

Literary Amor Patriae

Researches in the south of Ireland, illustrative of the scenery, architectural remains, and the manners and superstitions of the peasantry. With an appendix, containing a private narrative of the rebellion of 1798

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LITERATURE.

“ Then I our own Historians did peruse ;
The Greek and Latin too, and with the Muse
I did converse.—

* * *

Homer and Virgil, Horace, Sophocles
I read, yet hate none like Thucydides :
He says democracy's a foolish thing ;
May I have a Republic—he a King !”—

The Innocent Traytor—1679.

THE literary superiority of Ireland over the rest of Europe, in remote ages, has been a subject of national exultation. We are told of an Establishment at Armagh for seven thousand students ; of Greek princes who were educated at the University of Lismore, and of numerous foreigners having visited the schools of Ireland for instruction.

At the English Conquest, however, Ireland was unquestionably in a state of profound ignorance ; the pride of her schools and colleges had disappeared ; and “ to the present day,” says Sir Richard Cox, “ very few of the Irish aim at any more than a little Latin, which every cow-boy pretends to, and a smattering of logic which very few of them know the use of.” This passage, although intended to convey little commendation of Irish learning, is certainly a strong evidence of a literary taste, and may excite some curiosity to become better acquainted with mountaineers who even aim at “ a little Latin.”

Amongst the peasantry, classical learning is not uncommon ; and a tattered Ovid or Virgil may be found even in the hands of common labourers. [1] In Munster, the village school-master forms a peculiar character ; and, next to the lord of the manor, the parson, and the priest, he is the most important personage in the parish. His “ academic grove” is a long thatched house, generally the largest in the place ; surrendered, when necessary, for the waking of a dead body, or the celebration of mass whilst the chapel is undergoing repairs ; and on Sundays, when not otherwise engaged, it is used as a jig or dancing house.

The highest class of scholars is composed of men as full grown, and often as old as the master himself, distinguished by the name of “ poor scholars,” or “ strangers.” These strangers are, generally, the sons of reduced farmers and natives of Ulster and Connaught, who, having swallowed all the classical information within their immediate reach, range through the bogs of Munster to complete their knowledge of Latin, and to acquire the Greek tongue. The village schoolmaster gains little from this class of students ; but the glory of possessing pupils who, when they return to their native provinces, will spread his fame, appears to him an adequate recompense. Nor is his generosity confined to their education ; he also contributes his exertions towards their subsistence, and obtains for them gratuitous lodging in some neighbour's cabin.

The enterprising spirit of these literary adventurers is surprizing ; they will start from the home of their infancy—traverse the southern parts of the island—visit every village—sojourn in every school examine every local curiosity, and return to their birth-place, after perhaps a year’s absence, without having, for that space of time, expended, or indeed possessed a single half-crown ; so warm is the hospitality of the peasantry, and so high their respect for learning ! With the schoolmaster, too, it is a matter of special pride to be visited from remote distances; and it is not unusual to hear the respectability of a school estimated by the number of its “ stranger pupils.”

But it may be asked, what can be the object or use of a classical education to the children of Irish peasants ? The mass of the population is Roman Catholic. [2] By the penal statutes the wealthier part of that persuasion were deprived of their property, and the general exercise of their religion subjected to severe penalties and restrictions. In this state of things, the clerical profession had nothing to tempt the ambition of ancient Catholic families. It was a life of privations, difficulties, and sufferings ; those who enjoyed even competence would not embrace it, and hence it fell into the hands of peasants. The cottager reared one or more of his children in the expectation of their obtaining holy orders, and prided himself in the hope of seeing one of them, at some future day, the priest of his native parish. After wandering in search of learning through the country, they made their way to France, Spain, or Portugal ;—studied, and were ordained in the colleges of these countries, and returned to exercise their profession in Ireland, where the Roman Catholic clergy are, with few exceptions, sprung from the humblest ranks of the people.

These circumstances, and this feeling, crowd the country schools with learners of the classical languages, and there are few families, however lowly their condition, that do not boast a young aspirant for clerical distinction.

