

Once we were illigant people,
And the land that ye see from the steople
Was ours from the time of the Flood.
We drank punch out of rubies and pearls,
And the least of us all we were earls—
Mr. Petric can tell ye the same.

Nationality

The Irish papers lately to hand make merry over Lloyd George's attempt to define what it is that constitutes nationhood. It seems that the Welsh Know-all laid it down recently in the House of Commons that Ireland was not a nation because she had not a language of her own. Even for Lloyd George that was a bad break. Politicians and Prime Ministers and men who speak without thinking are allowed a certain latitude in the matter of foolishness, but the present statement deserves the Parliamentary bun. On the same ruling Belgium is not a nation, nor is Austria; and on the contrary, Lloyd George is a nation, and so is Curzon, for as we saw lately these gentlemen have a language of their own which misleads other men. However the most effective retort was Lord Ashbourne's. His lordship got up and made a speech in Gaelic to prove beyond yea or nay that, even though such a benighted person as an English Prime Minister might know nothing about it, Ireland very decidedly had a language of her own. Ironic laughter saluted the discomfited Premier. But he ought to be accustomed to such little exposures nowadays. Some have asked us who is Lord Ashbourne. We can remember him distinctly in the days when he was still the Hon. William Gibson, a well-known figure on Irish Ireland platforms, in the early days of the Gaelic revival, for which he did good service. He used, in those days, wear the national costume boldly. We recall seeing him come out of Kingsbridge station one day dressed in the saffron kilts, probably returning from some Feis held in the West or South. Like Douglas Hyde, the son of a Protestant parson, he had brains enough to realise how superior the Gaelic civilisation was to that of the Saxon, and both did splendid work in making their countrymen see the folly of aping West British customs and of selling their glorious birthright for a platter of English stew. From this late episode we see with pleasure that becoming a lord has not weakened the brain of this Irish gentleman. Too often an English title or a Government job acts like a dose of poison on a man's principles.

Dante

In the engrossment of ordinary affairs how hard it is to find time to spend an hour with the old immortal writers as often as one would desire. It was Gladstone who said he could not think of opening Dante unless he had time and leisure for a "long draught" of him. John Morley used to pick up the old books and find pleasure in even a short glance at some of the famous lines, and no doubt, for one who knew his classics so intimately as he did, that came easy to him. Most of us agree with Gladstone, and regret that so many days pass without a chance of the "long draught" of which he spoke. Coming back to Dante, even once or twice a year, for a long session, is always as refreshing and as invigorating as a tonic. And the more one reads, and the oftener one reads the same lines, the more beauty and truth are discovered in this sublime singer of Catholic Italy. Now and then we love to turn from the *Divina Commedia* to his minor and less famous work, *La Vita Nuova*, which throws so much light on the great masterpiece and is so necessary to its adequate comprehension. The *Divina Commedia* is a work of classical grandeur, one of the peaks of literature, an achievement of the same ineffable perfection as the *Moses* of Michelangelo, the *Transfiguration* of Raffaele, the *Iliad*, or the *Aeneid*, while the *Vita Nuova* is a tender, human record, largely autobiographical, treating in exquisite prose and beautiful poetry of the personal concerns of the immortal Florentine. For those who cannot read Italian, and find the best English versions of *La Divina*

Commedia hard reading, we would recommend an acquaintance with *La Vita Nuova* in Rossetti's translation. It can be bought, in the volume of Rossetti's poems in Everyman's Library, for a couple of shillings. And it is good buying.

Beatrice

In the *Divina Commedia* Beatrice in heaven is the poet's guide, and she whom he loved on earth leads him through circles of growing light upwards into the vision of the Great White Rose in the splendor of which is perfect rest. The *Vita Nuova* tells us all there is to be known about Beatrice on earth and leaves us much to conjecture. But what is told us is said beautifully. The first reference is in these words:—"Nine times already since my birth had the heavens of light returned to the selfsame point almost, as concerns its revolution, when first the glorious lady of my mind was made manifest to mine eyes; even she who was called Beatrice by many who knew not wherefore; . . . so that she appeared to me at the beginning of her ninth year almost, and I saw her almost at the end of my ninth year." The second reference gives us the key to the well-known picture of the meeting at the corner of a bridge in Florence:—

"After the lapse of so many days that nine years exactly were completed since the above-written appearance of this most gracious being, on the last of those days it happened that the same wonderful lady appeared to me dressed all in pure white, between two gentle ladies elder than she."

Four or five more short passages in prose and a collection of poems are all the definite information the poet gives us concerning the "wonderful lady" of whom he wrote that book that made him lean. Having quoted the passages of prose, let us give here a stanza of the poem he wrote when he was grieving for her death:—

Beatrice is gone up into high Heaven,
The kingdom where the angels are at peace:
And lives with them; and to her friends is dead.
Not by the frost of winter was she driven
Away, like others; nor by summer-heats;
But through a perfect gentleness instead.
Grief with its tears, and anguish with its sighs,
Come to me now whene'er I am alone:
So that I think the sight of me gives pain.
And what my life hath been, that living dies,
Since for my lady the New Birth's begun.
I have not any language to explain.
Yea, I am fallen so far
That all men seem to say, "Go out from us,"
Eyeing my cold white lips, how dead they are.
But she though I be bowed unto the dust,
Will guerdon me; and watches me I trust.

DIOCESE OF DUNEDIN

His Lordship Bishop Brodie arrived in Dunedin on Tuesday night, on a brief visit.

The recent social organised by the Altar Society of the Sacred Heart Church, North-East Valley, in aid of the vestments fund, realised, including a donation of 10s from a lady friend, the satisfactory amount of nearly £11.

Mrs. E. A. Bryant, Kenmore Road, Mornington, has received word that her son, Trooper Cecil Bryant, who has been on active service for the past three years, is at present in No. 3 New Zealand General Hospital, suffering from malarial fever.

A garden fete is being organised by the ladies of the various conferences of the St. Vincent de Paul Society of Dunedin and suburbs, to be held in the grounds of St. Dominic's Priory on Saturday, October 19, in aid of the fund for establishing a Catholic Girls' Hostel in Dunedin.

A euchre social is to be given on next Monday evening, September 16, in the Catholic Schoolroom,

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