

Correspondence.

AMERICAN LETTER.

(We are not responsible for the opinions of our Correspondents.)

To the Editor of the NEW ZEALAND TABLET.

SIR,—I read the TABLET regularly, thanks to my Christchurch friend "Rathkealsensis," who is always prompt in sending me the best Catholic paper in the colonies. I see in Australia, as in this country, the great strides Catholicity is making in spite of the intense opposition that the secret societies and all enemies of the Church are now taking against her. I am not surprised at the Puritanic hate that lifts its feeble head at the Antipodes, for the same hatred is as rampant in this Republic as it was among the silly bigots that were imported into New England in the much Yankee-adored "May Flower." As this is what is called the "age of progress," and as America is a go-ahead country, so renowned for its great inventions, shrewd Yankee notions, bogus elections, crooked whiskey, and wooden nutmegs, the latest progress is in the invention of new Protestantisms, which are springing up all over, making the number now, so far as heard of, 346. "The Watchers of the Coming Man" are the latest, and as they say the only reliable. But in spite of all this bigotry that is hissed through Beecherism and all of that ilk, the old Catholic Church, that has seen the ruin of its enemies in all ages, is to-day destined in this land to become the stronghold of its teachings, adding more lustre and purity to the reality of American independence. The onward course our holy faith is making here is unprecedented. Twenty years ago there was in this city one poor priest, who said Mass in a shanty, which could hardly accommodate the little band of Catholics on Sunday; to-day, we have eight churches, their noble spires towering over everything in the city, and whose interior magnificence can vie with some of the historic piles of Continental Europe, all having their fine schools adjoining, which can each accommodate seven hundred children daily.

I see the school question causes discontent in New Zealand as well as here. An American Catholic must pay taxes for a system of education he is no sharer in. Not only that, if he sends his child to the public schools, before his studies, a long chapter from King James's Bible is read for him as an introduction to the insult offered to the faith of his fathers. This sectarianism is a blot on the name of freedom, and until it is abolished will meet the undivided opposition of the Catholic Church, which already is felt, as some State legislatures have suppressed the reading of the Bible.

The financial depression that this country is going through at the present time is new in its history; dull times all over, and idleness everywhere but among the politicians, who are at the present time sapping the life out of the constitution of this beautiful country. It cannot be otherwise, when from the bigoted present-takers, Grant and his Cabinet, down to the pound-master, the worship of dishonest dollars goes on, whilst State prisons and penitentiaries often only lend enchantment to their view. From present appearances this injustice and robbery will go on, as Hayes is nearly counted in by the dishonest party now in power, backed up by a commission of vile political shysters, who own their position on the bench to their bigotry, and Grant's mismanagement, and who have, to the Nation's peril, boldly declared that fraud, perjury, and murder are as nothing compared with the success of their party. But the future looks threatening, and Congress boldly tell those traitors that Tilden's great majority will not or cannot be set aside, as the people's voice, from Alaska to the Gulf of Mexico, and from the Atlantic to the Pacific, comes in all its might to undo this wrong and to leave untarnished the great honor of being free men, under that grand old flag, upheld by the Constitution so nobly won and framed by Washington and his honored associates.—Yours, &c.,

Jersey City, Feb. 20, 1877.

T. J. O'CONNELL.

REVIEW.

The New Zealand Magazine, April, 1877.

THIS publication continues to pursue the ponderously respectable course it has marked out for itself. It maintains generally the creditable place it has assumed in the ranks of heavier colonial literature, and with the exception of one paper this month's number is, as usual, from a purely literary point of view, fair and acceptable.

The exceptional paper to which we refer, is that entitled "A Book of Poems," and which professes to give an unbiased review of *Flowers of the Free Lands*, by Thomas Bracken. Professes to give such a review, we say, for, although the writer assumes in a degree the paternal-didactic tone, there is a suspicion of acerbity apparent through this thin varnish that, to say the least of it, is highly suggestive of prejudice.

Having given us a page or two of verbiage, in which he aims at being instructive, and asserts a belief in "the mute inglorious Milton," this critic makes the following unique statement: "Our poet of the *Flowers of the Free Lands* has had the ill luck to be applauded by the crowd." We can well understand that to be so applauded would be a misfortune, were it the effect of puffing, or were the public of utterly vitiated tastes, but now, for the first time, we learn that genuine popularity degrades the bard; hitherto we had thought it formed an element in his greatness. It is not considered amongst the least of the glories of Burns, for instance, that his strains are familiar in the mouths of the most illiterate of his fellow-countrymen; and we recognise it as a weak point in Moore, that his lyrics lack the magic which might obtain for them a constant audience at the fireside of the peasant. "Let me

write a nation's songs," said Fletcher of Saltoun, "and I care not who makes its laws;" but he must be no weakling who wields so potent an influence.

