

# DANA

AN IRISH MAGAZINE OF INDEPENDENT THOUGHT

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## CONTENTS

### The Irish in America

1.—An Open Letter to Sir Horace Plunkett .. Ossorian

2.—Reply .. Rt. Hon. Sir Horace Plunkett, K.C.B.

Moods and Memories, VI. (Concluded.) George Moore

### The Position of the Mission

Priest in England .. Mission Priest in England

The Sower (Poem) .. .. Padraic Colum

A Way of understanding Nietzsche John Eglinton

A Literary Causerie .. .. F. M. Atkinson

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# DANA

AN IRISH MAGAZINE OF INDEPENDENT THOUGHT

## THE IRISH IN AMERICA

### I.—AN OPEN LETTER TO SIR HORACE PLUNKETT

MY DEAR SIR HORACE PLUNKETT,—When you knew that I was about to visit the United States for the first time, and to spend a few months in that country, you suggested to me, as a close and sympathetic observer of your work, that I might let you have any remarks I had to make on my experiences of our countrymen in America, with special reference to your treatment of the subject in your recent book on Ireland. I feel that my visit has not been long enough to enable me to form an opinion which I could with confidence present as a final judgment upon several millions of men and women. But I have seen a good many types of all classes of Irish people in the States, and have lost no opportunity—for the subject has interested me profoundly—of getting at the real truth by observation and inquiry. Such as my ideas are, and whatever they may be worth, I shall try to give them to you; and as they may possibly have some interest for others, whose opportunities have been less than my own, I shall, if you do not disapprove, put them in the form of an “open letter.”

Naturally the point of view from which things presented themselves to me was whether, or how far, your estimate of the Irish in America—with its reflex bearing on the Irish in Ireland—was verified by my own observations. I am bound to say that it does not appear to me to have been verified, if we take it as a whole and sum up the general trend of your criticisms. You are right, I think, in saying that the Irish have not signally distinguished themselves as politicians, in the higher sense of the term. They have not as yet been leaders of thought in that sphere. They hardly could, in a country whose institutions are so essentially Protestant as those of America. But the things they have done, and done well, seemed to me to bulk much bigger than those they have not. Instead of the curse of

unsuccess pursuing them into America, it appeared to me that in crossing the Atlantic they did really, to a great extent, leave it behind them, and that there is a great deal of justification for the popular view as to what their history in America reveals about Ireland and Irish problems. The career of the Irish race in America (using, as I mean to do, the word "Irish" in the special sense in which it is used in your book) is a very big subject indeed, and is full of features of the deepest interest for the student of sociology, ethnology, etc. Moreover, it is one which, so far as I know, no one has ever attempted to handle in a philosophic and critical spirit. Your own references to it are slight and few—they form merely a subordinate feature in one of your chapters, and are of course not to be taken as a full account of your views on the subject. But I think it might have been better not to treat of it at all unless you were in a position to do so more adequately, and to give at least a broad outline picture of the whole range of facts. As it is, it seems to me that even if every individual sentence of yours could be defended—and perhaps it might—the total effect is misleading—much is left untouched that goes to the make-up of the Irish in America, and prominence is given to elements which count for less in reality than they seem to in your book.

I have not noticed any great distinction, as you appear to do, between the Irish who emigrate to the United States of America and those born in the States of Irish parentage. In both cases I am quite unable to resist the impression of an elastic human force released from some external pressure and springing at once into its natural position. *The Irishman finds his level in the States*, and it seems to me impossible to deny—in spite of the criminal statistics on which I shall touch later on—that this is, on the whole, a far higher level than he reaches at home. I do not see him confined to any one field of distinction. He is to be found at the head of affairs in finance, organization of labour, management of business concerns, law, journalism, and of course political campaigning. Perhaps literature is the field in which he is least in evidence; and here, no doubt, his religion stands in the way. An important Catholic literature, in days when literature means an attempt to sound the depths of moral and social problems long ago dogmatically settled, or open to dogmatic settlement, by the Church, seems hardly possible. But elsewhere he seems to me fully to hold his own in the States, and to contribute to them some of their very best elements. I have met Irish-

men, natives of Ireland and American-born, who have verified the highest ideal one could form of the ennobling influence of freedom and equality, and who have raised my idea of human nature.

The case I am about to refer to is not exactly one of these, but it is very typical, and it seems, as we shall see, to lead us straight to the heart of the Irish problem.

Larry Harrigan was Chief of Police in St. Louis before the present very able occupant of that post, also an Irishman named Kiely. In Harrigan's time St. Louis was one of the "toughest" towns in the United States. The East and the West met there—forgers and swindlers learned the ways of desperadoes. Harrigan was picked out to cope with this state of things. He was a man of genius in his way, and a man born to command and lead. He had endless fertility of resource and dauntless courage. He attacked gang after gang of criminals and broke them up. On one occasion, in getting on the track of an association of counterfeiters, he had a running fight with four men who attempted his life, and he killed every one of them. During his tenure of office I am told that no less than sixteen criminals fell by Harrigan's own hand. This will give an idea of the sort of situation he had to deal with; but in the end law and order came to the top in St. Louis, and it was Larry Harrigan who put them there, as the citizens gratefully remember.

I do not of course refer to this career in order to show how the Irish succeed in the States, but because it seems to throw a ray of light on the position of the Irish at home. Harrigan began life as a shoemaker in the town of Tipperary. Just think what his probable career would have been if he had stayed in Ireland! What is the sort of social outlook that would present itself to the eyes of Larry Harrigan, shoemaker, of Tipperary? I think it very doubtful if law and order would have found a champion in him. His natural abilities would have probably made him a man of mark in some more or less limited sphere, but barriers, very strong, though invisible on the surface of things, would have kept him from rising to any position of dignity and usefulness such as he occupied in the States. The Ascendancy, who represent the combined force, the concentrated exclusiveness and bigotry, of a social caste, a political party, a religion, and a race, are in possession of the strong places in Ireland, not only in the public service, but also, owing to the action of the penal laws, in commerce, industry, and education. The moment Harrigan



began to rise in Ireland he would have come into the atmosphere of this class, and it would have repelled him. "This is no place for me," he would have felt, and they would have felt the same about him. It is not easy for a man of the class and type of Larry Harrigan to avoid feeling himself in Ireland either a helot or a rebel.

Compare this with the reception which America gave him, judging him simply on his merits, and the career which, on that basis, it opened to him. We get by such a comparison a vivid conception of one at least of the great forces which keep down the Irishman in Ireland. It is that stiff, coagulated crust in Irish social life which we call the Ascendancy. Abolished long ago in law, it is mighty to the present day in practical life, and just as surely as in the days of the Wild Geese, when it worked by legal proscription, it sends the flower of the Irish race to give their best qualities to the service of another country where in many important respects they are more truly "at home" than in their own.

I do not suppose that you by any means ignore in your own thought the existence of this repressive force, but you do not give it in your book anything like the recognition which it seems to me it ought to have in any survey of the conditions of Irish life and progress. This crust has got to be thoroughly dissolved, broken up, done away with in one fashion or another before the Irishman in Ireland can come to his own.

There is another crust which has also to be broken up, and that is the crust of mental apathy and inertness which has spread over a great mass of the people. To this feature you have given, and rightly, a good deal of notice; and probably one of the best results of your book, as more than one Irish-American reader has said to me, is that it will help powerfully to break up this crust and to make way for the passage of thought. But you have not noticed the extent to which the Irish-American mind is free from it. Undoubtedly the Roman Catholic Church or its representatives in Ireland are the main power in keeping this crust of inertia intact. The Cardinal who recently told his people that he felt obliged to warn them against your book because he had read a letter in the papers from a parish priest who objected to it, was helping to put another layer to that crust, and so does everyone who tries to substitute vituperation for thought, or authority for argument. Now, whether the Irish in America are really less Catholic than the Irish at home is a question I have no means of answering, but

unquestionably they are far less "clerical." A prelate in the United States who should warn his flock in a pastoral address against a serious book by an eminent public man—one notorious, too, for his sympathy with Catholic claims—and tell them plainly that he had not thought it worth while to read the book, but judged it solely on the evidence of a stupid and violent letter written to the papers by some obscure cleric, would excite no feeling but one of amazement or of ridicule. He simply *could* not do such a thing—it would never occur to him to treat the Irish-American laity with such contempt, such a reckless straining of authority as this episode implies, and if it did, they would very soon find means to bring him to his senses.

What has liberated them in America, and what keeps the crust unbroken in Ireland? No doubt the facilities for higher education in America have a good deal to do with it, as well as the general influence of democratic institutions. I shall not enter here upon this very large question further than to say that I can imagine nothing that would do more towards breaking up and dissolving the crust of Protestant ascendancy and the crust of clerical authority than the settlement of the University question on lines that will give the nation at large access to the sources of intellectual light, and command of the forces of national development.

There is one more topic on which I must briefly touch in conclusion. In spite of all that may be said, and truly said, of the success of the Irish in America, one cannot ignore the ugly fact that they contribute far beyond the proportion of any other people to the criminal population of the States. Official statistics as well as the observations of private investigators like Josiah Flynt are clear and decisive on this point. I have enquired as to the explanation of this, and have sometimes been told that the Irish do not come out so badly if crimes are classified instead of all classes of offences being lumped together, the crimes of the Irish being mainly those which arise from drink, and from a general want of self-control. This is something like the "want of moral fibre" which you draw attention to; and I think there is no doubt that you have hit the mark when you speak of this deficiency as being due largely to the artificial system of restraints and props which sustain Irish virtue at home, but weaken it for resistance to bad influences in a less cloistered life.

In fact if it were possible to sum up the whole question in a sentence, I should say that all my observations point

to one conclusion, namely that the Irish at home are living in an abnormal condition, and are hemmed in by forces which leave them scarcely any opportunity for natural growth and expansion. In America they are free ; and if many go downwards, there is more assurance and more significance in the fact that so many rise. In Ireland, whatever some may hope and others fear, there seems little doubt that an era of the loosening of bonds in all directions has set in. The results may not be wholly admirable, but the process means life, and if it is checked the nation will die. That your book will help the Irish people to a fuller and worthier life is a conviction of mine which of course you will understand is in no way weakened by the American observations, of which I have tried to give you some brief account in this letter.

I am, my dear Sir Horace,  
Yours faithfully,  
OSSORIAN.

## II.—A REPLY.

MY DEAR OSSORIAN,—Thanks for your “open letter,” which you are quite welcome to publish, if you so desire. Your opinions will, I am sure, be interesting to many, as indeed they are to me ; but as a criticism on the brief references in *Ireland in the New Century* to our transatlantic fellow-countrymen, they are, I think, based on a misunderstanding. Nothing which I wrote ought to have caused the impression that you would find “the curse of unsuccess pursuing them into America.” I agree with you that “so far no one has ever attempted to handle in a philosophical or critical spirit” that large and complex subject, “the career of the Irish race in America ;” but when you criticise my omissions of salient facts and the too great prominence which I give “to elements which count for less in reality than they seem to in your book,” you ignore an important difference in our points of view. The impressions upon which I drew were borne in upon me by a quarter of a century of observation widely extended. You gave, I daresay, with at least equal fidelity, the rapidly formed impressions of a few weeks spent at St. Louis and New York.

There were only two passages in my book to which your remarks upon my “estimate of the Irish in America—with its reflex bearing upon the Irish in Ireland” can refer. I suggested that the peculiar Irish conception of a home



and the associative instincts of the Irish accounted largely for the small share they seem to have taken in the greatest home-seeking and home-building opportunity ever opened to the human race. I did not treat this fact as being in any way a defect for which the present generation of Irishmen or their immediate predecessors were to blame, but as one which ought to be recognised and for which it is of the utmost importance to find a remedy in Ireland.

The other passage is that which occurs incidentally in my political chapter. In my study of the dominant influences upon the Irish mind and character at home I could not omit politics. My main contention was that political agitation, while essential to legislative reform, was carried on in Ireland in a manner calculated to suppress independent political thought. It is commonly said that the pre-eminent services of our countrymen to the political life of the great Republic demonstrate that they are not lacking in the qualities of statesmanship, but only in the opportunity for their display. My object was, of course, here, as in every other part of my argument, to put in a plea for social and economic work, under existing conditions at home, and to deprecate the sacrifice of all progress to the ideal of a political millennium. In this connection I gave it as the result of my own experience, observation, and reflection, that, taking the mass and not the brilliant exceptions into account, our countrymen have not themselves profited by their politics, nor made any important contribution to the political thought of the United States; but, on the contrary, that their too great addiction to that pursuit has handicapped them in the less exciting paths where nations find the surest means to material, social and even political advancement. Compared with what he could have done at home, the success of the Irish immigrant is great, especially when full account is taken of the depressing conditions which led to the expatriation of vast numbers of them. I regard the relative unimportance of the Irish factor in the pending Presidential campaign as a sign of growth of their real power. Viewed in relation to the record of other immigrants, and of their own moral, intellectual, and physical qualities, the question whether the Irish-American record is all that it might have been, remains for your philosophic critic to decide. I personally feel that the Irishman is only now beginning to "find his level in the United States," and that when he has found it there will set in a reflex action which will help him to find it in Ireland.

I note, not without some amusement, that, while expressing a sense of disagreement with these views, you handle the main points of my argument in a way which would have got you even more roundly abused than I was if you had gratified your enemies by writing a book upon Ireland. You account for the political position of the Irish in the United States by the fact that "American institutions are so essentially Protestant." The Irish in Ireland, you say, are repressed by "the stiff coagulated crust in Irish social life which we call the Ascendancy," and by another crust of "mental apathy and inertia;" and, you add, "the Roman Catholic church or its representatives in Ireland are the main power in keeping this crust of inertia intact." In an extremely interesting speculation, you attribute the liberty of thought, which Irish-Americans enjoy, to "the facilities for higher education in America, and to the general influence of democratic institutions." I think you might omit the former. The influence of higher education on the life of the country was, as far as my observations have extended, exceedingly small until a comparatively recent date, and is only now beginning to make itself a factor worth mentioning in the development of this great people. Did it ever strike you how many of their institutions of higher education owe their origin and endowment to the philanthropy of men whose native genius enabled them to win in the pursuit of wealth, and whose acute insight (certainly not imparted to them in the university), has prompted them to supply the deficiency of which they themselves only become conscious in the enjoyment of their wealth? A true instinct, born of a large experience of life, has shown them that, whatever genius may achieve without higher education, it is an essential element of success for the man of normal ability in ordinary circumstances. You, no doubt, introduced the subject as a peg on which to hang your advocacy of a settlement of the University Question in Ireland "on lines that will give the nation at large access to the sources of intellectual light, and command of the forces of intellectual development." Willingly would I give up all my other hobbies and join you in working for this urgent reform if I thought we could thereby break the moral and intellectual crusts which you deplore. What an irony, by the way, it is that in the "reflex bearing upon the Irish in Ireland" of Irish-American thought, we find rather a hindrance than a help to the demand for this essential concession!

