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## REVIEWS

### "THE OLD IRISH WORLD"

**THE OLD IRISH WORLD.** By Alice Stopford Green. Dublin: M. H. Gill and Son. London: Macmillan and Co. 4s.

**IRISH NATIONALITY.** Essay by Alice Stopford Green in "The New Irish Constitution." London: Hodder and Stoughton. 10s. 6d.

There are signs that Mrs. Green's active propaganda is beginning to have its effect. Mr. Fletcher may join with Mr. Rudyard Kipling in declaring that Irish history "was all broken heads and stolen cows as it had been for a thousand years," but the libel looks belated, for in current literature, in the reviews and in the newspapers, it is now recognised that the Irish society which English wars disorganised was prosperous and cultured. Mrs. Green's propaganda is directed against that traditional account of Ireland which a section of the Imperialists thinks it is to their social and intellectual interest to maintain. That traditional account is very aptly described by Mrs. Green as a Moral Tale—the Good Man (English) who prospered and the Bad Man (Irish) who came to a shocking end. The good man in the moral tale of Ireland is not even a fiction of Philosophy or History. He is, oddly enough, the offspring of grammar alone, and carries the races of his dry and uninspired pedigree. He owes his being, in fact, to the English dislike of a foreign language. The English refused to learn Irish, and so the only history of Ireland they could discern was that part of it which was written in English—the history of the English colonists told by themselves. "On this contracted record they have worked with industry and self-congratulation . . . all the Irish had to tell of themselves was obscured in an unknown tongue. The story of the whole Irish population came to be looked on merely as a murky prelude to the civilising work of England—a preface savage, transitory, and of no permanent interest, to be rapidly passed over till we come to the English pages of the book." The Moral Tale comes to obsess the official historians, and Professor Mahaffy speaks of an Irish lord's "wigwam," and Mr. Litton Falkiner writes of "the pastoral and in a great measure nomadic Celts, who stood for the Irish people before the twelfth century"; and Mr. Murray can only describe the gallant defender of a Northern town as a "hot-headed Irishman." Mrs. Green pleads that Irish history should be written for Irish people as English history is written for English people, and as French history is written for French people.

The spread of Irish culture through Europe, the development of the Irish language and Irish literature, the making of such works of art as Cormac's Chapel, the Cross of Cong, the Ardagh Chalice, the creation of Irish Universities, the growth of Irish trade, and the Irish victory over the Scandinavian power—these

## REVIEWS

should be of more interest to the historian than the dispatches of mediæval English journalists and the alleged conversations of a Bohemian Baron. Mrs. Green asks for a history of Ireland that shall be free and impartial. But impartiality of head need not mean insensibility of heart. "Who will pretend to comprehend human life who has no great affection for the soul? The generous heart knows no balancing hesitations between the man who deserts his country and the man who defends it; he alone can interpret the hero, in whose soul some answering passion flames; and I suppose that the understanding of a commonwealth will best come to him who is most responsive to a variety of emotions." He who would write Irish history as an Englishman would write English history, or a Frenchman French history, would not understand why his account should begin with the Norman Conquest of England, and why nothing should be said about Colmcille and his work in Iona, of Columbanus and the Irish mission to Europe, why the name of Brian Boru should be expunged, or why the battle of the Blackwater should not be described as "a glorious victory for O'Neill."

In "The Old Irish World" there are many reconstructions of that Irish life which the official historians have neglected. The most memorable of these is concerned with Lady Margaret O'Connor. She was the daughter of O'Carroll, lord of Ely, who was "the general patron of all the learned men of Ireland," and was the wife of Calvagh O'Connor Faly, lord of Offaly. Calvagh lived in the days of the Celtic revival, when the Irish lords had confined the English colony to a strip of coast—laid some twenty miles by thirty. For thirty-seven years Calvagh led his people against the English Government and recovered more territory from them than any lord in Leinster. One of his daughters was married to O'Donnell in the North, and another to Clanrickard in the West. When the Birminghams broke with the English Government and assumed Irish clan-names, he made alliance with them. And during all his wars Irish life in his territory kept its integrity. In one memorable year Lady Margaret invited to the O'Connor territory the representatives of the learned Irish and Scottish families, and bestowed gifts upon them. "And Margaret, on the garrots of the great Church of Da Senchell, clad in cloak of gold, her dearest friends about her, her clergy and judges too, Calvagh himself on horseback by the Church's outward side, to the end that all things might be done orderly, and each one served successively. And first of all she gave two chalices of gold as offerings that day on the altar to God Almighty."

Such national festivals were common, and the Irish were long practised in the organising of general conventions. There should have been no difficulty in introducing a representative parliamentary system. Mr. Balfour suggested that such a system had been bestowed by the English upon Ireland, and that the Irish people proved themselves unable to make use of it. In the sixteenth century successive parliaments in Ireland declined on patriotic grounds to abrogate Poyning's Law. Mr. Litton Falkiner had called us to wonder at this proceed-

## THE IRISH REVIEW

ings, and suggested that they were due to capricious temper of the people of Ireland, for was not the repeal of Poyning's Law to become the greatest triumph of Irish patriotism in the eighteenth century? In the important essay contributed to "The New Irish Constitution," Mrs. Green makes the proceedings very intelligible. In the sixteenth century the Irish Parliament had no relation to the English Parliament, and depended directly upon the King. In the eighteenth century the Irish Parliament was subject to the absolute control, not of the King, but of the English Parliament. Poyning's Act and its repeal had taken a new significance since the time of the revolution that had made this change. At all times the Irish Parliament was hampered by Poyning's law. Now why did the Irish members consent to its imposition, and why did they resist its repeal? They consented to the imposition of Poyning's law because they knew that as they voted they would be marked for ruin or protection by Henry VII. It must be remembered that the members of the old Irish Parliament were not from the Gaelic people, but from the Normans and the English Protestants. They resisted the repeal of Poyning's law because they knew that if it gave tremendous power to the Crown, it yet held provisions which, as far as they went, were a protection from arbitrary tyranny. "The preparing, before Parliament could be called, of Acts to which the Seal of Ireland had to be affixed before they went to receive the Seal of England, assured some discussion in Ireland, some degree of publicity, and some hindrance to unexpected laws sprung upon it by a foreign and uncontrolled Executive, and hurried through by a packed majority. Parliament, in fact, held that law and recognised order were safeguards to liberty; and its battle in Dublin was for the security of law, even of Poyning's Law, against the mere will of the King and his ministers: a motive neither trivial nor irrational." Mrs. Green shows us successive Parliaments hampered by Poyning's Law, and yet fighting against those who, in their own phrase "banish Ireland and mean conquest." The desperate measure that had to be undertaken to overcome the resistance of that maimed Parliament impresses us again with the conviction that any assembly is some protection to a country and some rallying ground for patriotism.

Our next issue will contain the first instalment of an important contribution to Irish historical research—"The Wars of Turlogh," by Edmund Curtis.