To return to the preceptor. In an evening assembly of village statesmen he holds the most distinguished place, from his historical information, pompous eloquence, and classical erudition. His principles verge very closely indeed on the broadest republicanism ; he delivers warm descriptions of the Grecian and Roman commonwealths ; the ardent spirit of freedom and general equality of rights in former days—and then comes down to his own country, which is always the ultimate political subject of discussion. He praises the Milesians—curses “ the betrayer Dermot”—abuses “ the Saxon strangers”—lauds Brien Boru—utters one sweeping invective against the Danes, Henry VIII, Elizabeth, Cromwell “ the Bloody” William “ of the Boyne,” and Anne ; he denies the legality of the criminal code ; deprecates and disclaims the Union ; dwells with enthusiasm on the memories of Curran, Grattan, “ Lord Edward,” and young Emmet ; insists on Catholic emancipation ; attacks the *Peelers*, horse and foot ; protests against tithes, and threatens a separation of the United Kingdoms ! These are his principles, which he pronounces with a freedom proportioned to the patriotic feelings of his auditory : before congenial spirits he talks downright treason ; in the presence of a yeomanry serjeant, an excise officer, or parson’s clerk, he reasons on legitimate liberty ; he is an enemy to royalty and English domination. Nor do these political sentiments confine themselves to the limits of mere declamation : he is frequently the promoter of insurrectional tumults ; he plans the nocturnal operations of the disaffected ; writes their threatening proclamations, studiously mis-spelled and pompously signed, Captain Moonlight, Lieutenant Firebrand, Major Hasher, Colonel Dreadnought; and General Rock, *Night* Errant and Grand Commander of the Order of the Shamrock Election.

Our schoolmaster is a poet too, and consecrates his powers to the diffusion of patriotic aspirations—songs, treasonable, amatory, and laudatory, on his “ Green Erin,”

“ Like an emerald set in the ring of the sea.”

Nor are his effusions confined merely to manuscript, but pass into print, and, in the shape of penny ballads, obtain considerable and important circulation.

The songs of the people are always worth attention, and it appears to me extraordinary that the most positive treason should for many years past have been published in Ireland, apparently without notice. Of about four hundred popular ballads (chiefly printed at Limerick) which I purchased without selection, in 1821, more than one-third were of a rebellious tendency, particularly a song entitled “ Cathaleen Thrail,” (Catherine the Slave,) so is Ireland allegorically styled. The first, second, and third verses describe the meeting of the author with Cathaleen Thrail, the genius of the country ; the fourth, sixth, and part of the last verse I shall copy, on account of the prophetic strain which runs through them :

“ You, Sons of poor Erin, therefore don’t fail
From Cork to Kinsale, and off to Cape Clear,
Come excite your parties, its no time to bewail,
Tho’ bad alterations we’ve plenty this year ;
Now the year 21 is drawing in by degrees
In the year 22 the Locusts will weep ;
But in the year 23 we’ll begin to reap
And divorce the *Black-weed* from Cathaleen Thrail.

I conversed with many in my circuit most pleasing
Until I came to my native land, sweet Donoughmore,
Tracing old tradition, down from the creation,
And how the Milesians were conquered of yore !
How laws were enacted to slacken their force
How they were wrongfully oppressed and opposed,
And how they were trodden and tossed by the Toads
Who made an encroachment on Cathaleen Thrail.

* * *

Good people, take courage, don’t perish in fright,
For Notes will be nothing in the year 25.
As I am O’Healy, we then will contrive
To daily drink beer by laws of Cathaleen Thrail !”

I shall quote a few lines from another song, which was so extensively sung amongst the lower orders in Dublin, that it must still be distinctly remembered by many ; the subject was the Banishment of Napoleon Bonaparte to St. Helena :

“ Now he is confined, and no hope of releasement,
Before the year twenty-five he’ll surprize them in earnest.
This truth we are told, and that by Pastorini,
That the sword it will fall, and perhaps from St. Helena.