Another very interesting feature in your letter is the

deductions you draw from the career of Larry Harrigan. You are quite right in saying that the moment he began to rise in Ireland he would have felt "this is no place for me." His "endless fertility of resource and dauntless courage" would have availed him little as soon as he went beyond his last. Probably before he had accounted for one of his sixteen desperadoes the minions of the law would have checked his further usefulness. But I wonder it did not occur to so agile and brilliant an imagination as yours that a moral Larry Harrigan is just what we most need in Ireland at the moment. We have had leaders of men of almost every type except this moral Larry Harrigan. Not long ago I thought one such had appeared, but, alas! he soon himself joined the shouting crowd of intellectual bullies. It would be too much to say that there is no country in Europe where there is so little liberty as in Ireland, but if freedom to express honest conviction be the test applied, and if public opinion be taken as the arbiter in the matter, then such a proposition would be hard to disprove.

The Irish Question would be more than half solved if some of the effort which is squandered in belabouring the old Ascendancy were directed against the intellectual tyranny which threatens to stifle with its rank growth the tender shoots of a nascent nationality.—Yours very truly,

HORACE PLUNKETT.

## MOODS AND MEMORIES.\*

VI.—(*Concluded*)

THE music began again, the people rushed to see a quadrille where two women, with ease, were kicking off men's hats; while watching them I heard that a special display of fireworks had been arranged in Marie's honour, the news having got about that this was her last night at the Elysée. A swishing sound was heard; the rocket rose to its height high up in the thick sky. Then it dipped over, the star fell a little way and burst: it melted into turquoise blue, and changed to ruby red, beautiful as the colour of flowers, roses or tulips. The falling fire changed again and again.

Marie stood on a chair and watched till the last sparks vanished.

"Doesn't she look like my picture now?" said Octave.

"You seemed to have divined her soul."

He shrugged his shoulders contemptuously. "I'm not a psychologist, I am a painter." But he must get a word with her, and with a carelessness that was almost insolence, he pushed his way into the crowd and called her, saying he wanted to speak to her; and they walked round the *bal* together. I could not understand his indifference to her charm. . . . I asked myself if he had always been so indifferent. In a little while they returned.

"I'll do my best," I heard her say, and she ran back to join her companions.

"I suppose you've seen enough of the Elysée? . . . Ah! qu'elle est jolie ce soir; et elle ferait joliment marcher le Russe."

We walked on in silence. Octave did not notice that he had said anything to jar my feelings; he was thinking of his portrait, and presently he said that he was sorry she was going to Russia.

"I should like to begin another portrait, now that I have learned to paint."

"Do you think she'll go to Russia?"

"Yes, she'll go there; but she'll come back one of these days, and I'll get her to sit again. It is extraordinary how little is known of the art of painting, the art is forgotten. The old masters did perfectly in two days what we spend weeks fumbling at. In two days Rubens finished

his *grisaille*, and the glazing was done with certainty, with skill, with ease in half an hour ! He could get more depth of colour with a glaze than anyone can to-day, however much paint is put on the canvas. The old masters had method, now there's none. One brush as well as another, rub the paint up or down, it doesn't matter so long as the canvas is covered. Manet began it, and Cézanne has—well, filed the petition : painting is bankrupt."

I listened to him a little wearily for I had heard all he was saying many times before, but Octave always talked as he wanted to talk, and this evening he wanted to talk of painting, not of Marie, and I was glad when we came to the spot where our ways parted.

"You know that the Russian is coming to the studio to-morrow, I hope he'll buy the portrait."

"I hope he will," I said. "I'd buy it myself if I could afford it."

"I'd prefer you to have something I have done since, unless it be the woman you're after. Good night. . . but one minute. You're coming to sit to me the day after to-morrow?"

"Yes," I said, "I'll come."

"And then I'll be able to tell you if he has bought the picture."

Three days afterwards I asked Octave on the threshold if the Russian had bought the portrait.

"No, there it is," and then he told me that Marie had gone to St. Petersburg with the prince, and this was the last news I had of her for many months. But a week rarely passed without something happening to remind me of her. One day a book of travels in Siberia opened at a passage telling how a boy belonging to a tribe of Asiatic savages had been taken from his deserts where he had been found deserted and dying, and brought to Moscow. The gentleman who had found him adopted and educated him, and the reclaimed savage became in time a fashionable young man about town, betraying no trace of his origin until one day he happened to meet one of his tribe. The man had come to Moscow to sell skins ; and the smell of the skins awoke a longing for the desert. The reclaimed savage grew melancholy ; his adopted father tried in vain to overcome the original instinct ; presents of money did not soothe his homesickness. He disappeared and was not heard of for years until one day a caravan came back with the news of a man among the savages who had betrayed himself by speaking French. On being questioned,

he denied any knowledge of French ; he said he had never been to St. Petersburg, nor did he wish to go there. And what was this story but the story of Marie Pellegrin, who, when weary of Russian princes and palaces, returned for her holiday to the Quartier Breda ?

A few days afterwards I heard in Barrè's studio that she had escaped from Russia ; and that evening I went to Alphonsine's to dinner, hoping to see her there. But she was not there. There was no one there except Clementine and the two stockbrokers ; and I waited eagerly for news of her. I did not like to mention her name, and the dreary dinner was nearly over before her name was mentioned. I heard that she was ill ; no, not dying, but very ill. Alphonsine gave me her address ; a little higher up on the same side as the Cirque Fernando, nearly facing the Elysée Montmartre. The number I could inquire out, she said, and I went away in a cab up the steep and stony Rue des Martyres, noticing the café and then the *brasserie* and a little higher up the fruit seller and the photographer. When the mind is at stress one notices the casual, and mine was at stress, and too agitated to think. The first house happened to be the right one, and the *concierge* said, "the fourth floor." I thought of *La Glue*, of her untidy dress and her red hair, and it was *La Glue* who opened the door. I was asked into an empty drawing-room, and we stood by the empty chimney piece.

"She's talking of going to the Elysée to-night. Won't you come in? She'd like to see you. There are three or four of us here. You know them, Clementine, Margaret Byron?" And she mentioned some other names that I did not remember, and opening a door, she cried, "Marie, here's a visitor for you, a gentleman from Alphonsine's. You know, dear, thè Englishman, Octave Barrè's friend."

She gave me her hand, and I held it a long while.

"Comme les Anglais sont gentils. Dès qu'on est malade—"

I don't think Marie finished the sentence, if she did I did not hear her ; but I remember quite well that she spoke of my distaste for cards.

