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OLIVER PLUNKETT.

SUBSTANCE OF A LECTURE DELIVERED BY A. M. SULLIVAN, ESQ., EDITOR OF THE DUBLIN "NATION," IN BELFAST, DUBLIN, LIVERPOOL, & C.

(CONCLUSION.)

So far the cold and unimpassioned legal chronicle supplies the particulars of his trial as it was called. This is all that we have. No pen has described for us the scene: no sympathising eyewitness was by, to land down to posterity the numerous particulars that do not come within the range of a mere report of evidence—no one to depict the conflicting passions and emotions that moved the actors. But we can, alas, only too faithfully imagine it all. The grim severity of the judges—captious and hostile, scowling on the prisoner as if he was a malefactor already convicted, trying to escape—each question of the witnesses, each protestation of his innocence only aggravating his crime in their eyes. The counsel for the crown—five of them, no less—hovering around the doomed captive like Indians around their victim at the stake—each one, turn about, having his thrust at the defenceless breast—each one his brutal taunt and lying charge upon the bound and helpless prisoner. Calmly that venerable old man—without counsel, advocate, or friend—presents himself to his persecutors. Who can read unmoved even the rude narrative of the law book, as it reveals him, single-handed, battling with despairing energy—contending in his own simple, earnest, persevering, and importune way against the host of able lawyers that crowd around him. In those days no counsel for defence was allowed to men charged with his crime; so there stood the helpless Primate, as he himself says, at their mercy—five of the ablest lawyers in all England engaged against him; the judges themselves, with a brutal partisanship they did not venture to conceal, coming to the assistance of all the lawyers and the witnesses whenever Plunkett had the perjurers in a dilemma. On the 15th of June sentence of death was passed upon him. He was led back to prison. The sixteen days which elapsed until his execution, he passed in prayer, meditation, and fasting. In prison he fasted usually four days in every week. The accounts which the jailers who had charge of him give of the venerable martyr, are noble testimonies to his character. They describe him as a quiet, gentle old man, with a mixture of serenity, cheerfulness, and candor, that won upon every one of them. It is said that the appearance of haggard anxiety which somewhat tinged his usually calm and dignified countenance before and during the trial, entirely vanished after he had heard the sentence. He seemed like one who felt that his prison doors on earth were about to open on a glorious and eternal liberation. In the same prison with him were confined several priests charged with the crime of having taken orders in the Church of Rome. In this circumstance the Prelate found a consolation which his enemies could not have imagined. After sentence he was allowed to communicate with his fellow-martyrs in his prison, not personally, but by letter or message through his faithful servant who attended him to the last. One of these priests was a Father Corker, under whose spiritual guidance the Primate placed himself in preparation for death, and who has left us in writing some most interesting particulars of Plunkett's last days. At length the last sun rose upon the troubled career we have been following. The night before, the Primate arranged with Father Corker what prayers and devotions he would offer on the way to execution, in order that they might at the same moment, in their cells, accompany his petitions to the throne of the Most High. He went to bed (Father Corker informs us) at eleven o'clock, and slept quietly and soundly till four in the morning, when his man-servant, who lay in the room with him, awakened him. Capt. Richardson, the keeper of Newgate, says— "When I came to him in the morning, he was newly awake, having slept all night without any disturbance; and when I told him to prepare for his execution, he received the message with all quietness of mind, and went to the sledge as unconcerned as if he had been going to a wedding." He passed down the stairs, and entered the press yard, into which he well knew the windows of Father Corker's cell looked down; and there, surely enough, behind the strong thick bars, were the faces of the priests all suffused with tears. "He turned about to our chamber windows," says Father Corker, "and with a pleasant aspect, and with elevated hands, gave us his benediction." Then he passed through the gateway into the street, and they saw him no more in this world. The hurdle was outside the gate, the pursuivants standing by. When the Primate reached the sledge, they assisted him on to it; then laying him down upon it, manacled him heavily. Then commenced that process of law called being drawn on a hurdle to Tyburn. Follow in imagination, if you can, that procession! See that aged man, stretched,