Now you that belong to a certain great kingdom,
I would have you beware lest your fate be impending,” &c.

Verses, however, more polished than the foregoing, have been employed in the dissemination of the same sentiments, and I venture to select one specimen to prove my assertion.

“ Despair not, sweet Erin, thy sun is not set
In the dark shades of discord but still there remains
A hope that ‘twill rise in mild splendour as yet,
A hope that my country may shake off her chains !
The spirit of Freedom still hovers above
To foster thy children, and dares to inspire
Their bosoms with valour, with glory with love
The patriot’s soul and the patriot's fire !”

Modern manuscripts, in the Irish character, may be met with in almost every village, and they are usually the produce of the leisure hours of the schoolmaster : there is little variation in their contents, which consist of verses wherein Fingal, Oscar, Ossian and St. Patrick are important characters. A dialogue in particular between Ossian and St. Patrick, in which the latter endeavours to convert the bard to Christianity, [3] and one of some length between Death and a Sick Man, are amongst the most common. In addition to these are found translations from the classics, and frequently from some of Dean Swift’s verses into the Irish, with a variety of receipts, prayers [4] and charms. The possessor of such manuscript regards it with a degree of affection bordering on veneration, and only on particular occasions is it produced.

To hear the contents of one of these monotonous olios read aloud, is considered by the peasantry a treat of the highest order, and large numbers will assemble on a winter’s evening around the turf fire of a farmer’s cabin for that purpose.

The merit of such remains of Irish literature as have descended to us, is a question which has seldom been examined without prejudices so violent as to render a just conclusion almost impossible. The opinion of Mr. Flood, supported by the bequest of his fortune to Trinity College, Dublin, for the purchase of Irish books and manuscripts and the cultivation of that language, is often referred to ; and Lord Rosse (then Sir Lawrence Parsons) has recorded his coincidence of opinion in observations, published by his Lordship, on Mr. Flood’s bequest.

“ Many Irish manuscripts, in the reign of Elizabeth,” says the noble writer of this volume, “ were in Denmark ; many were lately in libraries in France, some also in the Vatican : and, if diligent search were made, and large prices offered, probably many more might now be saved from the depredations of time, and which will otherwise very soon be lost irretrievably.” Every one must agree in the inference drawn from this—that “ it is time to save what remain” —and it would doubtless be desirable that some one, qualified for the task, should translate such works as were considered worthy of it.

Unfortunately, however, the admirers of Irish literature are either so learnedly abstruse, or so profoundly ignorant and illiterate, that their very commendation is injurious to the cause they advocate.

The pages of O’Connor and O’Halloran appear, to use the expression of a friend of mine, “ marvellously cumbersome ;” and the illustration of Irish antiquities and verbal derivations by the “ erudite Vallancey” rather tend to confuse the general reader by their remoteness from the subject, and to confound the unlearned by a display of orientalism.

The late Mr. Joseph Cooper Walker is, perhaps, the most pleasing writer on Irish literature and antiquity ; but, if the genius of Vallancey laboured to derive every thing Irish from the east, so Mr. Walker’s ingenuity was on the alert to trace its Italian origin, which I have been told he afterwards regretted and ascribed to a partiality for Italian literature, acquired during his residence on the continent.

The Relics of Irish poetry, by Miss Brooke, is an exception to my former remark ; and, had the volume in question been written at a different period, when the antiquarian junto formed by Vallancey, O'Halloran, and O'Flanagan, and supported by Messrs. Walker, Beaufort and Ousley, was less despotic in the circle of Hibernian belles-lettres, it would have been a performance of the first class : As it is, this work will continue to hold an eminent place when the productions of those who condescend to patronize the writer, are forgotten, or remembered only as collections of ill-digested fables.

The more ancient Irish manuscripts are the Monkish Chronicles ; of some of these, the names only have descended to us : they are generally called after the monastery in which they were written, and those most frequently quoted are the Psalter of Cashel—The Annals of Innisfallen—The Ulster Annals—The Book of Ballymote and the Annals of the Four Masters ; but to any of these I believe it impossible to assign, with certainty, an earlier date than the thirteenth or fourteenth century ; and it is a question if the original of one of these manuscripts is now in existence : copies of them are preserved, and may be found in various libraries, both at home and abroad.