"You didn't play that night at Alphonsine's when I lost all my money. You preferred to look at Victorine's drawings. She has done some better ones. Go and look at them, and let's finish our game. Then I'll talk to you. So you heard about me at Alphonsine's? They say I'm very ill, don't they? But now that I've come back I'll soon



get well. I'm always well at Montmartre, amn't I, Victorine?" "Nous ne sommes pas installées encore," Marie said, referring to the scarcity of furniture, and to the clock and candelabra which stood on the floor. But if there were too few chairs, there was a good deal of money and jewellery among the bed-clothes; and Marie toyed with this jewellery during the games. She wore large lace sleeves, and the thin arms showed delicate and slight when she raised them to change her ear-rings. Her small beauty, fashioned like an ivory, contrasted with the coarse features about her, and the little nose with beautifully shaped nostrils, above all the mouth fading at the ends into faint indecisions. Every now and then a tenderness came over her face; Octave had seen the essential in her, whatever he might say; he had painted herself—her soul; and Marie's soul rose up like a water flower in her eyes, and then the soul sank out of sight, and I saw another Marie, *une grue*, playing cards with five others from Alphonsine's, losing her money and her health. A bottle of absinthe stood on a beautiful empire table that her prince had given her, and Bigou, Clementine's little dog, slept on a embroidered cushion. Bigou was one of those dear little Japanese or Chinese spaniels, those dogs that are like the King Charles. She was going to have puppies, and I was stroking her silky coat thinking of her coming trouble, when I suddenly heard Clementine's voice raised above the others, and looking up I saw a great animation in her face; I heard that the cards had not been fairly dealt, and then the women threw their cards aside, and *La Glue* told Clementine that she was not wanted, that "elle ferait bien de débarrasser les planches," that was the expression she used. I heard further accusations, and amid them the plaintive voice of Marie begging of me not to believe what they said. The women caught each other by the hair, and tore at each other's faces, and Marie raised herself up in bed and implored them to cease; and then she fell back crying. For a moment it seemed as if they were going to sit down to cards again, but suddenly everybody snatched her own money and then everybody snatched at the money within her reach; and, calling each other thieves, they struggled through the door, and I heard them quarrelling all the way down the staircase. Bigou jumped from her chair and followed her mistress.

"Help me to look," Marie said, and looking I saw her faint hands seeking through the bed-clothes. Some jewel-

lery was missing, a bracelet and some pearls as well as all her money. Marie back among the pillows unable to speak, and every moment I dreaded a flow of blood. She began to cry, and the little lace handkerchief was soon soaking. I had to find her another. The money that had been taken had been paid her by a *fournisseur* in the *Quartier*, who had given her two thousand francs for her *garniture de cheminée*. A few francs were found among the bed clothes, and these few francs, she said, were sufficient *pour passer sa soirée*, and she begged me to go to the dressmaker to inquire for the gown that had been promised for ten o'clock.

"I shall be at the Elysée by eleven. Au revoir, au revoir! Let me rest a little now, I shall see you to-night. You know where I always sit, in the left-hand corner, they always keep those seats for me."

Her eyes closed, I could see that she was already asleep, and her calm and reasonable sleep reminded me of her agitated and unreasonable life; and I stood looking at her, at this poor butterfly who was lying here all alone, robbed by her friends and associates. But she slept contentedly, having found a few francs that they had overlooked amid the bed-clothes, enough to enable her to pass her evening at the Elysée! The prince might be written to; but he, no doubt, was weary of her inability to lead a respectable life, and knew, no doubt, that if he were to send her money, it would go as his last gift had gone. If she lived, Marie would one day be selling fried potatoes in the streets. And this decadence—was it her fault? Octave would say, "Qu'est que cela peut nous faire, une fille plus ont moins fichue. . . si je pouvais reussir un peu dans ce sacre métier!" But there was something in Marie beyond Octave's philosophy.

She was going to the Elysée to-night. It was just six o'clock, and she wanted her dress by ten. I must hasten to the dressmaker at once; it might be wiser not—she lay in bed peaceful and beautiful; at the Elysée she would be drinking absinthe and smoking cigarettes until three in the morning.

But I went to the dressmaker, and said the dress must be there at nine. At half-past ten I was at the Elysée waiting for her.

How many times did I walk round the gravel path, wearying of the unnatural green of the chestnut leaves and of the high kicking in the quadrilles? Now and then there would be a rush of people, and then the human tide would

disperse again under the trees among the zinc chairs and tables, for the enjoyment of bocks and cigars. I noticed that Marie's friends spent their evening in the left hand corner; but they did not call me to drink with them, knowing well that I knew the money they were spending was stolen money.

I left the place discontented and wearied, glad in a way that Marie had not come. In the morning I dressed quickly; I had to; I was breakfasting with Octave, and sitting to him after breakfast.

We were in the middle of the sitting, he had just sketched in my head, when we heard the news. She had been found dead on her balcony dressed in the gown that had just come home from the dressmaker.

I hoped that Octave would not try to pass the matter off with some ribald jest, and I was surprised at his gravity. "Even Octave," I said, "refrains, *on ne blague pas la mort.*"

"But what was she doing on the balcony?" he asked. "What I don't understand is the balcony."

We all stood looking at her picture trying to read the face.

"I suppose she went out to look at the fireworks; they begin about eleven."

It was one of the women who had spoken, and her remark seemed to explain the picture.

GEORGE MOORE.

(*To be continued.*)

## THE POSITION OF THE MISSION PRIEST IN ENGLAND.

THE first number of *DANA* which came under the writer's notice was the issue for July, containing an article from the pen of the Hon. W. Gibson on "The Possibility of a Thought Revival in Ireland." That article, and the Editorial comments which accompanied it, have suggested the present paper, or rather, have given rise to the hope that the pages of *DANA*, open as they are to fair and honest criticism of matters of public interest, might afford publicity to a subject which the writer has long desired to see ventilated.

As competition is the life of trade and commerce, promoting individual effort where the apathy arising from an indolent sense of security would otherwise obtain, so frank and outspoken criticism is of the greatest utility to a government or administration. If opposition is suppressed, and all dissentient voices forcibly silenced, it is tantamount to a confession of weakness. A wise administration does not fear discussion: its actions will stand the light of investigation; and, at the same time, public interest and freedom of speech—always within the bounds of courtesy—afford the surest safeguard against the stagnation of law and the abuse of authority. It is with these convictions, and because I believe that a real good may be attained, that the present article has been written.

There are just two points which may seem to require explanation. It will perhaps be suggested that the condition of priests on the English mission is a subject which might be more properly discussed in an English publication than in a magazine of Irish thought. But Irishmen will remember how many of their sons are working for the salvation of souls in the cities and towns of England. Since the restoration of the Hierarchy, the ever increasing number of our missionary priests has been in great part recruited from Ireland, and whatever the blessings or the hardships of sacerdotal life in this country, they are shared alike by the Saxon and the Celt. Moreover, the facilities for the publication in England of a paper such as the present are not great. The Catholic press would not venture to print it, being, for the most part, under Episcopal censorship, none the less severe because it is indirect.

The secular press, on the other hand, is not sufficiently widely read by the clergy to ensure the acceptance of a subject of mainly clerical interest. DANA, however, appears to strike the happy medium. It has a considerable circulation in English presbyteries, and promises to have a much larger clientèle, amongst both clergy and laity, in the land of its birth.

An apology is also due from the writer for concealing his identity. Many persons hold that an anonymous critic is to be disregarded, as not having the courage of his convictions. May I ask my readers to suspend their judgment until they have read the paper : I hope to show that I have good reasons for withholding my name ?

