

Irish Lace

The 'Art Workers' Quarterly' for October contains an article by Mr. M. Jourdain on design in modern needlepoint laces that should be carefully studied in Irish lace centres, notably at Kenmare, Youghal, and New Ross. Mr. Jourdain illustrates his observations with beautifully finished drawings in full size specimens of Irish lace in raised and flat needlepoint, point de France, and other laces of the nineteenth century, and his detailed critical notes on the designs and on the measure of technical skill exhibited in working them will prove of value, even if one be not disposed to agree with him in everything. His conclusion seems to be that Irish designers show a tendency to realistic imitation, they reproduce materialistic forms without any attempt at conventionalising them, that there is 'a tendency to strive for ready effect to sacrifice the minuteness and finish of handwork, "the ornament upon ornament" of the old Italian rose points which gives the quality of preciousness to lace.' The workmanship of convent-made lace in Ireland he finds technically excellent, but the designs are not always the most skillfully contrived. 'The dangers of Irish lace,' he adds, 'are two: the applying of fine threads to the interpretation of badly designed and ill-grouped forms on the one hand, and on the other hand of adopting a style of ornament which depends upon largeness of detail and massiveness in grouping, and is therefore unsuited to lace at the present day.' On the other hand, Mr. Alan Cole, of South Kensington, recognised as one of the highest authorities on lace in the Three Kingdoms, disagrees with Mr. Jourdain's criticisms of these designs, which he describes as 'artistic and beautiful,' praises one of the specimens for its 'artistic completeness' and 'the beauty of its curves and the great variety of leaves and flowers,' as well as its 'skillful and delicate workmanship.' Mr. Jourdain himself admits that the Irish lace is superior in design to many admired specimens of French laces.

The Education Question

Never for a moment (writes a Dublin correspondent) have the Archbishops and Bishops of Ireland allowed the great educational injustice from which their flocks suffer at the hands of the British Government to be forgotten by the public. In and out of season they have insisted upon the absolute right of Irish Catholics to perfect equality with Irish Protestants in educational matters. In pursuance of this policy the resolutions adopted by the Irish hierarchy at their October meeting in Maynooth, which have already been published, have been read from every altar throughout the country. The result of their continual insistence is that the justice of the Catholic demand is now freely admitted by every liberal-minded and impartial person. An insignificant number of bigots bar the way to redress. They consist of a few Orange fanatics and the Trinity College monopolists who have so long thriven on the fat of the land, to the exclusion of the great majority of the people. Lord Rossmore, late Grand Master of the Orange fraternity, has recently given the public his views of these gentlemen, derived from a long and intimate knowledge of their doings. Insignificant as they are numerically, they have, ably assisted by the bigots of Trinity, frightened the Prime Minister and his supporters in the Cabinet into perpetrating the injustice which they have publicly proclaimed exists to the great detriment of Catholic Irishmen. History shows plainly that these fanatics can never be placated or brought to a sense of justice where Catholics are concerned. The first resolution adopted by the Bishops declares that 'the rents drawn by Trinity College out of land in almost every part of Ireland, which as the outcome of confiscation have been reserved during three hundred years as a prize for a State-favored minority, are of right the inheritance of the nation at large, and should be devoted, however late in the day, to provide in an effective manner, as far as they can go, for the wants of all the people of Ireland in the domain of higher education.' To use a homely phrase, this 'hits the nail on the head.' So long as the monopolists are permitted to retain their ill-gotten gains in peace, and no longer, the great majority of Irishmen will be denied fair play. When it became known that Trinity College was excluded from the purview of the late Royal Commission many regarded the whole business as a sham, and time has proved that they were right.

During the 'speech day' proceedings at St. Stanislaus' College, Bathurst, his Lordship Bishop Dunne, having complimented the college on its progress, promised to be responsible for £1000 towards the completion of the institution.