A manuscript of some antiquity was found, about six or seven years since, in an iron chest, which was discovered on taking down one of the walls of Lismore Castle. If I remember correctly, it was on vellum, of large folio size, well written in double columns, and nearly half of the outside column, from top to bottom, had been cut off, or destroyed by fire : it appeared to contain about two hundred pages, and was clumsily bound in oak.

The volume passed through the hands of several persons in Cork, some of whom were both poor and illiterate ; and I mention the circumstance, as it possibly may lead to some inquiry respecting this manuscript.

Although we feel anxious for the preservation of such relics, yet it almost appears an idle “*amor patriæ*” to suppose that Irish literature or history can suffer, even by the total loss of the legendary records of an age of ignorance and superstition.

The overabundant use of epithet is a striking peculiarity of most compositions in the Irish language : by some writers this has been ascribed to the nature and structure of the language ; by others, to the taste of the people. In a conversation which I once had with some Irish scholars, I well remember one of them stepping forward in the formidable gesture of an excited orator, and addressing me in an exalted tone of voice in defence of epithets. “*Worshipful Sir,*” said he, with outstretched arm, “*these epithets are numerous in the original Irish, because they are enlivening and expressive, and are introduced by historians to decorate their histories, and to raise the passions of the reader. Thus were the youth at once instructed in the grand records of their lofty nation,—in eloquence of style—and in sublimity of composition !*”

Picture this declaration coming from a poor, ragged schoolmaster, or, as he styled himself, “*Philomath,*” whose miserable habitation, of sods, cemented with mud, and constructed in a ditch, scarcely seemed a human abode : yet, before the door of this hovel, surrounded by a group of admiring compeers and disciples, he harangued, with almost the energy of inspiration, on the superiority of the literature of his country ; declaring, “*that some scribbling pretenders to knowledge had made it a determined point and standing rule to calumniate and throw as much dirt as they could on Irish history, laws, and morals ; thereby imagining that they did a mighty piece of service to England and the King of England, by traducing the people, who were once the terror of the Danes, and who gave kings to Scotland, and even to England itself.*”

As a fair example of the use of epithets, the following literal translation of some well-known Irish verses may be produced.

“ Mineid (in Irish, Moighneid) the son of Deirg, and Goll, the active, the magnanimous and martial son of Moirne, met in this dreadful field of slaughter : the contest between these two intrepid champions was furious, foaming and frightful—manly, mighty and mortal, insomuch that broken, battered and gory were the corslets, shields and helmets of those impetuous chiefs ; and their beamy swords of broad metal did wide-spread havoc in the strained grasp of their sinewy arms.”

Miss Brooke, in the preface to her *Relics of Irish Poetry*, extols the copiousness of the language, and remarks, that “ the number of synonyma, in which it abounds,” enables the poet “ to repeat the same thought without tiring the fancy or the ear ;” and mentions, as an illustration, “ that there are upwards of forty names to express a ship ; and nearly an equal number for a house.”

Specimens are afforded to us, in this volume, of the Ode, Elegy and Song ; and, to prevent doubt, the originals are given, with translations, elegantly versified, and literal in the extreme.

Most Irish odes are ascribed to Oisín, the same person as Mac Pherson’s Ossian, whose well-known poems they resemble in style and subject. A similar mistiness to that in which many of his heroes are clothed, envelopes the identity of this bard, whose personal history is as imaginary and undefined as the descriptions contained in the verses attributed to him. These odes represent the kings and chiefs as terrific in war, and fond of the chase ; in short, excelling in those virtues and qualifications esteemed by Indian nations at this day, and possessing, in addition, a great love for song and banquets. Little more than a savage splendour can be discovered in these banquets, notwithstanding the vaunting assertions respecting ancient Irish civilization, for which similar bardic or monkish verses are the foundation.

