

According to our Constitution, four meetings should have been held during the year, and the annual meeting in the month of October, but the Dominican Nuns' bazaar, and the numerous entertainments in connection with it, made it inadvisable, in the opinion of your committee, to arrange further social re-unions. Your committee suggests that two indoor entertainments during the year are sufficient, as the expense of these functions makes too severe a drain on the finances, while to raise the subscription might interfere with the length of the membership roll. Your committee, however, suggests to the incoming management that an out-door reunion of some sort be held at the earliest opportunity this year. This is a welcome change, and would be in keeping with the usage of such associations as ours in other parts of the world.

Our thanks are due to his Lordship the Bishop, who kindly allowed us the privilege of electing him patron of the association, and who also forwarded a donation to the funds; to Messrs. Sullivan, Costello, and McCormack for donations, and in an especial manner to Rev. Brothers Brady and Moore. Both rev. gentlemen have taken an active and enthusiastic part in the work of the association, their efforts on its behalf having helped in no small degree towards its success. We also desire to mark our grateful appreciation of the assistance received from the press, the generous reports accorded our gatherings having been of material help in bringing our association under the notice of many ex-pupils.

Scotland's National Ecclesiastical Seminary

Beautifully situated on the Kincardine side of the river Dee, and five miles from the Granite City of Aberdeen (says a writer in the *Catholic Parish Magazine*), stands our national ecclesiastical seminary, Blairs College. Here nearly all our native-born priests since 1829 have begun and finished their classical training preparatory to entering upon their more advanced studies of Philosophy and Theology. (These are pursued either in Rome, Paris, Valladolid, or since 1892, in New Kilpatrick, Glasgow.) The present fabric at Blairs is large and exceedingly well arranged, built of beautiful white granite. The casual visitor, as he enters the well-kept grounds and ascends the gracefully-curved avenue, is struck by the air of prosperity, of modernness—I had almost said of affluence,—around him. There is no hint of a tragic past, of a hard and bitter struggle against the combined forces of bigotry and poverty. But to anyone who has been privileged to investigate the records of the past of Blairs, who knows what the present buildings are the culmination of, it is indeed a great surprise to see that to-day the Catholic Church can claim as her own a building and a position in the educational world second to none in Scotland. Let us take a very brief glance at that past.

It was at 5 o'clock on the evening of June 2, 1829, that 20 miserably-clad youths arrived at Blairs from their former home, the College at Aquhorthies. That morning they had walked from Aquhorthies to Inverurie, whence they took the fly boat on the canal to Aberdeen, thence in five carriages to Blairs. I have said they were miserably clad: the Rev. Charles Gordon (the famous 'Priest Gordon' of Aberdeen), who had been entrusted by the Vicars Apostolic with the preparation of Blairs for the students' arrival, says: 'On their arrival at Blairs I found them in a very tattered state indeed. It may be said they had no coats for their backs, shoes for their feet, nor linens for their bodies.' But if these young men 82 years ago were in such a sorry plight, they brought with them memories of still worse traditions stretching back thirty years to the College at Scaln. Life at Scaln had been a life of hardship always, of danger often. More than once had the little house hid away among the hills in the wilds of Banffshire been attacked by armed soldiery and burned to the ground. Again and again had superiors and students been compelled to flee through mountain passes into secluded Highland glens where the forces of bigotry might not follow.

But I weary my readers with these memories of a past that, thank God, is dead and gone. It is of the Blairs of to-day that I have been invited by our editor to speak; and so I must hasten on.

It was in the year 1828, I think, that the Laird of Pitfodles, John Menzies, a name ever to be held in grateful memory by the Catholic priesthood and people of Scotland, made over to the Vicars Apostolic his mansion house and estate at Blairs (covering over 1000 acres) for the formation and endowment of a seminary. The mansion house, though large enough for the accommodation of Mr. Menzies and his servants, was not sufficiently commodious for a college. Consequently John Gall, architect, Aberdeen, was employed to draw up plans for the extension, and the work was immediately started under the supervision of Father Gordon. On June 2, 1829, though Father Gordon was not yet quite ready for them, the students were admitted from Aquhorthies. The dark days for the education of Scotland's priesthood were over.