At first sight it would appear that the position of the secular priest on the English mission is one of almost absolute security. He is, in theory, hedged round with all the protection which the laws of the Church can afford him. He is an accredited member of an immensely powerful society, whose interests are, to a certain extent, bound up with his own. If he be incapacitated from work, by sickness or old age, he has a right to support from the diocese to which he belongs. If he has a grievance against his ecclesiastical superiors, he has a right to appeal to the Metropolitan, or if he prefer it, to the Sovereign Pontiff himself. So much for theory : in practice the ecclesiastical position of the priest is something very different. He is practically the slave of the Bishop to whom he owes obedience. At the whim of his diocesan he is appointed to a particular mission ; only to be transferred, at shorter notice, perhaps, than would be given to a clerk, and with less reason than would be assigned for the dismissal of a housemaid. He may suffer under the abuse of Episcopal authority, till there remains hardly a shadow of hope that his grievance will be redressed ; he may be the victim of the grossest injustice, while his reiterated appeals are ignored at Westminster or at Rome.

The very existence of an ecclesiastical system under which such abuses are even possible, is a scandal and an anomaly ; but the fault lies not so much with the Bishops themselves, as with the official procedure of the Roman authorities. Place any body of men in a position of almost autocratic power, grant them the opportunity of secretly defending themselves against any charges of injustice, before the complainant has even received an acknowledgment of his appeal for redress ; give them as subjects men whose pockets are too often empty, and to whom prolonged

delay means ever increasing hardship, and it will be strange indeed if individual members of such a body never become corrupt, and apt to disregard their most solemn obligations when they foresee that they can do so with impunity.

The English Hierarchy is in precisely the above position. That it is, as a body, composed of upright and honourable prelates is an undoubted and comforting truth. That scandals have occurred, that the provisions of Canon law have been violated or absolutely ignored, no mission priest of any experience will deny. Bishops are but men ; their difficulties are great, and their powers of arbitrary action practically unlimited. It is too much to expect that the breastplate of justice is invariably donned with the pectoral cross.

The Fourth Provincial Council of Westminster is, or at least ought to be, the great charter of the secular priest's liberties. It was solemnly conducted by the diocesan bishops; its decrees were authoritatively ratified by the Holy See. By this Council it was enacted that no secular priest could be deprived of his missionary rights at the mere pleasure of the Bishop. There must be a valid cause, a canonical offence ; not merely alleged, but duly proven. To this end a " Commission of Investigation " is appointed in each diocese, before which the secular priest has an inalienable right to be tried, according to the canonical procedure approved by the Church.

Without the due observance of all the judicial formalities, the Bishop cannot pronounce a valid judicial sentence. No law could be more equitable, or more clearly defined.\* Nay, so careful is the Church that her ministers should temper justice with mercy, that she commands the Bishops to first try the effect of paternal admonitions, before even proceeding to accuse a recalcitrant cleric before the Commission of Investigation ; much less does she permit of a sentence of condemnation being pronounced without an opportunity of defence being granted to the accused.

But, alas, the wise decrees of the Catholic Church have been despised and flouted by her own sons. There are to-day priests outside their dioceses, deprived of their missions and maintenance, against whom no charge has ever been uttered. There are others who, rightly or wrongly, have been charged with various offences, and condemned without any pretence of a trial. There are priests who have besought their diocesans to grant them at least the bare justice of a canonical enquiry, and whose appeals have fallen on

\* Vide IV. Conc : Prov : West .: Dec : XII. n. 8, et passim.



deaf ears and stony hearts. And for such as these what course remains open? "An Appeal to Rome!"

It sounds so well: the poorest priest has the right to appeal direct to the fountain of authority against any injustice whatever on the part of his Bishop! Yes, he has the right to post a letter of complaint to the Cardinal Prefect of the Congregation of Propaganda, and to possess his soul in patience, though it be only on the streets, until he receives a reply. Rome is so far away, and the ways of the Roman Curia so mysterious, that a Bishop can afford to laugh at the efforts of a simple priest to obtain a hearing.

If the complaint ever reaches the hands of the Cardinal Prefect at all, (which, in many cases, may well be a matter of conjecture), to whom is the reply sent? Not, as a rule, to the aggrieved priest, but to the Bishop with whom he is at variance. Thus his Lordship has an opportunity of stating his side of the case. He has all the influence of his position; he probably knows one or more of the Congregation; he has an agent in Rome who will carefully look after his interests. If the Bishop has indeed abused his authority, and is unwilling to confess himself in the wrong (and who is not?) what chance has the unfortunate priest? Whose word is more likely to weigh with the Roman Curia? The priest is ignored, the Bishop triumphs.

The writer has known of a case in which a priest, the victim of a most flagrant injustice on the part of his Ordinary, has appealed at least a dozen times to the Congregation of Propaganda, the supreme judge in matters relating to England. Not one of these appeals has been thought worthy of a reply. In time the priest will die, the matter will be forgotten, the Bishop's character will remain unsmirched, and—"it is expedient that one man should suffer for the many." Would not the bare possibility of such a scandal be a reproach to Catholicism in England, even if the actual injustice had never occurred? That many of our prelates would scorn to act otherwise than honourably, is no reason why the opportunity should be given to a possibly unworthy superior to oppress his subjects with impunity. But as English priests are governed to-day, it is positively dangerous for one of them to become a *persona non grata* to his diocesan.

In the old times of the Fenian agitation in Ireland, the position of a "marked man" was one of unenviable notoriety. To be "marked" ecclesiastically, as the object of Episcopal displeasure, is almost equally undesirable. And herein lies my apology for remaining anonymous.

I have shown that the ecclesiastical system, as at present existing, is insufficient to protect the secular clergy from the grossest injustice. It remains to be seen if any remedy can be found for such a crying evil. I would venture to make two suggestions.

As mentioned above, the Bishops have their agents in Rome, who assist them in the transaction of their diocesan business, and in great measure prevent the tedious delay and "red tape" for which the Eternal City is noted.

Why should not the secular clergy have some similar organisation? It should not be difficult, for a reasonable consideration, to find some ecclesiastic, well versed in Roman methods and etiquette, and a *persona grata* to the Curia, who would advise priests as to the best means of obtaining a hearing for their complaints. Such assistance would be invaluable in cases of clerical dispute. Appeals would be drawn up in proper form, and their consideration expedited by the good offices of the man on the spot. English priests and Roman officials would both reap the benefit. One such agent might be attached to each diocese, and the necessary expenses might easily be met by an annual "whip round" the clergy.

My second suggestion is based on the experience of the American priests, when Cardinal Satolli was sent to them as Apostolic Delegate. True, the arbitrary injustice of certain American prelates has never, thank God, been equalled by the Bishops of this country. We do not compare our grievances with the tyrannies disclosed in the case of Bishop Bonacum v Father Fitzgerald, a report of which was published by order of the Congregation of Propaganda in 1895. But the specific which remedied these greater evils would be no less efficacious for the cure of lesser ills. Let the secular priests, in a body, petition Rome for the appointment of an Apostolic Delegate to England. Such a petition could not go unheard. Within six weeks of his landing, an able ecclesiastic, invested with plenary jurisdiction, would do more to repair injustice than six years of "appeals" could ever accomplish.