Irish songs are abundant and may be easily procured, but few have been committed to paper : this may be ascribed to two causes ; first, being short compositions, they are easily remembered, and secondly, their treasonable nature. Many of these songs are extremely comic, from a richness of humour delivered with a peculiar quaintness, which it is impossible to convey in translation. Allusions to the Greek and Roman mythology are occasionally introduced with propriety and good taste, but more frequently in the most absurd way : one village bard has described his mistress as looking “ *just like Venus or Jove.*”

Passages, closely imitated from the classics, may be observed in many Irish verses. The resemblance between the commencement of Carolan’s Song on Mable Kelly, and one of Sappho’s Fragments is evident ; and Fitzgerald’s Ode to his Ship on leaving Dunboy was doubtless suggested by the third Ode of Horace.

The following translation of a spirited Irish song, which has not before been printed, may be worth preserving : it was composed for, or on, some of the piratical sept of O’Driscoll, a clan that, with the O’Sullivans, possessed a considerable part of the coast of the county Cork, and urged their trade of maritime plunder to such a formidable and fearless extent, as to rival the Algerines, who became jealous of them, and made a descent, in 1631, on their country ; burning Baltimore, the principal town belonging to the O’Driscolls, and carrying off the inhabitants into slavery. This event created the greatest consternation in Ireland, and more effectually checked the piracies of the O’Driscolls than the repeated expeditions fitted out against them by the city of Waterford ; as they appeared only to become more daring after each attack, notwithstanding the destruction of their vessels and the ruin of their castles.

Our oars we ply, when seas run high,
And loud the winds are roaring,
Now down the depths, now up the sky,
On eagle billow soaring !

And when we hail, the gentler gale,
With glee our stout hearts glowing,
Abroad we spread the spritted sail,
And catch it while 'tis blowing.

For us enough, or fair or bluff,
Waves calm or wildly foaming,
So we may launch, thro' smooth or rough,
Adventurously roaming !

Unknown to fear, the Buccanier,
Self-crown'd the Ocean Ranger,
Blow high—blow low—his course will steer,
His element is danger!

Descriptions of female beauty are often very pleasing in the Irish : part of the song, already mentioned, on Mable Kelly, by Carolan, which has been sweetly versified by Miss Brooke, may serve as an example.

“ As when the softly blushing rose
Close to some neighbouring lily grows,
Such is the glow thy cheeks diffuse
And such their bright and blended hues !

The timid lustre of thine eye
With nature's purest tints can vie,
With the sweet blue-bell's azure gem
That droops upon its modest stem !

* * *

Even he whose hapless eyes no ray
Admit from beauty's cheering day,
Yet, tho' he cannot see the light,
He feels it warm, and knows it bright !”

In a composition of an earlier date, we find the following.

“ On her soft cheek, with tender bloom,
The rose its tint bestowed,
And in her richer lips' perfume,
The ripen'd berry glowed.

Her neck was as the blossom fair,
Or like the cygnet's breast,
With that majestic graceful air,
In snow and softness drest.

Gold gave its rich and radiant die,
And in her tresses flowed,
And like a freezing star, her eye
With heaven's own splendour glowed."

Miss Brooke gives a striking, and to me, novel simile from one of Carolan's songs, composed for Miss Mary O'Neil. "Her eyes (says he) are to her face, what a diamond is to a ring ; throwing its beams around, and adorning the beauty of the setting." The fine expression of "the mind illumined face" is a favourite one in Irish verse ; and amongst the most generally used comparisons, is that of Maiden's Lip—to the Wild Strawberry.

The description of Bridget Brady, by her lover Thaddeus Ruddy, a bard who lived about the middle of the seventeenth century, is perhaps unique as a specimen of local simile.

"She's as straight as a pine on the mountains of Kilmannan,
She's as fair as the lilies on the banks of the Shannon ;
Her breath is as sweet as the blossoms of Drumcallan,
And her breasts gently swell like the waves of Lough Allan ;
Her eyes are as mild as the dews of Dunsany,
Her veins are as pure as the blue-bells of Slaney ;
Her words are as smooth as the pebbles of Terwinny,
And her hair flows adown like the streamlets of Finny."

