

OUR ROMAN LETTER

By SCOTTUS ALTER.

On January 22 last, in company with many sympathisers—including Cardinal Fruhwirth, many Bishops, Generals of Orders, and representatives of various colleges and religious institutions throughout Rome—the Irish clans gathered at the Irish College in the Church of Sant'Agata dei Goti to pay respect to the memory of the late Rector, Mgr. O'Riordan. The Solemn Requiem Mass was celebrated by the Rector of the North American College, and the panegyric preached by Mgr. Salotti, one of the most eloquent of Roman preachers and a distinguished worker in connection with the cause of the Irish martyrs. With warmth and pathos Mgr. Salotti described the salient points in the character of the illustrious dead, gracefully illustrating in his life-work the history of his country, her fortitude in suffering, her unconquerable faith, and unflinching hope and courage. He recalled in turn his love for the Irish College and its students, for his country, and for the See of Peter. Alluding to a saying of Lacordaire over the grave of Montalembert, the preacher added that the spirit of the dead lived on, and would be felt again when the Irish martyrs were crowned with the honors of the altar, when the cause of Ireland was victorious, and when the Papacy was secured its rightful place of honor and influence among men.

It was with the greatest and most general satisfaction that the news was lately received of the appointment of Father Curran as Vice-Rector of the Irish College. Father Curran has long been a quiet and untiring worker in the classifying and marshalling of historical records, so necessary to their preservation and utility, and in many similar kinds of work, such as entail more than their due amount of trouble and yet seldom receive their due amount of praise. His work in Dublin in connection with the process of the Irish martyrs, and again, in the ordering and arrangement of the Dublin diocesan archives, is the admiration of those here and elsewhere who have had the privilege of seeing something of it. His appointment as Vice-Rector to such a worker in historical research as Dr. Hagan augurs well for the future of the Irish College, and especially for the future of Irish historical studies in Rome.

Father Magennis, the General of the Carmelites, recently lectured to an appreciative audience in the Irish College on the Irish race in America, their work and influence there, especially in connection with recent developments. The subject of the lecture was one of the greatest interest to all, especially at the present moment, when we find Italian papers, such as the *Tempo*, emphasising the importance of the Irish organised forces in America in influencing the choice of a new President, and so, indirectly, the attitude of the United States towards the various European Powers. The audience filled the Kirby Memorial Hall of the Irish College, and included priests and students from the various Irish institutions in Rome, as well as the students of the North American College. Father Magennis even exceeded their expectations, by the alternating humor and pathos he was able to give the subject, and the new lights he was able to throw on it from the rich fund of his personal experience. Dr. O'Gorman, General of the Augustinians, presided at the meeting, and pointed out, not without a touch of his characteristic genial humor, an aspect of the subject which the lecturer's modesty had striven to keep in the background—the principal part, namely, which Father Magennis himself had played in placing the Irish cause in the position in which it now stands in America.

The following document, which has been received by various Irish people here, will, no doubt, be of interest to intending "British" visitors to Rome. There is a sweet old Saxon legend entitled "How the Devils spake British," but in the present instance we presume "British" is not opposed to "Anglo-Saxon," and includes, no doubt, moreover, West British where available. The document is headed "Patriotic League of Britons Overseas, Rome Branch," and runs:—"On and after February 2, 1920, Mr. Oscar Browning, joint secretary of the league, will be at home in the Palazzo Simonetti, 12 Via Pietro Cavallini. . . . Mr. Browning's rooms are on the top floor. Visitors are requested to use the lift. The object of the Roman branch of the Patriotic League is to be a centre for all British interests, to bring together the various elements of the British community, and to consolidate them for their mutual advantage, as is already done in Rome by the Swiss, the Danes . . . and other nationalities."