The result would be seen, as in America, in the more rigid observance of the Canon law; the lawful authority of the Bishops would be vindicated, the wrongs of the secular clergy redressed, and the fair name of the Catholic Church in England freed from the stain which tyranny has cast upon it.

A MISSION PRIEST IN ENGLAND.

## THE SOWER.

Out of the dawn,  
 As if new-created,  
 A wide, windy hillside  
 Ploughed to it's sky-line !

Stride it, O Sower,  
 Up to its top-ridge,  
 Scattering, exultant !  
 Swinging loose arms  
 Against the strong, wet wind,  
 Mouthing great rhythms  
 To the long sea-beats  
 On the wide shore behind  
 The ridge of the hillside !

Below in the valley  
 The slumber of mothers,  
 The cradles at rest,  
 The fire-seed sleeping  
 Deep in white ashes !

Give to darkness and sleep,  
 O Sower, O Seer !  
 Give me to the earth—  
 With the seed I would enter !  
 O the growth through the silence  
 From strength to new strength,  
 Then the strong bursting forth  
 Against primal forces,  
 To laugh in the sunshine  
 And gladden the world.

PADRAIC COLUM.

## A WAY OF UNDERSTANDING NIETZSCHE.

ALTHOUGH Nietzsche may fairly be described as a dangerous author, there is the same kind of natural safeguard against the corruption of his readers as that which preserves the schoolboy from corruption by the more highly-coloured passages in the works of Horace and Ovid which are placed freely in his hands, and may excite the misgivings of parents. The wit required to understand what Nietzsche really means is as little compatible with intellectual gullibility as an aptitude for Latin usually is with the depraved tendencies of the naughty boy. The schoolmaster, at all events, is unlikely to complain if he find in these tendencies unexpected allies; and in like manner divine philosophy may gain unexpected adherents if the average, or more than averagely, sensual man be led on by the popularity of Nietzsche's lively phrases about Christianity and morals to make acquaintance with a very rigorous intellectual regimen, and to realize the consequences of the proved falsity of many notions of conventional morality and established religion. Indeed he should be warned that if these have chastized him with whips, Nietzsche will chastize him with scorpions. When he has parted with every article of transcendental belief, and sacrificed all those *arrière-pensées* of faith and morals which are so little in evidence in ordinary conversation, and yet are such determining motives of ordinary conduct, he will find himself in the presence of a caustic and relentless mentor who will require of him—at the point where he is ready to creep into some monastery, or to become, perhaps, a church-warden with an intellectual “past”—a capacity for “gaiety” in self-abnegation and self-annihilation. He will find, indeed, that several of the gravest responsibilities of that God whom he has repudiated have devolved upon himself, and will be called upon, in a world bankrupt in ideals, to create new moral values and new Gods.

We must reassure ourselves a little in face of Nietzsche's disquieting denials of “God, freedom, immortality,” and all those inspiring ideas, our secret misgivings about which are revealed whenever a single thinker is bold enough to deny them, and seems to precipitate all the stars of thought from the sky. The denial of “God” and of the ideal is from time to time necessary, because to attain to any real

perception in such matters it is necessary to live creatively and to find out these things for oneself. God as an objective fact does not appear to exist. Such is the reciprocal connection between the individual and the causal energy of the universe that we must create the objects of our belief: the whole force of our nature must go into the achievement. The ordinary citizen does not like the doctrine of God to be challenged: he likes to think of God being there, as he likes to think of a limitless supply of coal in the bowels of Great Britain. It is on the sense of moral cowardice in regard to those beliefs to which we may have recourse in grief or in weakness, but which for the most part hardly bear examination, that Nietzsche relies when he comes with his dogmatic denial of those beliefs. A dogmatist, however, is what no man has a right to be: and Nietzsche, who is as fierce a dogmatist as Tertullian, has of all persons least right to complain if we remind ourselves of the physiological conditions of his shrill assurance. Most men require the stimulus of happiness for production of any kind, but Nietzsche, like Leopardi, was one of those who only rise to the height of their powers under the stimulus of pain and privation. He is one of those invalids who cannot breathe in the lower valleys of thought, and can only get the full of their lungs when hurricanes are blowing. The more outrageous the statement to be made the better he is pleased, and the more himself he is. The bleaker and colder the intellectual landscape the more impetuous becomes his verve. We may be sure that if he rejects with so much scorn "God, freedom, and immortality," it is because it has cost him something to do so.

His starting point is the philosophy of Schopenhauer, a volume of which fell in his way while he was a professor at Basle, and at once completely filled his mind. Of philology, his study till then, he had said in his inaugural lecture that it is "neither a Muse nor a Grace, but a messenger of the Gods; and as the Muses formerly descended among the afflicted and suffering Boeotians, this messenger comes to-day into a world filled with gloomy and baneful shapes, filled with profound and incurable sufferings, and consoles us by evoking the beautiful and luminous forms of a marvellous, an azure, a distant, a fortunate country!" Pessimism is the most restful of all creeds to a mind harassed by the disorder and vulgarity of modern life, and it is out of pessimism that all the religions have originated. For pessimism is the affirmation of the

ideal, and restores to the mind what actuality refuses. To condemn existence as a whole is to exempt from all risk of change and contamination by experience those forms of truth and beauty which the mind creates or of which it can entertain the supposition. Pessimism, as a creed, is the last subterfuge by which the human mind, instead of succumbing to the ills of life by suicide, madness or recklessness, escapes from the galling pressure of fatality. It is true that the pessimist must then affirm, like Schopenhauer, that all the consolations of life are purely negative, and that in turning to art, or religion, or philosophy, or science, he is only exercising the hard-won faculty of escaping, by means of an "objective interest in things," from real experience. But man, as Goethe said, "never knows how anthropomorphic he is." He can never secure his conception of nirvana, of heaven, of God, of beauty, or of holiness from some admixture of the hopes and sympathies which he may have dreamed of renouncing. The pessimistic idealist is likely enough to return from his contemplations with some "gospel" or philosophy addressed to his fellowmen, in which lurk perhaps all the old seeds of infatuation. In the pessimist's affirmation of the ideal, Nietzsche mockingly detects the last resource of hypocritical weakness. He resolves, then, at the point where all the hopes and illusions of chagrined egoism find themselves foiled, to declare himself optimist—a lover of fate, or a "yea-saying man." He denies "the ideal." More courageous and more honest than Schopenhauer, he returns from the dread region of ultimate self-questioning with no deceptive doctrine of resignation, or altruism, or contemplation—seed-grounds of hypocrisy and illusion—but with the frank and "gay" denial of God, freedom, immortality, and, at the same time, with the equally frank and gay avowal of the will-to-live, the desire of power, strength, and activity. But has he reckoned with the narrow limits of that power in which he has learned to exult, the limitations of experience, from which pessimism has found in art, contemplation, resignation, the only permitted outlets? He returns, at all events, with this augmentation and ratification of the sentiment of power, that it disowns all "idealistic" restrictions. He has acquired a caustic perception of the figmentitious nature of those conceptions which it suits alike the interest of the strong and the poltroonery of the weak to regard as moral distinctions, transcendental or divine, inherent in human nature. Nietzsche stands or falls with his assertion



that moral distinctions are not superhuman or superimposed (transcendental) checks and ingredients of human conduct but the creation, subject to continual transformation from the same source, of humanity itself. The spectacle of "the moral law" awakens in him, not as it did in Kant, such a feeling as the spectacle of the stars awakens, of eternal and super-normal elements present in every-day experience, yet a certain judicious respect as the monument of earlier ages in which man acted in his true rôle as a "creator of values." In the sense that "language is fossil poetry:" or in the sense that philology, according to the passage already quoted, evokes the forms of a more fortunate past; so the morality which men accept as "slaves" points back to the creative power of "masters" who imposed it (as Nietzsche conceives, for their own ends).