I recollect once having seen a curious Irish Romance, (to which Miss Brooke alludes in a note,) where the heroine is introduced to the hero by means of a series of comparisons. This lady, of course a princess, looking from the window of her chamber one wintry day, saw a raven feeding on some animal that had been recently killed, and the marks of whose blood tinged some newly fallen snow. "Is there any one in the world," asked this princess of her attendant, "whose hair is black as that raven's wing, whose complexion is as pure as that blood, and whose skin is as fair as that snow ?" To this her highness's attendant replies in the affirmative ; and, in order to convince the princess, who, in consequence of some old druidical prophecy, had been shut up all her life in a dismal tower, secretly introduces a handsome young prince to her apartment : on their first meeting, they are deeply in love with each other ; he carries her off—and so commences their eventful history !

These romantic tales are abundant ; but there is a great poverty of fancy and sameness of incident in them, notwithstanding Spencer's commendation : "Yea truly," says the poet, in his View of Ireland, "I have caused divers of them to be translated unto me that I might understand them, and surely they savoured of sweet wit and good invention." Fingal and Ossian generally perform leading parts, and the adventures of a chief detained by spells in a magician's power, and a lady transformed into a swan or a deer, whose natural form is restored on the introduction of Christianity, are amongst the most common. On the latter fiction Mr. Moore has founded the song of "Silent, O Moyle" in his Irish Melodies ; but the less refined author of "Ilesperi-neso-graphia" gives us, in a few lines, all the spirit of this tedious legend :

"The next strange story which his ears
Receiv'd, was of some wolves and bears,
Who once were men of worth and fame,
But by enchantment brutes became ;
And would (if tales sung truth) obtain
Their former human shape again.
That then, through all the western ground,

The crooked harp with joy shall sound ;
And that a monarch of their own
Shall sit upon the western throne,
And drive from thence by force, all those
That would his powerful arms oppose.”

It has been said that a similarity of feeling exists between the music and poetry of Ireland, as in common both excel in the expression of plaintive sorrow ;

“ And sure if to thy harp belong
One dearer—one exclusive tone,
The mournful cadence of thy song
Proclaims the chord of grief thine own.”

Hence the Irish elegy is considered to be superior to heroic compositions, from the variety of tender and endearing appellations with which the language abounds. Amongst the elegies given by Miss Brooke, that ascribed to Edmund Ryan, or Ned of the Hills as he was familiarly styled, is worthy of being better known.

Ryan, according to tradition, was one of the partizans of James II., and the confiscation of his estate followed the defeat of that monarch at Boyne. Obligated to retire before the victorious forces of William, Ryan headed a party of freebooters termed Rapparees. To a mind capable of producing compositions of exquisite pathos, how revolting must the association with a gang of lawless plunderers have been ! Many songs are still extant in Ireland, attributed to Ned of the Hills, and a beautiful popular melody is distinguished by his name.

The elegy translated by Miss Brooke is addressed by Ryan to his mistress, who appears to have forsaken him on his loss of fortune. Although I have quoted so largely from the Relics of Irish poetry, I cannot resist copying a few stanzas.

“ Bright her locks of beauty grew,
Curling fair and sweetly flowing,
And her eyes of smiling blue,
Oh how soft—how heavenly glowing !

Ah poor plundered heart of pain,
When wilt thou have an end of mourning ;
This long, long year I look in vain
To see my only hope returning ?

* * *

Why art thou false to me and love ?
(While health and joy with thee are vanish'd)
Is it because forlorn I rove,
Without a crime, unjustly banish'd ?

* * *

Why do I thus my anguish tell—
Why pride in woe—why boast of ruin ?
Oh ! lost treasure, fare thee well,
Lov'd to madness—to undoing !

Yet oh hear me fondly swear—
Though thy heart to me is frozen,
Thou alone, of thousands fair,
Thou alone should'st be my chosen !