In all ages has the merit of the poet been confirmed by the approbation of the populace. Homer was recited in the streets to admiring crowds; the love of the people for Euripides rescued from death many men belonging to the wrecked forces of Nicias; and it is told in illustration of the powers of Dante that, when he went abroad, he was followed through the town by cries of "*Eccovi l'uom ch'è stato all'Inferno*." In our own days, moreover, amongst lesser testimonies to the capability of the multitude to appreciate that which is good, we have the description, given by Farjeon, of the effects of a pure song on the habitués of a low London tavern, where ribaldry in general prevailed.

In fact, ballad-poetry originated, as Macaulay tells us, in the necessities of the people, and it is a strange slur to cast upon a poet that he has caught and charmed the popular ear. Verily the *Profanum Vulgus* is here most unjustly despised. Mr. Bracken need feel but little discouragement at finding himself declared unworthy of entering into the *sanctum sanctorum* where such a Rhadamanthus sits in judgment, and over whose portals is inscribed the motto of Molière's pedantic women—

"Nul n'aura de l'esprit, hors nous et nos amis."

Our critic, however, with most engaging candour and an extreme simplicity, opens out to us his qualifications for passing sentence. He strings together, in a manner malapropos and disjointed, a number of extracts from British poets, and his comments upon them are unsurpassed. The two cardinal points of poetry, according to Coleridge, are, "The power of exciting the sympathy of the reader by a faithful adherence to the truth of nature, and the power of giving the interest of novelty by the modifying colours of the imagination." From this our reviewer evidently differs. He says, in effect, what Cowper said in satire.

"Manner is all in all what's'er is writ,
The substitute for genius, taste, and wit."

In a passage of Milton's *L'Allegro* quoted by him—the passage is from *L'Allegro*, and not from *Comus* as stated in the reviewer's note—he finds "Little of thought or fancy, wisdom or wit." And this he asserts of a poem, concerning which, together with its companion *Il Penseroso*, Macaulay wrote: "These poems differ from others, as atar of roses differs from ordinary rose-water, the closed packed essence from the diluted mixture. They are, indeed, not so much poems as collections of hints, from each of which the reader is to make out a poem for himself. Every epithet is a text for a stanza." The italics are our own.

The thought contained in some beautiful and melodious lines of Coleridge's is adjudged to be "common-place;" yet Carlyle says, "Coleridge remarks very pertinently somewhere, that wherever you find a sentence musically worded, of true rhythm and melody in the words, there is something deep and good in the meaning too. For body and soul, word and idea, go strangely together here as everywhere." A man may, however, fail now and then in the musical flow of his lines and still deserve the name of poet. The critic, for example, who would deny such a title to Ben Jonson would expose himself merely to ridicule, were he indeed considered worthy of any notice. Yet this writer is accredited by Macaulay with "rugged rhymes," with "jagged mis-shapen distiches," and again he says, "Ben's heroic couplets resemble blocks rudely hewn out by an unpractised hand with a blunt hatchet."

In the third verse of *Childe Harold's* "Greetings," our reviewer perceives only "grace of words." But, indeed, the whole style of his criticism is that of *Philaminte*:

"J'aime superbelement et magnifiquement;
Ces deux adverbes joints font admirablement."

We should have concluded that the whole string of quotations alluded to had been brought together simply in vacuous pedantry, so inapt are they, and so feeble and senseless are the comments that attend upon them, did not the last extract adduced seem to afford a clue to the manœuvre, and give evidence of a deeper motive by no means creditable. This extract is a sonnet of Shakespeare's, into direct comparison with which a passage, certainly amongst the least meritorious, in Mr. Bracken's volume is brought. Here is literary bullying with a vengeance, and which cannot be too highly reprobated. To fell even one of heroic strength with the club of Hercules, wielded by means of a lever, would be but a paltry victory. The Laureate himself so dealt with would be found wanting.

The fact is the writer, whatever may be his pretensions, is totally unfitted for the task he has endeavored to perform. Even had it been undertaken with good temper it must have proved a failure, for it is clear, on his own showing, and from the ridiculous remarks he makes concerning the extracts he has brought forward, in attempted repression of the author he essays to review, that he has no perception whatever of the meaning of poetry. Its sense escapes him, and for him its delicate essence is void of sweetness; by "jingle" alone does he recognise the bard. The censures and instructions of such an one are alike worthless, and do but prove him to be a much gasping and effete Quintilian.

In conclusion, we trust the *New Zealand Magazine* does not seriously propose to itself an effort to crush local talent of the less ponderous kind, but that this, its first shabby attempt to do so, may prove as well its last.

The Dublin *Irish Times* says that the profits realised by the Messrs Guinness's brewery amount to the magnificent figure of £100,000 per annum, and the partnership has been dissolved upon the terms that Sir Arthur is to receive £1,000,000 or 20 years purchase of £50,000 a year. Mr. E. Cecil Guinness, who becomes the sole owner of the brewery, offered to draw a cheque for £1,000,000, his brother's share of the concern: