Literature.

[The prompt mention in our list of "Books of the Week" will be considered by us an equivalent to their publishers for all volumes received. The interests of our readers will guide us in the selection of works for further notice.]

THE GREATER IRELAND.*

Mr. Froude found himself on a rough path when he undertook to spread among us his views of the Irish at home; but, so far as we know, no one took offense when he returned to Great Britain and explained to the world in general what he thought of the Irish in America.

One thing, at least, in his relation to this people, should soften their hearts, that he both saw and foresaw their importance in our civilization as a present and coming fact. His chapters raised the subject into a kind of philosophic basis, and wrote down on the lists for serious consideration a topic which had been previously left to such fate as the conflict of passion and prejudice with events would result in. The American attitude to this question has been neither highly intelligent nor highly creditable. It has consisted mainly in a kind of helpless patriotic and protestant worry over a perplexed problem We have neither liked the superficial phenomena of the emigration nor seen the way clear to shut out of the country its substantial benefits. Events have, therefore, been left pretty much to themselves. We have fallen blindly into what we should be slow to say was not the best policy, looked out for our national and free institutions, and for the rest comforted ourselves with a truly American, though inoperative religious confidence in futurity.

Since the late war the question has stood in a new light. The results of the war have opened American citizenship to the entire colored race. In the presence of this vast absorption of alien blood into citizenship, the protest against alien races has lost its force. The mingled peoples who fought and bled together for the integrity of the national domain have acquired national unity—at least on one line; and, though the domination of a distinct race in the land has been weakened, the alien feeling of the others has disappeared, and with it many, at least, of the old dangers and inconveniences of the situation, and a national feeling has taken its place.

Race questions still remain on our hands, but we have gone far enough in the process of assimilation to see how they are to be settled. We still have an Irish question, a German question, a Chinese question, a Negro question, and we may have others. How we get on with them depends on the assimilating power of American life. The hold France had on Alsace and Lorraine was due to the enormous assimilating power of French society, which made the German races there French, precisely as we shall make our emigrants American; not English, nor New English, but American. The strongest and most dominating elements in our national life will be the most felt and the most permanent; and we can now see that the assimilating power of our institutions is so far ahead of events in dealing with the races that are here that neither the Irish, nor the Germans, nor the Africans are to dominate us, but that they are all to be assimilated into the new and mighty life of the country.

The volume referred to at the head of this column is an intelligent and enlightening study of this process, as regards one large element in the problem. Mr. Philip H. Bagenal came to this country to trace, on the ground, the influence of the American-Irish on British politics. It is to his credit that he soon saw that what the Irish are and do here is of more importance than any functions they still retain in Great Britain. Mr. Bagenal does not fully admit this, though we want no better proof of it than his book. In our way of reading it, the light he throws on the Irish and their destiny here is much, and very little is forthcoming to impress us with the formidable proportions of what they have done to keep up agitation at home. A few hundred thousands of money and a vast amount of talk is the whole of it.

Mr. Bagenal rates the power of talk, and especially of Irish talk, higher than we do. In our view, it is a safe and harmless way of carrying off into cosmic space discontent and fret which might otherwise be dangerous. If it was Talleyrand who said that words were given to conceal thought, the Americans have invented another use—made them convenient to carry off political passion. Because these men talk furiously, we conclude that they will cool down when the contributions come in, and not send a great deal of the money they get to buy arms for the Land Leaguers.

Mr. Bagenal goes back to the beginning, and tells a long story before he gets onto the ground where he is strong.

In speaking of the Native American feeling, he says that it is now only a sentimental feeling; but that, like some of our subterranean rivers, it runs strong and deep. Certainly it is, and we believe it will remain strong on the national point; strong enough to guard our institutions, quick to defend them. Beyond this and as a mere anti-race feeling there is not much of it left. Mr. Bagenal does not look as anxiously to our future as Mr. Froude. Perhaps he sees more clearly the tremendous odds which lie against Roman Catholic agitation in a free country. Perhaps he sees that freedom is in itself a kind of Protestantism. Perhaps he apprehends more correctly the safety we get from the balance of races, and the fact that, on so large a field and where the elements of the problem are so vast, things must go on in an orderly way and that a majority can always be relied on to keep the rest in order and get fair play. The Americans themselves, he asserts, have no fear that their institutions will be dangerously compromised by the Roman Church. The Irish element in our population he finds by no means the priest-ridden flock it must be to effectuate the mischief Mr. Froude apprehends. They have accepted, he tells us, the theory of the Republic, to abide by it. In fact, it suits them. They expand and bloom in it. They are Americans first and Catholics afterward. They will not be dictated to, even as to the education of their children, who, for the most part, are in the much-dreaded national schools, while the priests stand by, with their chins in the air.

