been widely spread by the newspapers and will appear in the new volume of his poems to be issued this winter—"From the Earth. A Cry."

This poem was received with shouts of applause when read at the "Papyrus Club," and has been extolled highly by all critics. In this all the fiery passion of the author is given full sway; untrammelled by the conventionality he hates, and against which his bold, great nature rebels, the words are thrown out, the whole wrong ruling, wrong management, wrong principles of the world are set forth. He sees that the earth is given over to the corporations. That the poor, the labouring man, the employees, are slaves bound hand and foot as much as ever the negro was enslaved, and his own love of freedom shrieks out Shame!

"The moment a man employs another, that moment the employed becomes a slave," he said to me last night, and his magnificent soulful eyes flashed with his thought. "And this is wrong! radically wrong! Why should a few men own the earth, and possess the lives of those who are thrown to their care by the accident of necessity caused by the bondage of this conventional living which is all hypocrisy, all a lie? The world should be free to man as to the animals, and as the good God meant it should be!"

Here is a man, a successful man, one who has been imprisoned, has passed through dangers and vicissitudes enough to make a marvellous book of strange and vital interest if his history were written out in full. A man who ten years ago had no money and seemingly little chance for being anything but the second mate of a vessel. Who says he then knew how to do but two or three things, and looked only for an opportunity to do one of them. Who, fourteen years ago, was a corporal in the British hussars. Thirteen years back a Fenian prisoner in Australia. Less than two years later picked up at sea in an open boat, an *escaped convict*. God save the mark! A man who is now editor and part proprietor of one of the most potent organs in America. Ay! or in the world. A widely-known poet. An author. And above all still a *man*. No falling off of individuality because of his success. A man with a heart, whose quick eye and glowing soul can see and sorrow over the woes of any life, and yet one who says there is nothing doleful in life. Listen:—

"Do not look a week, a month ahead. Take care of the present. A man who does to-day what to-day requires of him is building surely and well. One of the truest things I ever wrote, and I do not know but it is the favourite verse from my poems, is:—

"Like a sawyer's work is life:
The present makes the flaw,
And the only field for strife
Is the inch before the saw."

Oh! I tell you men and women, thinkers and idlers, here is a man who has the right view of life. Were he selfish in these thoughts, if he spoke such words as I have quoted and yet lived only for himself we could despise him and find him weak. But day by day he lives up to what he sings, day by day he draws more hearts towards him by deeds of generosity and kindness, done as only an Irishman, a lover of nature, the friend of all humankind, could ever do them.

Last year Mr O'Reilly was President of the "Papyrus Club" which is made up of authors, editors, and magazine-writers, and not one of them but will give you a cordial greeting if you carry as passport to his sanctum the name of Boyle O'Reilly.

The editor, poet, author, Irishman, has a home in Charlestown. An hospitable home. Here is his study: this long room occupying half of the first floor. Artistic in all its arrangements, from the draperies at the window; to the statuettes, bronzes and pictures scattered about. No doors bar out the visitor; heavy, soft hangings cover the doorways. Perhaps the most striking things in the room (if the owner himself is not in) are these two great bronze busts. One the agonized head from the "Laocoon," the other the head of "War" from the "Arch of Triumph" in Paris. Strength—the strength he glories in here. But the first I should seize upon—after his books—if I were told to "take my choice" would be the "Fraying Boy," a statuette—charming—expressive—beautiful. The graceful arms raised and expanded, following the movements of the face and eyes, which are turned towards the Sun, the great God of the ancient Irish. In the whole figure a devout story.

The books are kept on low shelves passing around, or nearly around, the room. Easy of access, open to all. "I hate closed doors over my books! I will not have curtains! Books were never injured by dust, and I wouldn't put a decent book behind glass!" he says.

Here are photographs of scenes in Western Australia—great ferns and matted undergrowth. Photographs of the land whereof he sings:—

"How can I show you all the silent birds
With strange, metallic glintings on the wing?
Or how tell half their sadness in cold words,—
The poor, dumb lutes, the birds that never sing?
Of wondrous parrot-greens and iris hue,
Of sensuous flower and of gleaming snake,—
Ah! what I see I long that so might you,
But of these things what pictures can I make!"