and manacled! They drag him along—there go the sheriffs, and there the files of halberdiers; and there the pursuivants march by his side. Crowds press round, and throng to see the holiday. See the windows in the streets—the old and the young, how they press! The hurdle is dragged along—the shout, and roar, and gibe, and curse, is on every lip; or it may be some heart not altogether stone softens as that aged face is seen stretched, looking upwards, as if appealing from man's injustice to God. Down to Holborn-hill they bring him, and up its slope; the fierce crowd gathering and swelling as they go. And now they leave the city behind, and pass into the green fields where Oxford street now stands. They reach the spot where now is Connaught-square, then called the Elms, Tyburn. The crowd still thickens, and press round. The halberdiers advance and clear the way. The hurdle stops. They loose the cords—he rises—Lo! Standing up against the dark green horizon of Hampstead-hill, that, crowned with woods, stretch far away behind—a crossbeam, with its loose cord dangling and swaying to and fro in the breeze. There stands the cart beneath it, and there are the privy councillors around. Who is the man who stands there, with knife all bare and sleeves tucked up? What mean the axe and short saw that lie upon the ground at his feet? And hark! that crackling noise heard in the pauses of the sullen moaning of the impatient crowd? And see!—a column of smoke that, till now unseen, rises behind—an open in the crowd as a turnkey passes with a bundle of faggots towards the spot. A fire!—it lights up, even in the broad day, the faces that throng around, like demons exulting. The old man is raised from the sledge—he totters—the cords and irons have pained his limbs. He is lifted on to the cart beneath the gibbet—the loose cord swinging and swaying by his face. He looks around him, his white hair streaming in the wind. Was ever fate so desolate! Led out like a sheep to the slaughter! Death—what matters it—but death there and thus? No eye of pity—no prayer—no tear. Had he but been granted to die in Ireland; but there—amidst strangers, and every stranger a foe—far, far from his native land—that land only the more endeared to him by its sufferings and sorrows.—Long, long, and silently he looks around the horizon, as if he fain would pierce through distance, and catch one glimpse of his beloved country, upon which to rivet his dying gaze!—He commences the last act of duty he owes to himself as a man and a minister of God—the last solemn assertion of his innocence. Once more, as at his trial, he makes—this time reading from a paper—an able and elaborate defence, and rends in fragments the web of perjuries brought against him. Then, giving a per- concerted signal to a disguised priest concealed in the crowd at the gallows foot, he kneels and recites the solemn *Miserere mei Deus*, and, meekly bowing his head, receives the absolution which the priest below, unseen and unnoticed in the crowd, administers. A few moments more and under that beam swings to and fro the form of the martyr—one stilled sob alone bursting forth amidst the solemn stillness of the moment, probably from some poor Irishman, who had stolen sorrowing amongst the crowd. But the law was not satisfied. The executioner lowers away the body—life still moving every limb.—He drags it to the tree, and now—ah, story of horror!—the bowels are ripped open, and, together with the heart, torn out and thrown on the blazing fire. Then the "quartering" is executed; the knife and axe sever first the head from the trunk, and next the limbs one by one. Even the ferocious mob is hushed into silence by the horrible sight, as the executioner, seizing the silvery hair, all dabbled now with blood, lifts up the head to view, and proclaims, "Behold the head of a traitor!" A murmur passes through the crowd, like the moaning night breeze in the forest. They turn homeward from the spot, while a pious hand collects the mangled relics that now are all that remain of Oliver Plunkett.

The rest may be briefly told. The body was begged from the king by Father Corker, and by his friends was buried in the churchyard of St. Giles's in the Fields, close by where five Catholic priests, similarly sacrificed, had been interred. A few years afterwards the relics were taken up and carried to the Benedictine Monastery, at Lambspring, in Germany, where a handsome monument was raised over them.—The head, however, was sent to Rome. There it remained highly venerated until 1708, when Archbishop M'Mahon—then in the Eternal City, and into whose possession the sacred relic had passed—was appointed to the Irish Primacy.—On his return to Ireland he brought it with him. In 1722 he founded a convent of Dominican nuns in Drogheda, Catherine Plunkett—it is believed a relative of the illustrious martyr—coming from Belgium to preside over it as prioress. In this convent Primate M'Mahon deposited the

head of his sainted predecessor, in a silver shrine, and there it remains to this day. Interesting as it would be, it would occupy too long to trace the fortunes, or rather the doom that seems to have fallen upon every one who had a hand in the Primate's death. The very day after his execution, Shaftesbury, the author and instigator of the whole Popish Plot, was seized and dragged ignominiously to the Tower, amidst the execrations of the very rabble he had taught to howl for Catholic blood. One by one God's vengeance followed and smote the guilty actors in the terrible tragedy. Years after the events I have described—old, bowed down, withered, emaciated, tortured by remorse—outcast from his Church and abhorred of men—one of them sought out Dr. Plunkett's successor, Dr. M'Mahon. As he approached the Archbishop he exclaimed in agony of soul—"Am I never to have peace? Is there no mercy for me?" The Prelate heard him in silence, then opened a glass-case, and in a deep and solemn voice said, "Look here, thou unfortunate wretch!" The head of his murdered Primate was before him—he recognised it at a glance, swooned, and fell senseless on the floor. This was the witness Duffy. The miserable man was reconciled to the Church, and, after a few years of penitential anguish of mind, passed before the judgment seat of God.