From 1829 till 1910 is a tale of steady progress, in which the chief event to be recorded is the erection of the new college buildings, the chief name to be remembered that

of Bishop Chisholm, last Rector of old Blairs, first Rector of new Blairs. Had I space at my disposal I should like to give a few biographical notes on each of the six Rectors who presided over old Blairs, but as that is impossible, I shall merely record their names and dates. The Rev. Alexander Badenoch, who had been Rector in Aquhorthies, came with the students to Blairs, but remained there as Rector only three months. His successors were:—Rev. John Sharp, 1829-1847; Rev. John Macpherson (founder and first editor of the 'Catholic Directory' for Scotland), 1847-1858; Rev. John Strain (later Bishop), 1858-1864; Rev. Peter Jos. Grant, 1864-1890. Then came the Rev. Aeneas Chisholm, now Bishop of Aberdeen. His Rectorship was big with events. Shortly after his appointment he realised that the buildings at Blairs were not large enough for the accommodation of the increased number of students required to keep up the supply of priests in Scotland. He set about collecting the funds necessary for the erection of a college that would be worthy in every way of the position that the Catholic Church now holds in Scotland. With such success did he labor that on October 13, 1897, the first wing of the new college was opened; the college chapel finished October, 1901; the completed buildings, September, 1903. The last two events took place during the Rectorship of Monsignor McGregor, who has proved during his twelve years of office that the best interests and noblest traditions of Blairs are safe in his hands.

There is yet a name to be mentioned which must never be forgotten. It is that of Monsignor Lennon. Much that Bishop Chisholm accomplished would probably still remain undone but for Monsignor Lennon. The greatest benefactor of Blairs since 1829, his hand was outstretched to help when help was most needed. The beautiful college chapel built by him stands to-day as a fitting memorial of one who, coming as a stranger amongst us, left his name as a household word in our midst. In the little college cemetery hard by his own beautiful church he rests, what was mortal of him. The nobler part, the spirit which burned with such zeal and generosity in the interests of the training of a Catholic priesthood, we may safely trust to the hands of Him Who forgets not even the widow's mite.

Cottage Industries in Ireland

It is surprising (says a Consular report) that the hand-woven fabrics can still survive against the productions of machinery, but the Irish understand how to dye their hand-woven cloths with lichens and plants which give them an inimitable effect, and their qualities of durability and appearance give them a distinct value. The centres of hand-weaving and spinning are in Donegal, Mayo, Connaught, and Kerry, where there is abundant mountain grazing for sheep with luxuriant wool and where labor is superabundant. The leading centre, however, is Donegal, and it is estimated that £10,000 a year is paid to the people of the impoverished and barren districts of Donegal for their homespun cloths. The cloth is usually sold at country fairs, where it is brought in large rolls or webs about 28 inches wide. As a loom of the necessary size could not be accommodated in the tiny cottages occupied by the people, the homespun cloths are not made in double widths.

Each district in Ireland produces cloth of a distinct character. In North Donegal the cloth is heavy, well-woven, substantial, and generally dyed in dark colors with stripes and checks. The market for this is usually a retail one. The products of Castlebar resemble those of North Donegal, but are somewhat brighter in color. In Connaught and other parts of County Galway there is a peculiar sort of flannel of very durable quality. It is usually dyed in red, dark blue, or black; and the Galway woman presents an odd, but vividly picturesque, appearance clad in hood and cloaks made of this peculiar material. The Kerry homespun are well made, but poor in color and pattern, vegetable dyes being seldom used.

In each of the cases which have been mentioned the cloth is produced for local use, and only the overflow reaches the outside market, but in South Donegal the case is different, as there is an extensive homespun industry there, carried on specially for the wholesale market and conducted upon business principles. There is a hereditary talent for coloring the cloths prevalent among the people of Donegal, and the cloths which come from this district are considered as beautiful as any woollen fabrics produced anywhere in Europe. There are no statistics available as to the importance of this industry.

Hand knitting is still able to compete against mechanical imitations and is a means of livelihood to many in the isolated regions of the country. The wild district of Kincassilough, County Donegal, is an important centre. The Arran industry of Mayo produces some very fine specimens. Hand embroidery, as it is done in some parts of Ireland, cannot be satisfactorily imitated by machinery, and is a cottage industry of importance. Irish art needlework is of the best quality and will bear favorable comparison with any produced in Europe. The centre of the cabinet-making industry is in the vicinity of Killybegs. Basket-work is engaged in in Liffelack, County Galway, Beaufort, County Kerry, and Castlecomer, County Kilkenny. Much ingenuity is shown in adapting the wicker-work to useful purposes.