There is a water-colour sketch of Dowth Castle, where the poet was born. A sketch made for him by a brother poet and his close friend, Dr. Joyce. "You cannot know how dear that is to me—my old home," says the loving-natured man of this picture. But we have made too long a call here already; the poet must be at work again. See all these poems to be looked over; what would you give to hear him read them, or have them shown to you before the cold hands of the press are laid upon them? I could promise you a feast, for I have read some of them, and you may have some of them in his forthcoming volume, which will never be ready if all the visitors stay as long as we. Upstairs are his wife's parlour, the nursery, and the bedrooms; but the chief interest lies in this study. Here it is Mrs. O'Reilly does her own literary work; and in and out of here run the three little girls, and when the six months' old baby can follow them, we shall see "Blaird"—named after Dr. Joyce's latest book—playing hide-and-seek about the curtains.

If your call is made at Mr. O'Reilly's den in the *Pilot* office, do not attempt to remove the sheets of paper and the "clippings" from the chair you will sit in. "I shall forget all about them if they are moved," you will probably be told. Here is, indeed, a busy office, and the desk is literally heaped with "revises," "reviews," "first-proofs," letters, and, indeed, "a little of everything."

The first volume of O'Reilly's poems—"Songs from the Southern Seas"—was published in 1873; the second—"Songs, Legends and Ballads"—in 1878; this includes the contents of the first. I will not go into detail of its beauties, but I do wish that every person who has a collection of books would add this one to it. It will repay you all, for every poem in it is fine, or beautiful, or grand, as the case may be. Why, I have found the little three-verse scrap—"At Best"—in, at least, twenty scrap-books. His life experiences have been so varied that his subjects are equally so, and few bards have touched so many chords on the harp of song. One of the grand old bards of that singing nation, he seems to be come down in our midst, loved and revered by every Irish heart. A genius recognised to-day at the age of thirty-five.

Had I space, I could tell you many things of Mr. O'Reilly that would better show the man and the poet; but I have not. Come and talk with me of him, and I can do better than on paper.

Last year he published a prose work—"Moondyne"—which has been widely read and praised. And I saw a letter from delicate Paul Hayne last week, wherein he begs for "another book founded on fact, although you are *par excellence* a poet!" And the author told me yesterday that he would give us another by-and-by. Bless him!

JAMES BERRY BENSEL.

THE CASE AGAINST MR. BENCE JONES.

WE take the following from a recent number of the *Cork Examiner*:—

Clonakilty, Friday night.—To-day the following notice was posted on the Church piers of this town:—"Stand and read this, sir, this is a caution to the Clonakilty tenants who are daily bowing to Jones—but I have my doubts whether it is in love or fear—not to dare give him one penny over Griffith's valuation; or indeed, if they do, whether it is by the fireside after eating their supper, or when going for their little 'firsouchs' (little heifers) in the evening, they will have new news in the morning. This is just as good as if the fatal shots are put through." The greatest excitement was caused through the town, and, it being market day, large groups were everywhere discussing the incident. For the past three or four weeks it was freely rumoured that Mr. Bence Jones's tenants, whose gale day comes on next Tuesday, were determined to proffer only Griffith's valuation, and if a clear receipt were not given for that figure, to bring back the money and abide by the consequences. These rumours were every day growing thicker, and culminated to-day in the threatening letter referred to. A meeting of the Land League was at once convened, Father O'Leary being present in the chair. A resolution was carried unanimously condemning the threatening notices, and a second calling on the tenants to pay only Griffith's valuation. In putting the resolution the rev. gentleman said: Gentlemen, I am glad you have come forward so soon publicly to dissociate ourselves from, and distinctly to condemn, the notices that have been posted through the town to-day threatening bodily injury to any of Mr. Bence Jones's tenants who would pay the full rent. The policy threatened in these notices is not the policy of the Land League. We reprobate and denounce outrages of all kinds as strongly as any men in the land, we care not who they may be. At our last meeting we offered a reward for any information leading to the conviction of the parties who broke some gates on the night of the Roscarbery meeting. We have since heard, indeed, that there was not a shilling's damage done on the occasion, but still we showed that we had done our part. Still I must say that, strongly as I condemn those notices regarding Mr. Bence Jones, I am not at all surprised that wild words should be used when his name is in question; for undoubtedly Mr. Bence Jones is, to put it mildly, an exceedingly unpopular man. I certainly do not know anyone in any part of the county who has earned for himself such general and deep detestation. Nor is this a matter of to-day or yesterday. It has prevailed as long as I can remember. Twenty years ago his life was threatened in this very town, and I have heard it frequently said that but for the late Father