The reflections suggested by this chapter of Irish history are deep in their import; political, religious, and social. The period was a turning point in our history. I think it may be considered as the period at which the Irish Bishops seem to have, of necessity and from duty, recognised and accepted the English Sovereign as Sovereign of Ireland. Up to this time there was some vestige of sovereignty, or claim to it at least, amongst the native Irish authorities;—but, with the "Flight of the Earls," it fled. Henceforth the Bishops are found yielding obedience and allegiance to the sceptre of the Stuarts. There remained no other claimant, no other power to maintain, even in a rude way, the barriers of society, and the choice was between the government of the conquerors and utter anarchy. So, as far as I can gather from their actions, the Bishops, as I have said, of necessity and from duty—for the sake of their flocks, for the sake of social order and morality—"attorned" to the Stuarts; and henceforth sought to make the best of the circumstances. The people themselves seem so to have "attorned" too. When the next sword of Ireland was drawn, it was for the English King as King of Ireland.—The national feeling of our country seems to have gathered around the Stuarts; and he who studies the "Jacobite Relics of Ireland" will own how devotedly, yea, passionately, the Irish as well as the Scottish Gaels espoused the cause of that dynasty. The Stuarts were of their own race and of their own faith, which, perhaps, accounted largely for the manner in which the Irish clung to their fortunes. For full forty years—throughout the penal times—the oppressed and persecuted sang to each other in their songs, whispered to each other in secret, cheered each other with allegories of the return of "King James" or "Prince Charlie." In the "Blackbird"—the "Drimin du daelish"—the song of "Kathleen na Houlahan"—"Dark Rosaleen"—and a hundred other of the most beautiful and passionate bursts of national feeling, we have attested the strength of Ireland's devotion to the new dynasty of the old race and faith.—The religious considerations that arise from a study of the period of Plunkett's life are equally serious. They open up the records of a terrible persecution—of heroic fortitude and unconquered fidelity.—The condition of the Irish Catholics, from the date of Plunkett's exemption to 1829, affords a subject to which, I trust, a competent lecturer will yet direct his attention; so that full justice may be done to the endurance of a people who bore that long agony of slow martyrdom with a spirit worthy a nation of saints—worthy a nation that, in one century, bore such children as Hugh of Ulster, and O'Donnell, Owen Roe, and Patrick Sarsfield; Eber M'Mahon and Oliver Plunkett!

SOLENN OPENING OF THE NEW CHURCH, ST. MARY'S, DIOCESE OF WESTMINSTER, AT TURNHAM GREEN.

On last Tuesday the new church at Turnham Green (of which, as we recorded at the time, the foundation stone was laid last summer) was solemnly opened by His Eminence the Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster, assisted by a large number of the Clergy.

THE CARDINAL ARCHBISHOP OF WESTMINSTER'S SERMON.

Immediately after the Gospel Cardinal Wiseman advanced from his throne to the front of the altar and delivered a most eloquent and impressive sermon, which was listened to with the deepest attention by the large congregation. His Eminence took for his text the following passage from the Epistle of St. Paul to the

Ephesians being the verses 11—14 of the 4th chapter:—"And he gave some apostles, and some prophets, and other some evangelists, and other some pastors and doctors. For the perfecting of the saints for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Until we all meet into the unity of faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the age of the fullness of Christ: That henceforth we be no more children tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the wickedness of men, by cunning craftiness, by which they lie in wait to deceive."

Having read these verses His Eminence thus proceeded:—"The opening of a new church dedicated to the worship of God is an event which is calculated not only to bring us consolation but also instruction. It is consoling to observe rising in the midst of a growing population, that hallowed spot in which the Church of God administers the sacraments, and distributes those graces which have been appointed by God for the training of mankind to eternal life. And it is instructive also, for the event serves as a lesson which leads the mind to the contemplation of the solemn and momentous teachings of the Church. There are particular reasons too at the present period which give to this event additional interest, reasons arising from a consideration of the times in which we live. St. Paul in the verses I have read keeps a particular object in view. But before I enter upon the consideration of the subject of my discourse and before commenting on my text, it may be well to call your attention to a preceding passage. It must be admitted that whenever the Apostle repeats a point of doctrine almost in the same words, he must have it deeply at heart and his impression must be that its claim upon our attention is most important. I shall therefore ask you to go back to a chapter or two and we shall find the following passage in the second chapter of the same Epistle verses 19 to 22. "Now therefore you are no more strangers and foreigners; but you are fellow-citizens with the saints, and domestics of God. Built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone: In whom all the building, being framed together, groweth up into a holy temple in the Lord. In whom you also are built together into an habitation of God in the Spirit."