In the family, for instance, parents will impose a slave-morality: "You mustn't do that!" Impatience, expediency, not to speak of a lack of metaphysical acumen, will dictate this hasty method of tabooing certain actions as in themselves "bad." And it is so that conventional morality and religion treat the parents themselves. Indeed it is only by a flash of intuition, with some elements of "wickedness," that in later life we occasionally transcend the moral casuistry of the Sunday School. Take, for example, public charity. The poor would fare far better at our hands were it not for that moral philosophy which at once puts up our backs by inculcating the practice as a duty. We refuse charity in the streets because we do not like the smack of self-satisfaction consequent on the performance of an action which is reputed to be virtuous. But if it were simply understood that we can do what we like with our own money we should relieve many a poor applicant simply out of a sense of freedom, or according to that maxim of "noble" as contrasted with "slave" morality, which Nietzsche might have said had lost its way among the early Christians, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Or take the habit of telling lies. It is a matter of expediency to whip little boys out of such a habit, and to impute it as an offence in the mentally undeveloped; yet who can doubt that a punctiliousness about telling the truth is mainly an affair of personal pride, and strongest where it is purely voluntary. But the "noble," who are voluntarily truthful among themselves, will *enforce* the practice on their vassals. The "power," then, which Nietzsche cares about is the power to preside at the

origin of those conceptions which direct and control men. We have to bear this in mind in order to account for an apparent inconsistency in the writings of Nietzsche, who, while praising power wherever he sees it exercised in history purely from the love of it, is clearly always on the side of those who confront the might of the world with the might of the idea, and for whom some limitation of circumstance or character has been a "school of genius." When he praises deliberately "bad" men, such as the mythical Machiavelli or Cæsar Borgia, he is praising men who dealt with the crowd in the spirit of "masters," though only after its own moral values; he is praising them at the expense of merely "good" men, with whom some sense of "acquiring merit" by their actions is inseparable from the habit of regarding actions as in themselves good or evil.

But what becomes of those "laws which in the highest empyrean had their birth," of which Sophocles sang even in that Greek world which philology evoked for Nietzsche, How was it, indeed, that the Greeks and Romans, whose "immoralism" Nietzsche is never tired of praising, were far less afraid than we are of the suspicion of having the tongue in the cheek when they talked of virtue and morality, and used these words far more freely than we do? They believed in good and evil just as much as we do, but in calling a man good or bad they regarded the whole ensemble of his character and circumstances more liberally, if not quite as fastidiously as we. Plutarch's heroes do not in general perform particularly "good" actions, yet his biographies leave the impression of goodness or badness, or rather of moral strength or weakness. In regard to morals, Nietzsche is (by continual effort) one of the ancients: and though his attitude towards the struggle of the ordinary man with his "temptations" can hardly be described as sympathetic; though in fact he holds his sides in unholy merriment at the spectacle of men living deliberately against their inclinations; he is probably as whole-hearted as any moralist in his belief that the devil is an ass. "I do not deny," he says,—“as need hardly be said if it be allowed that I am in my senses—that it is needful to avoid and combat many actions which are called immoral; just as it is needful to perform and to encourage many which are called moral; but I think it is needful to do both the one and the other for different reasons from those till now acknowledged. It is needful that we should change our *way of seeing* in order

to arrive, perhaps very late, at changing our *way of feeling*" Nietzsche himself seems to see with the ancients and to feel with the modern puritans like Emerson, Thoreau, Carlyle, who have arrived at a "way of feeling" in these matters most nearly akin to that of the ancients, ("teachers best," as Milton calls them, "of moral prudence") and who have regarded man, as the ancient regarded him, rather as having a will to exert than as having a soul to save. In this way the ancients maintained their supremacy as moralists even after the appearance of Christianity, with its consoling but, as it seemed to the ancients, "immoral" beliefs. Nietzsche, as is well known, denounced Christianity as a perversion by which, owing to a combination of circumstances, "slave morality" was enabled to triumph over the "morality of masters." This antipathy to Christianity into which he has thought himself helps one, at all events, to understand the attitude of serious thinkers in the ancient world who detected in the "forgiveness of sins" and the annihilation of the will, a lax morality. And later, when Europe was filled with renunciants and ascetics, paganism was still able to unfold before the eyes of men the most shining examples, not indeed of holiness, but of manhood (virtue). Throughout the middle ages and under the regime of ecclesiasticism, virtue, in the old sense of manhood, was almost discredited in favour of the ideal of renunciation; until the Renaissance, with the not specially antique accompaniment of libertinism, brought back the ancient ideal of a humanity "for perfect action formed under laws divine." The morality of Shakspeare's plays, or of Browning's poem, "The Statue and the Bust," of Goethe, or of Carlyle's "Friedrich," is none the less positive and real for not lending itself to inculcation from the pulpit.

To the doctrine of the Superman—that "far-off divine event" to which, according to Nietzsche, humanity moves—a consideration of the "morality of slaves and masters" naturally leads on; but his conception of the Superman, moulded chiefly by hatred of Christianity and the obsession of his mind by Darwinism, is undoubtedly a little crazy. There is a kind of assumption that those great men who act as "bridges" to the Superman exist at the expense of the rest of mankind. But the existence of great men, like the discovery of nature's secrets, brings nothing but gain to all men. A great man, a spiritually great man, is he who adds a new power and significance to life. It is otherwise, to some extent, with the Cæsars and

Napoleons, those idols of the average man, who, like the wrath of Achilles, "bring a thousand woes to men, and send quickly to Hades many strong souls of heroes, thus accomplishing the will of Zeus;" and Nietzsche, with his insane denial of idealism and devotion to "physiology," came to acknowledge greatness only in such men. Undoubtedly all civilizations culminate in a period during which a privileged few appear to subsist at the expense of the rest of mankind. Refinement, wealth, beauty, learning, leisure, amusement, all these things are necessary for art; but we must not therefore conclude that civilization exists for the sake of the few. As the blossom is only an incident in the development of the plant, so the efflorescence of art and culture is only a part of the life-history of a race. Behind this efflorescence, and eventually displacing it, new ideas and tendencies are germinating. How is it that the spiritual development of humanity appears to obey laws so contrary to those which govern its physical evolution, that it is as a rule among the "despised and rejected" that the princes and potentates of thought arise? Clearly because it is on the unsuccessful candidates for natural selection that the problem of existence bears with its whole weight. So little competent is a merely physical theory like that of Darwin to explain life, that its chief service is so to marshal facts as immediately to demonstrate the existence of forces which it leaves out of account, and to send us back perhaps to some metaphysical theory like that of Hegel, which teaches that every positive generates the negation of itself.

JOHN EGLINTON.

