# Irish News

## OUR IRISH LETTER

(From Our Own Correspondent.)

DUBLIN, May, 1908.

In company with the Bishop of Cloyne, his Eminence Cardinal Logue sailed from Queenstown on Easter Sunday to take part in the rejoicings that celebrated the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Catholic Archdiocese of New York. Apart from the large share Ireland has had in establishing the Catholic religion in the United States, it is fitting that the Primate of all Ireland (the 109th Primate since Saint Patrick founded the See) should share in this jubilee, for the present Archbishop of New York is a native of Armagh and an old friend of Cardinal Logue's, and in his Archdiocese alone there are over a million Irish or Irish-American Catholics, so that the magnificent welcome given to the Cardinal is very pleasing to the hearts of all at home, and we feel grateful to the Catholic public of the States who thus acknowledge that our Irish exiles are pillars of the Church in the West.

'There came to the beach a poor exile of Erinn.'

Have the feelings of exiles changed much since the days when that home-sick ballad was written? I doubt it. Through the rush and wear and tear and the heartless drive of modern life in America, I think there must be, deep down in every Irish heart there, even a greater, a sadder, a more hopeless ache for the restful green hills far away: the green hills where a man may still take a little quiet leisure, still throw himself on the grass of a sunny evening, and look out over the homely scene; where the country Sunday is still a day of rest and kindly neighborliness, with the walk to Mass, the fathers in groups, the mothers side by side, the children in a flock, vainly trying to be sedate, as befits the Sunday dress; the very birds and trees and sunshine having a certain Sunday air of their own. There are quiet spots in plenty in the big land, too, but they are too quiet, too vast, too lonely as a rule. And then the exile never loses the feeling that it is not really home: memory sheds such a halo around those green hills far, so far away! and though the land of adoption may be rich and beautiful, whose face ever has for the man the sweetness, the beauty of the mother's—the face that first smiled for him in childhood? There is the secret of the exile's longing: the motherland first smiled for him in infancy, and its smiles never fade from memory. Two thousand years ago Virgil wrote just as the Irish emigrant away in other lands would write would he but allow his feelings to have full vent:

'But we to distant climes must banished go;
Some to parched Afric's sands; to Scythia some;
To Crete, and turbulent Oaxes' stream,
And Britain, quite from all the world disjoin'd.
Shall I then never more, admiring, see,
After long absence, and some harvests past,
My country's coasts, my poor hut built with turf,
To me a kingdom? Shall these lands, so well
Manur'd, by impious strangers be possess'd?
These crops by aliens?'

And this same old Virgil, giving us his weather signs, and all about the fields and groves, the crops and domestic animals, tells his lore precisely as does a thoughtful Irish farmer at the present day, when, of a winter's night or a Sunday evening, you can entice him to open the stores of his knowledge (learned mostly from reading in nature's library) by showing him that you know he understands these wonderful things and will give you a pleasure by sharing his knowledge. It was but quite recently I opened Virgil's 'Georgics,' etc., and found, to my surprise and admiration, that one farmer or another had told me most of what the great writer expounded nearly 2000 years ago: so ever up to date is nature.

'I want to know, Peter,' I said to a very poor farmer in the King's County, 'the exact difference between rape and prashach?' Peter just went out into the field, brought me two samples of the plants, and gave a clear and practical lesson in botany, all the clearer to his pupil that no Latin names came in. On beautiful Lough Erne, a poor boatman described, in just such language as Virgil's, the various signs of weather as denoted by animals, birds, and plants. And so on, one thing learnt here, something else there, until I have come to have a great respect for the knowledge of the (so-called) illiterate peasant who learns from nature, much less respect for teachers who learn entirely from books.

### The Manufacture of Poplin.

We see from an advertisement in the daily papers that a large order has been received in Dublin from his Holiness for a quantity of Irish poplin, or tabinet, to be used in Rome for vestments and other church requisites. The principal manufacturer of this material now in Dublin is Mr. Atkinson, of College Green, who keeps up the traditional quality of this unique and beautiful stuff, which is peculiar to our city and owes its origin to an accident.

In the early part of the eighteenth century a colony of French Huguenots settled in Dublin. Many of them were silk weavers by trade, and they set up their industry in a locality still known as Weavers' Square, in the Coombe, in those days a prosperous hive of industries of various textile manufactures. It so happened that silk ran short on one occasion; there was some difficulty in obtaining a supply, and, to eke out the silk on hand, an ingenious Frenchman hit upon a plan of weaving a fabric of which the warp was a woollen thread, the weft silk. The result was the beautiful texture which was named tabinet, from an old French word which signifies striped. Hence, I fancy, comes the name 'tabby,' or striped cats. This Irish tabinet soon became famous, as it far surpassed ordinary all silk stuffs, being softer and more pliable without easily creasing, and infinitely more durable. It is also said that some peculiar quality in the water of the Liffey, used in dyeing, imparts a special lustre to the silk: certain it is that a Dublin tabinet, or poplin, as it is now called, cannot be competed with elsewhere. For over a century it was a favorite material for ladies' and gentlemen's wear, but cheap fabrics and ever-varying fashions have made it be less in vogue for the last thirty years, and it is now principally patronised by royalty and for Church use.

### An Irish Tenor.

We are quite proud of the young Irish tenor, Mr. J. F. McCormack, whose exquisitely sweet voice and great natural gift of singing with ease and grace—for a real singer is born a singer, like a bird—have won him a place at the head of his profession at a very early age. Of course I do not mean to say that Mr. McCormack has not been trained, and trained in some of the best schools, notably Milan, but no training can supply the place of nature's gifts, the sweetness of voice, and natural grace of utterance so rare now. These Mr. McCormack possesses in a high degree: he has not to seek approbation by forcing and straining: he wins the ear and pleases the heart by allowing his hearers to listen in restful pleasure. So highly is he appreciated in the musical world that he lately received an invitation from the director of La Scala, the great Opera House of Milan, to take the leading parts in some of the operas to be produced there next season—the first time an Irish or English tenor has been so favored. However, Mr. McCormack's engagements already cover the next two years.

### Pilgrimage to Rome.

On the invitation of Monsignor O'Riordan, Rector of the Irish College, Rome, the Catholic Truth Society of Ireland is about to organise a pilgrimage to Rome during the jubilee year. A well-known Dublin priest, the Very Rev. Canon Fricker, of Rathmines, has taken charge of the arrangements, and there is no doubt everything will be done to make the visit to the Eternal City a memorable one for Irish pilgrims. Canon Fricker is a convert, but he has been so long a priest that few now know that he was not always one of us. His zeal and activity are marvellous; he works late and early for the good cause of temperance, takes a deep interest in the spiritual welfare of soldiers, one of the largest barracks in the city being in his parish; his schools are models, and he even finds time to look after that very useful institution, a crêche, or screech, as most poor women not inaptly term those day nurseries for the infants of poor women who have to go out to daily labor. In fact, the name of Canon Fricker is a household word in Dublin where everyone knows him, many love him, and not a few fear his watchful eye. With the Canon to organise at home and Mgr. O'Riordan to welcome in Rome, the pilgrimage of the Irish Catholic Society should be a great success, and one that many will be anxious to join.