

found in the words of Mr. Cutten, which we quoted recently: the State schools, being secular, do not give a well-balanced education; and as long as the Government favors them it is guilty of an injustice to the children and to the parents of the Dominion. It is not enough to ask, as justice compels, that the taxes we pay for education be spent on schools such as we can conscientiously support; charity moves us to demand also that to all children there be accorded such advantages as are only to be found in the private denominational schools. Let us press home this demand incessantly. The more S.O.S. signals are sent out, the better proof we shall have that we are winning.

NOTES

Gabriele D'Annunzio

Carson as a comic opera king has been eclipsed by the fantastic Italian poet who raised an army of raiders and captured Fiume. D'Annunzio is a long time in the public eye now, and in all his career he has seldom lost an opportunity of posturing in the heart of the limelight. His rhapsodies, his fervid oratory, his theatrical addresses during the war, are all in keeping with the man's earlier history. No doubt there are a number of Italians who are willing to admire his literary work and to hail him as the greatest living genius in the Peninsula, but he never did and never could catch the solid culture of Italy. As a poet he is not up to Carducci's standard. No novel of his could stand comparison with Manzoni's great classic. His plays are at most but fine fireworks, and as ephemeral as *La Girandola* that on festive occasions still lights up the Piazza del Popolo. When D'Annunzio's novels were translated into English they were lauded to the skies by many critics, but the *gros bon sens commun* of John Bull could never stand the man. If we mention them at all it is to warn our readers to avoid them; for they are like the man himself—erotic, morbid, melodramatic, and pitched in a shrill falsetto key. Boito, Fogazzaro, and de Amicis are far better authors for those who want to read modern Italian prose. And even they fall immeasurably behind Silvio Pellico and Manzoni.

Translations

Speaking in a general way, we may say that English translators are not very happy in the works they select for introduction to the reading public. As a rule, if you come upon a foreign work in one of our book stores it seems to have nothing to recommend it except its questionable morality. Books such as Sudermann's *Song of Songs*, Strindberg's *Confessions of a Fool*, D'Annunzio's *Flame of Life*, are neither good literature nor wholesome stuff for readers. But this is the sort you will invariably find if you ask for a German, Italian, or Norwegian author. Germans and Italians do not accept Elinor Glyn or Marie Corelli when they demand English literature; and the fact that we are offered the dross instead of the gold is an eloquent condemnation of our depraved taste and our critical acumen. What youth in the Dominion has read Goethe, or Manzoni, or Chiamisso, or Hauff? But for that matter who reads Dickens, George Eliot, or Shakespere nowadays? The jazz and the pictures and the shop windows supply our future statesmen and political guides with their intellectual food; and if you cannot get blood out of a turnip can you get sanity or high ideals out of the cinema or the *Triad*? The demand creates the supply, and the vile translations of foreign works that find their way hither are but one more proof of the decadence of the "cubs of the lion" in the southern seas.

Good and Bad Reading

Carlyle said that the true university is a library of good books. The library, however, is not of much avail if it be not used rightly. And in the right use

of it lies the one royal road to education and culture. Schools do not give a man learning: they at best give him the key to it. No man ever came forth from school or college a learned man, and no man ever became learned without assiduous study and deep reading in the works of the wisest and best authors. As the body is built up, not in youth alone, but in youth and maturity, by constant exercise and the assimilation of plain, wholesome food, so too the mind must be developed and nourished by strong meat and laborious training. Conversely, as a diet of meringues, lollies, and syllibubs will end in dyspepsia and vapors and bodily debility, light reading and superficial reading will leave the mind unfit for exercising its powers, and will render a man no better than a drivelling fool.

Shane O'Neill

With reference to the mention of Shane O'Neill's "mistress" in our Irish History columns this week, there is room for a note by way of correction of Mr. Sullivan's views. In his notes to the *Macdonnells of Antrim*, the Rev. G. Hill explains that there was in Scotland a sort of marital union known as "handfasting," which permitted the parties to separate after dwelling together for seven years. He is of opinion that the Countess of Argyle had been "handfasted" to the third Earl, and that this unlawful marriage, recognised, however, by Scottish custom, was dissolved in the usual way by the lapse of the seven years. From a letter in the State papers there is evidence that she was married to Shane O'Neill after the death of his first wife. "It is," says Mr. Hegarty, in a note to *The Indestructible Nation*, "extremely unlikely that any priest would have celebrated a blasphemous marriage, and the whole question still awaits investigation."

Silken Thomas

Among the striking figures in Irish History, Silken Thomas with one heroic gesture illuminates a whole period. Whatever may have been the cause which inspired him, he stood forth as a champion for Irish independence on the day when he strode into the presence of the English lords and flung the Sword of State on the table before them and proclaimed that he no longer recognised an English Government in Ireland. What a scene it must have been, and what the wrath of the gentlemen of his Majesty's Council! To them, as they sat at ease, idle pensioners who grew fat on Irish moneys, entered the splendid young Geraldine, attended by his bodyguard, his harper behind him. Erect, proudly defiant, his arm flings forth and the sword that was his as Deputy jingles on the table, while their faces pale with consternation or empurple with fury. Little he recked for their thoughts or feelings: "This Sword of State is yours and not mine. I received it with an oath and have used it for your benefit. I should offend mine honor if I turned it to your annoyance. Now, have I need of mine own sword. I am none of Henry's Deputy. I am his foe. I have more mind to conquer than to govern, to meet him in the field than to serve him in office. . . . He was never our King, but our lord, as his progenitors have been before him. But if it be my hap to miscarry as you seem to prognosticate, catch that catch may. I will take the market as it riseth, and will choose rather to die with valiantness and liberty, than to live under King Henry in bondage and villainy." Tone, Emmet, Lord Edward, have since struck the same proud note of loyalty to Ireland a nation. Silken Thomas fought bravely and all but won. For the same cause, long years after, Lord Edward, another Geraldine noble, was stabbed to death by the English savage Sirr. In Ireland the men die but the cause never. As the faltering Greek runners passed the torch to another hand, the sacred tradition comes down through the ages in the Irish blood. The milestones on Erin's road to freedom are the tombstones of heroes. When the weary journey is at an end the tombstones will not lie forgotten.