## A LITERARY CAUSERIE.

“WITHOUT being so presumptuous as to hope to emulate the rich humour, pathetic tenderness, and admirable tact which pervade the works of my accomplished friend, I felt that something might be attempted for my own country of the same kind with that which Miss Edgeworth so fortunately achieved for Ireland—something which might introduce her natives to those of the sister kingdom in a more favourable light than they had been placed hitherto, and tend to procure sympathy for their virtues, and indulgence for their foibles.” So writes Scott of Maria Edgeworth in the general preface to the *Waverley Novels*, and his admiration was no temporary amiability born of good nature, but the genuine conviction of his literary life, as can be seen from his frequent allusions to her work in his private letters as well as the unstinted praise given to it in print. The general opinion of her own times gave her a very high place. But the century that has passed since the appearance of her first books has brought about a change. She is now one of the neglected, except by those who take pains to find what is good, and having found, do not willingly cast aside. From such readers, fit audience though few, Maria Edgeworth is sure of a hearing, and a modest corner on the shelves; but the people who eagerly look forward to the publication of a new novel by Marie Corelli or Ellen Thorneycroft Fowler know nothing of her.

The latest volume of the *English Men of Letters* series deals with Miss Edgeworth, and is written by the Hon. Emily Lawless, who has shown very fine taste and judgment in carrying out her task, evidently one in which she delighted. She wisely makes no attempt to assign her author a place in literature, to decide the absolute value of her work; she is content to set before us a daintily written memoir giving the main outlines of a life which, though sufficiently busy, was never very eventful. Maria Edgeworth is one of those writers whose personality directly appeals to us in the friendliest way, and it is from this point of view that Miss Lawless has written her pleasant little volume.

Miss Edgeworth was born in 1767, at Black Bourton, near Oxford, and except for a very short time when she was eight years old, no part of her childhood

was spent in Ireland till 1782, when the family permanently settled at Edgeworthstown. A considerable factor in her life was her love and veneration for her father who seems to have borne some resemblance to the glorious Richmond Roy. He interfered with much of Maria's writing, and indeed her best work is that with which he had absolutely nothing to do; he is probably in a great measure responsible for what are generally regarded as her peculiar weak points. Even when not actually guiding her pen,—a piece of parental presumption of which he was perfectly capable—in spirit he hovered over it, and that a desire for the paternal approbation was with her the first and strongest of incentives there can be no question. Wherever in her case the didactic impulse is seen to distinctly overpower the creative; wherever we find utility lauded to the skies as the only guide of an otherwise foundering humanity; above all wherever we find an enormous emphasis laid upon the necessity at all times and places of a due subordination of the feminine to the masculine judgment—there we may feel sure that we are upon his track, and that such sentiments were uttered primarily with a view to the approval of the domestic critic. He not merely accentuated, he actually lifted into the light of a solemn duty, what was by nature the most serious of Maria Edgeworth's mental failings—a lack, namely, of imagination, which under his fostering care grew and swelled, until it amounted to something very like a kindly and tolerant contempt for everything which that word conveys. Her best book, *Castle Rackrent* was written entirely without her father's advice or supervision. It stands upon a wholly different footing from any of Miss Edgeworth's other writings. In it alone we find her regarding life,—not from any utilitarian, ethical, or dogmatic standpoint,—but simply and solely objectively, as it strikes and as it ought to strike an artist. So far from any cut and dry code of morals being enforced in it, morals of every sort are even startlingly absent.

Her Irish stories, *Castle Rackrent*, *The Absentee*, *Ennui*, *Ormond*, are probably those that are most interesting at present, and on these Miss Lawless lays most stress. But to my mind there is very excellent work to be found in the tales of fashionable life—*Belinda*, *Helen*, and the rest. If one is content to recognise that there are certain faults and peculiarities, to take the didactics for granted as a necessary evil, there is much that is admirable and even fascinating. Do not try to compare her with Jane Austen, the



incomparable. But she has penetration, subtlety, irony, delicate powers of observation and character drawing, her men and women live and move and have a real being, sometimes her dialogue is quite splendid, she was well acquainted with good society and in drawing fine ladies and fops she excelled Miss Austen, whose *Lady Susan* is by no means among her best work. The truth of her delineations has been vouched for by a contemporary, Lord Jeffrey, by no means prone to indulgent criticism. He speaks of her "faithful representations of the spoken language of wit and politeness," and of "that gift of sportive, but cutting *médiance*," which is sure of success in those circles where success is supposed to be the most difficult and desirable.

Byron describes her as "a nice, unassuming, 'Jeanie-Deans'-looking body—and if not handsome, certainly not ill-looking. Her conversation was as quiet as herself; no one would have guessed she could write her name." She was an excellent letter-writer. She displays here all her talents and gifts with none of the constraint and moral purpose that hindered her too often in her tales. Her humour was quiet but unmistakable and unfailing. Here is a hitherto unpublished letter written when she was seventy-two. She had had a dangerous fall from her library ladder, and had promised her sister and brother-in-law not to mount it again. She now prays to be released from her promise :

DEAR AND REVEREND LADY AND SIR,—On account I would not wish to be troublesome, I have these two months and more forbore to write to you on the subject ever uppermost in my thoughts, and that's wearing me to a shadow entirely—meaning the promise I made that was extorted from me in an unlucky moment of trouble, and when I was not myself (to say myself), which all here can witness, and is willing to put their hands and seals to—if required.

About the ladder, ma'am ! My leg is now well and sounder than ever, thanks be to God, and your ladyship, with Mrs. Edgeworth, and *Miss Lucy above all*, and Master Francis, that well-nigh broke his back carrying me up and down (and says I am heavier than his wife—lady, I mean). God bless him, for he says, moreover, that it's a folly the promise I made, and void *ab origine*, I think he termed it, being made under bodily fear, and no use in life, seeing the ladder is now stronger than ever it was, and as strong as any ladder in Christendom.

And, in short, your ladyship, I expect, will grant me a dispensation from the rash vow I made never to go up

that ladder again, for it would break my heart to be bound to the letter of my rash word that way. Not a day of my life passes but I get in a fever to go up that ladder to my magpie place where some things are a-wanting for ever. And as to getting other people's legs to go up for me, it's neither here nor there—it can't be—except when your ladyship is in it, or one of the dear childer—which are not coming that I can see—and in the meanwhile I am fretting to an atomy for my liberty.

I trust his Reverence will consider me, and I leave it all to your ladyship, and will abide as in duty bound by whatsoever you say. Only I hope you'll earn the blessings I have ready to shower down upon your heads, if you'll grant the humble prayer and reasonable remonstrance of your poor petitioner,

MARIA—the long-winded.

How unlike the popular idea of Maria Edgeworth is this letter, and how well the tone is seized and reproduced.

F. M. ATKINSON.

### SONNET.

On reading a Dublin Newspaper in the train,  
April 16th, 1904.

Night falls ; the emerald pastures turn to grey,  
Young stars appear, a mystic beauty thrills  
The dusk above the line of far-off hills,  
Where late the splendours of the end of day,  
Sad and majestic, flamed and passed away.  
In dust and thunder speeding to the sea  
The train flies on, yet eve's serenity,  
Great and untroubled, holds the world in sway.

Then, turning from the calm domain of Night,  
Again my eyes upon the printed page  
Fall, and again I hear but cries of rage  
From bigot-voices, brawling down the right,  
While thought, the fair land's fairest heritage,  
Is drowned in clamour of ignoble fight.

T. W. R.

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