Every scene with thee would please,
Every care and fear would fly me,
Wintry storms and raging seas
Would lose their gloom if thou wert nigh me.

* * *

Such, oh Love ! thy cruel power,
Fond excess and fatal ruin ;
Such, oh Beauty's fairest flower,
Such thy charms and my undoing !

The Ibero-Celtic Society, recently established in Dublin for the preservation of Irish literature, have published, under the title of their Transactions, a Chronological Account of Irish Writers, with a Catalogue of their Works. This is not an uninteresting volume, although it abounds in historical and literary inaccuracies, which would be more pardonable had the compiler or editor commented with less severity on the errors of others ; one example may serve : speaking of Carolan—" Some accounts of the life of this bard," says the editor, " have been published by different authors ; but all are erroneous so far as relates to the place of his nativity and some circumstances belonging to his early life. The biographers of O'Carolan, say, ' He was born in the village of Nobber, in the county of West Meath, on the lands of Carlanstown, which were wrested from his ancestors by the family of the Nugents on their arrival in this kingdom in the reign of Henry II. ' ' He must be deprived of sight at a very early period of his life, for he remembered no impression of colours. ' In these two short extracts there are nearly as many falsehoods as lines ; and yet these errors have been repeated in a History of ' Irish Worthies ' lately published in London. This is inexcusable in an editor who had the means of obtaining better information," &c. After some vaunting remarks we come to a breathless continuity of negatives to these assertions.

" Torlogh O'Carolan, then, was not born in Nobber; nor is Nobber on the lands of Carlanstown ; nor is Carlanstown in the county West Meath ; neither did the Nugents ever wrest those lands from the ancestors of Carolan ; nor was he deprived of sight so early in life as to have no recollection of colours." The result, however, of the ensuing half page devoted to correct this important matter is that Carolan was born at Newton, a small village *three miles and a half* from Nobber, and that, on entering his fifteenth year, he lost his sight in consequence of the small-pox. I will now venture to point out one or two errors which struck me on glancing over the Transactions of the Ibero-Celtic Society.

" In 1565, Donald M'Carthy, created first Earl of Clancarty," is mentioned as the author of some poems. It will be remembered by the reader that this title was first bestowed on the M'Carthy's by Charles II., on account of the services of Lord Muskery, whose actions were conspicuous during the revolutionary events subsequent to 1641. Again, John M'Donald, or Shane Claragh, is stated to have presided at the Munster Bardic Sessions held at Charleville in the county Cork, in 1755. The inscription on his tomb, copied at page 102 of this volume, proves him to have died in 1754 ; and I believe it will be found that the Munster Bardic Sessions or Meetings were held at Brury in the county Limerick, and not at Charleville in the county Cork. These instances may be sufficient to establish the statement I have made of

inaccuracy, and I have been induced to notice them in case the next volume of Transactions may question my correctness in these particulars.

It is almost impossible for any historical or topographical work to be free from error, and individually I beg to acknowledge the advantages I have derived from the volume, on some details of which I have ventured to remark ; but it must be felt that the repetition of such trivial errors as those in the biography of Carolan did not call for the application of coarse and ungenerous epithets. Under any circumstances, it is a degrading and illiberal retort of a public body to depreciate the labours of a young man who published a valuable and useful book, “ The Irish Worthies,” without assistance in the compilation, and under the most disheartening and unaccountable neglect. It is only necessary for me to state a fact which has come within my own knowledge, that Mr. Ryan, who is an Englishman, was allowed by two noblemen, for some months, a certain number of franks to enable him to solicit information from individuals resident in Ireland, and who might naturally be supposed to feel an interest in his undertaking. Of an incredible number of letters so addressed, I believe not more than three received any reply ; but this was not all; insult was added to contempt, and Mr. Ryan’s letters, in some instances, after being opened, were inclosed back to him, for the satisfaction of causing him to pay double postage !

[1] Cæsar, Justin, Julius, Florence, Terence, and Horace, are Christian names not uncommon in the south of Ireland.