Bohemia has been thought of for long as a sort of romantic land, whose marble halls are filled with pickers-up of unconsidered trifles, a place pleasanter, on the whole, to read about than to live in. Bohemia recently,

indeed, has made a reputation for qualities and achievements more worthy of admiration. To us, indeed, in the revival of her national language, and in the successful restoration of her national power which followed, she has been often and rightly held up as a model for imitation. Still, just at present, it would seem as though modern Bohemia, in matters ecclesiastical, has some children at least ready to revive her reputation as a place where wayward fancies may be carried into practice without any of the inconveniences which follow from such frolics in more sober lands. A section of the Bohemian clergy matured some time ago many propositions which would, they modestly asserted, if carried into effect, vastly improve the Church in their native land. The Archbishop of Prague was to be made a "Patriarch of the Czechoslovak Republic," the bishops and parish priests to be elected by the clergy and people, the liturgy to be in the Czech language, the administration of ecclesiastical property to be independent of the bishop, priests to practise matrimony and to discard ecclesiastical dress, and lastly—to secure, we suppose, the gratitude of posterity—the seminary course to be finished in a single year. In all these proposals, except, perhaps, the last (which beats even the Trinity College Divinity Course of two years), there is nothing brilliantly original. Some of the milder proposals are similar to those made by an Irish-speaking Protestant in *Antaglaisceach Goedheolach* for October last. All of them have been frequently made and followed by Christians separated from the Church, though of course it is painful to find there should have been a number of priests to support them. The more moderate of the reformist clergy were in favor of submitting the proposals to Rome, and, being in a majority in the assembly which had met for their discussion, sent as a deputation last June Professor Sanda and some others. They were received in Rome with marked courtesy, care being taken that nothing should be said to them which might offend their brethren or be used as a further incitement to separation from the centre of unity. The reply to the proposals, however, was firm though courteous. The position of bishops, the education of the clergy, and such matters must follow the Code of Canon Law, and if modifications be introduced they must be confined to the limits allowed by the Code itself. As regards the use of the national language in the liturgy, the introduction of some modifications—such as the reading of the Epistle and Gospel, the prayers in the ceremonies connected with the Sacraments—might be allowed, to be introduced, however, at the request of the bishops and according to the normal procedure of the Roman Congregations. As regards celibacy, no discussion was possible, and the discipline of the Latin Church must remain in full vigor. This result of the mission to Rome was, naturally, the signal for many to withdraw from the movement—others, however, proceeded to carry out the "reforms," propounding the theory that Rome would bow to the accomplished fact. Some priests left aside their soutanes, went through a form of marriage, translated the liturgical books into Czech, and used their translations in the liturgy. Finally, a short time ago, meeting together, they formally voted the "reform" and separation from Rome. This was naturally followed by the condemnation of the reformist clergy by the Holy Office, with the declaration that each of them stands excommunicated as a heretic and schismatic. The bishops of Bohemia had already expressed their devotion to the Holy See, and taken strong measures to check the reformist movement. They are warmly supported by the greater and better part of their clergy and their flocks. Indeed, even from the first, the reformist movement was mainly confined to Prague and the districts round it, the influence of the movement decreasing in proportion to the distance of a district from this centre, and the Slovak clergy being unaffected. In spite of a certain appearance of Czech nationalism which the movement seems to aim at taking, it is but a phase of a movement which has also appeared to some extent in Hungary and Jugoslavia, and in the opinion of many is due largely to the evil of a foreign State influencing education, which was inaugurated in his dominions by the Emperor Joseph.

From the first centuries of Christianity, the girl-martyr, St. Agnes, has been looked up to as the special protectress of Rome and its people. Each succeeding year, her feast returns on January 21, seeming each time fresher and more beautiful, with a sort of child-like joy in the heroism and triumph of this little child of 13. She is present to the minds of the faithful in that graceful way in which she is always represented, a delicate figure, surrounded with heavenly light, carrying in her arms the Immaculate Lamb, as though repeating the words which are sung in her office: "I keep my faith to Him alone." St. Agnes is, as it were, the synthesis, the culminating point of all the glories of the martyrs whose shrines sanctify the city of the Popes. She, adorned with all that beauty, youth, and

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