Per contra, the priests tell him that the Irish race is looked on by themselves as the agent which, in their hands, is to recover the land for the Old Church. He points out with exemplary clearness both the lines of policy on which this end has been pursued and some very important changes which are of late being made in it.

Until recently the Catholic priests, as he observes truly, dreaded to have their flock dispersed in the country, where their own influence was weak and the Protestant strong. They held them in the towns and pushed this matter so far as to change the Irish from the rustic and agricultural people they are on arriving into dwellers in towns and metropolitan work-people. This policy suited the priests for a time; but it is now shrewdly suspected of having been pressed too far and too long. The development and concentration of town life has crowded them together and held them down. The physical and moral consequences of the policy tell against it. The tables of disease and mortality are alarming, while a scrutiny of the kinds of disorder show that moral degradation is established among them. Contrary to the current opinion, the fecundity of the race is low. Only 10 per 1,000 of the Irish in New York indulge in matrimony annually, against 42 in the 1,000 of Germans. The number of births is not large, but the death-rate among children is alarming. The Irish death-rate in New York for 1877 was 24.50-100 per thousand, against 15.7-100 per thousand among the Germans. These facts tell the story and show how far the character of common laborers has been fixed on the Irish immigrants by the policy of their priests. Mr. Bagenal points out that Native American prejudice has not done it, as the modification and amelioration of social and political feeling against them since the war has not changed their status; on the whole their position remains unchanged and there is much reason to apprehend that, as a class, the Irish immigrants will have permanently fixed on them the character of common laborers.

The meaning of facts like these have not escaped the attention of the more far-seeing Catholic leaders, among whom we name Bishop Spalding and Bishop Ireland. With every reason for doing so, they have concluded that it is time to change their policy and try Catholic colonization in the West. By this means they hope to draw the Irish from the dangers of the cities and place them where they will profit by their own industry, build up a territorial influence, and count more for their Church.

Experiments of this kind have been started on a large scale, with strong backing, and are said to be working well. The Catholic prelates certainly have not long to deliberate. The day for such enterprises is passing. Land cannot remain cheap and abundant in the West. In twenty years there will be little room left for this property-absorbing scheme, and the Irish would then have their priests to thank for having fixed on them the character of the laborers and menials of the nation.

Mr. Bagenal sees clearly the great advantages of such colonization as far as the emigrant is concerned. He does not hesitate to commend the associations which have it in charge to the emigrant Irish. How far these measures are likely to meet the views of the Catholic prelates he does not care to inquire. To us it is more important. How the new movement will result must depend on what the Irishman proves to be as a colonist. Thus far the other races of Europe beat him. We should expect them to continue to do so. It is against the Irish as a race that they have displayed so little political ability. The genius to colonize is, at least, first cousin to political genius. With a fair amount of political ability, the Irish people would have ended their home troubles long ago. Scotch nights have long been dull nights in the British Parliament, and Irish nights promised lively times and drew crowds; but the Scotch got what they needed, and the Irish used themselves up in wit and agitation and got nothing. We apprehend that, when thrown on themselves as colonists, they will have as much trouble with Nature and with the frontier society as with the English landlords. Mr. Bagenal is not deceived as to what is required for a colonist. He points out that only picked men have a chance. Still, the Irishman in Minnesota, working his farm, is likely to be a nobler man and a better citizen than the same man in New York City. We should add that Mr. Bagenal, though an Irishman, is a Tory, and connected, we believe, with the *St. James Gazette*. The second part of his book, which has little importance to us, is designed to tell against the "Land Leaguers."

* The American Irish and their Influence on Irish Politics. By Philip H. Bagenal, B.A., Oxon. Author's Edition. Boston: Roberts Brothers. 24mo, pp. 236.