[2] The Bishop of Clonfert, (1786,) with a liberality equally honourable to his head and his heart, writes—“ There are twenty Catholics to one Protestant in my diocese. To attempt their conversion, or to think of making them read Protestants books, would be in vain. I have, therefore, circulated amongst them some of the best of their own authors, particularly one Gother, whose writings contain much pure Christianity, useful knowledge, and benevolent sentiments. He wrote eighteen volumes of religious tracts ; and died about the year 1690. Unable to make the peasants around me good Protestants, I wish to make them good Catholics, good citizens, good any thing. I have established, too, a Sunday-school, opened to both Protestants and Catholics, at my residence in the country ; have recommended the scheme to the clergy, and hope to have several on foot in the summer. Pastoral works, however, of this nature go on very heavily in a kingdom so unsettled, and so intoxicated with politics as this is.”

[3] “ There are numerous Irish poems,” says Miss Brooke, “ still extant, attributed to Oisín, and either addressed to St. Patrick, or composed in the form of a dialogue between the Saint and the Poet. In all of them the antiquary discovers traces of a later period than that in which Oisín flourished ; and most of them are supposed to be the compositions of the eighth, ninth, and tenth centuries.”

As a specimen, I copy a translation of the commencement of one of these poems.

OISIN.

I care not for thee, senseless clerk,
Nor all thy psalming throng ;
Whose stupid souls, unwisely dark,
Reject the light of song.

Unheeding, while it pours the strain,
With Finian glory swell’d :
Such as thy thought can scarce contain
Thine eye has ne’er beheld !

PATRICK.

O son of Finn ! the Fenii’s fame,

Thou gloriest to prolong ;
While I my heav'nly king proclaim
In psalm's diviner song !

OISIN.
Dost thou insult me to my face ?
Does thy presumption dare
With the bright glories of my race
Thy wretched psalms compare ?

[4] In these manuscript books, of which I possess several, the following prayer to the Virgin is of frequent occurrence. The fidelity of the translation may be depended upon.

“ In praise of the Virgin Mother.”

“ O Jesus Christ, the incorporated wisdom of God, be my aid !—O blessed Virgin, listen unto me—Mother of the Saviour of the world, assist me—Mother of God— Lady of Heaven—Sweetly beloved Queen—and Advocate of all human lineage, I beseech you come !—Amiable and mild Lady—Lady of Angels—Flower of the Patriarchs—Desire of the Prophets—Treasure of the Apostles—Mother of the Confessors—Ornament of Virgins—O sweet Virgin Mary, pray for me ! Lady, who art heard above the company of Angels, preserve me from all evils, past, present, and to come ; do not abandon me this day, nor at that dreadful hour when my soul shall be separated from my body, but obtain for me, Sweet Virgin, at the time of my death and judgment, that my soul may come to the heavenly paradise before your Child Jesus, and that I may be worthy to see his grace and everlasting glory with you, O Gate of Paradise—Palace of Jesus Christ—Star of the Sea, Consolation of Mankind—beginning without end !—Take pity on me, O sweet and blessed Virgin Mary—Daughter of God the Father—Mother of Jesus Christ, and Spouse of the Holy Ghost.—Gate of Heaven—Door of the Firmament—Hope of Christians—Fountain of Piety—Safeguard of Peace—Glory of Virgins—Honoured above all Angels—Mother of Mercy—Miracle of Virginitv—Virgin above all Virgins—Temple of the Most Holy Trinity—Beautiful above all creatures !—O Lady of Meekness—Abyss of Mildness—Hope of the Sorrowful—Consolation of the Afflicted—in you the angels do rejoice !—O sweet Lady of Mercy, turn your merciful eyes unto me, and obtain for me, by thy powerful intercession, mercy, grace, and peace, in this life, and eternal happiness in the next.—Amen.”

By me Edmond Morton,
The Amulet of the Virgin Mary.

Researches in the south of Ireland, illustrative of the scenery, architectural remains, and the manners and superstitions of the peasantry. With an appendix, containing a private narrative of the rebellion of 1798 (1824)

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