People We Hear About

Among the Pope's treasures (says an exchange) is an egg which he received from an English lady one Easter. The shell is made of ivory, its lining is of white satin, and the yolk is a golden case containing a large ruby set in diamonds; the whole is worth upwards of £2000.

The Hon. A. Wilmot, late Postmaster-General of Cape Colony and a member of the Legislative Council, Cape Town, has been appointed a Cameriere di Cappella to his Holiness. Mr. Wilmot has long taken a deep interest in Catholic affairs, and the Right Rev. Dr. McSherry, Bishop of Justinianopolis, and Vicar-Apostolic of the Eastern District of the Cape of Good Hope in his religious work has had amongst the laity no more energetic or more influential supporter than the new Papal Chamberlain.

Mrs. Humphrey Ward, novelist, is a colonial. She was born at Hobart, Tasmania, June 11, 1851. It was at Oxford, with which her husband was associated, that Mrs. Ward began her literary work. Her earliest original work was in the form of critical articles contributed to 'Macmillan's Magazine' and to the 'Pall Mall' when under Mr. Morley's control. Of all her numerous books none has attained such popularity as 'Robert Elsmere,' issued in 1888. Over half a million copies have been sold in America alone.

It is over half a century since Florence Nightingale and her band of nurses sailed from London for the Crimea. Since then her name has been a synonym for womanly tenderness and devotion to the relief of the soldiers' sufferings. The present generation knows little of the horrors endured by the British soldiers in the Crimean campaign. Blundering incompetence has rarely inflicted greater suffering on its helpless victims. Things were at their worst when Florence Nightingale went out to organise the work of nursing the British sick and wounded. She did it thoroughly, and with a completeness that used up all her energy and strength, for since her return to England over forty years ago she has lived practically the life of an invalid.

Here was a good story of Gladstone, who was fond of loitering around the second-hand book-shop windows, and fingered the volumes which were thus displayed. If he picked up a book that interested him, he frequently became quite oblivious to his surroundings. On one of these occasions a loafer, who must have carefully studied Mr. Gladstone's habits, whispered quietly: 'Half a crown, please, sir.' Without raising his eyes from the book, Mr. Gladstone put his hand into his pocket and handed over the half-crown. A few minutes later he was going off with his prize, when the bookseller, who knew him well by sight, stopped him with the demand for one shilling, the price of the book. 'But I have already given you half a crown,' said Mr. Gladstone, and explanations followed.

Sir Francis William Brady, Bart., is to be added to the somewhat long list of public men who have survived their own obituaries. When Sir T. Francis Brady, who spent a generation as Inspector of Irish Fisheries, died recently quite a number of provincial newspapers fell into the error of confusing him with the other Sir Francis. The surviving Sir Francis is that somewhat unusual combination, a K.C., a musician, and a poet. His was the special version of 'Come back to Erin' which was written for the departure of the King and Queen from Ireland. Called to the Bar some eight-and-fifty years ago, he took silk in 1860. He is a County Court Judge and chairman of Quarter Sessions for Tyrone, and at two months over eighty still practises at the Bar.

The last week in October saw the completion of the greatest engineering work ever attempted or accomplished in the way of railroad tunnelling. In the opening of the New York subway for public service the triumph of human skill and energy over the most formidable obstacles, natural and artificial, that have ever been faced, is signally demonstrated. The tunnel, or tunnels, begun in March, 1900, extend a length of twenty-two miles. To find the boring completed and the entire line equipped for perfect railway service in so short a period as four years and a half is a fact to fill the mind with wonder and admiration. This new wonder of the world is, moreover, more wonderful still in the fact that it is the work of one man—one master mind directing the minds and hands of many. An humble Irishman, one of the peasant class, who had never had the advantage of a scientific training, is the master of this great tunnel. His was the brain to conceive it and work out the problem of its construction to the last detail. This man's name—Maddison—will go down to history as one fit to rank with the greatest of the world's engineers.