Here St. Paul represents the Church, to whose aggregated completeness he would direct the mind under the similitude of a house or a building, the Apostles being the, as it were, second founders, working upon the earlier rude and strong foundations which the Prophets laid of old, both being united from the beautiful order which the New Testament develops. This house thus built up rises to the roof, having the Saviour of the world for its corner-stone, in the main body of the edifice, and according to St. Paul "you are also built together" as it were like living stone, joined together by faith of Christ, who forms the support of the Church. Now, could any words more clearly convey the great doctrine of the necessity of unity of faith? If you were to break away the wall of this building in which we are to-day assembled, the edifice falls, for the integrity of the structure would have become impaired. But no power on earth can move the Rock of the Church, no influence can prevail against its power. The unity of a building depends on the unity of all its parts. The parts which are joined must be properly cemented. All must rest upon the same solid foundations, and thus will be acquired firmness and stability, so that all will be secure even to the highest pinnacle. According to St. Paul the Church has the one foundation and the one head, no part being separated. It would be very difficult to place in a stronger light than the Apostle does the necessity of unity to cause stability.—Let us go farther. The Church is no longer like a building which can be changed and altered. In a material building we may cautiously remove a portion to add a chapel, and all the time by care maintain the supports; but not so with the living body of the Church. Our Saviour is not a mere part of the Church. He is all. We are parts, and if we remain united to Him we live; but if we be cast off from Him then, like limbs torn from a tree, we die and wither away, for corruption attacks us, and once we separate from the Tree of Christ there is no more life in us. Unity is necessary to perseverance and persistence, and woe to us if we be lopped off from the Truth. The true Church has been compared to living stone, but that is a figure we cannot well comprehend. We understand by life that which pervades the living from the skin even into the innermost marrow. Life permeates; it breathes through the system; we feel its influence; it is entire. You know, my brethren, the beautiful and touching prayer, uttered by Our Lord just before His Passion, when He prayed that He and the Father were one by the unchangeable bond of eternal love; so

that those whom He loved should also be one in the Father and in Him. He is our Head and the Head acts on the entire system. This is the true proof of that unity which brings all the parts together in harmony and obedience. He who is truth itself will lead us and we may safely follow. St. Paul in summing up his teaching on the subject of unity makes use of a striking beautiful expression. After having spoken of our being built up into the habitation of God, he says that the Lord gave "Apostles and Prophets;" thus teaching that the first and earliest foundations of the Church had to be continued. Thus we were to make our way through the world, not by following the bent of our own inclinations, but by attending to 'Apostles, Prophets, Doctors, and Evangelists.' Now, these doctors, or teachers, were intended to be shepherds. It was to be their privilege to instruct, and the flock were to learn. It would be folly to suppose that there was to be no flock. The shepherds are responsible for the flock, for the Lord and Master shall come and say, 'Where is that sheep I gave to your care? Have you followed it into the desert when it strayed, even as I would, and when found have you carried it home?' The duty is reciprocal. The shepherds must guide and the sheep must obey, for there is a mutual responsibility.

But the shepherds must give correct guidance. The teachers must teach true doctrine. What is the use of teachers who teach error? We can trace in our Church from the Apostles down an unbroken list of Pastors. Truth and the soundest morality are thus obtained. Catholics have the one faith throughout all time and all countries. It is not one faith in Rome and another in London, one in Madrid and another in China, one in Australia and another in Mexico but in every place one and the same faith, and thus unity is secured, that unity of faith which consists of the true knowledge of the teachings of God. The Gospels tell us that Our Lord passed from earth in the full maturity of his powers. Speaking humanly, He was of that age when the body is still active and supple and when the mind is experienced. Thus the Church knows no decrepitude, no failure, no tottering, no weakness of limb, none of those ailments which break up the health. Of course the Saviour, if He pleased, could have lived on without change but I speak now of His humanity, and as man we find that he chose for his death the culminating period of life, as it is symbolized that the Church He left started on her career in perfection. The true Christian, though aged, may, like Zacharias and Elizabeth, walk with God by His Grace. Do all reach this happiness?—Would to God it were so. Those who are not fed on truth can never attain to it. They never come to the fulness of maturity, but are blown about by every wind of doctrine. Let us take a familiar illustration. Your have sometimes seen children in innocent play get into a boat which happens to be on the shore. They do not observe the rising of the waters, but they play till they are carried away. The moorings have snapped. The boat is loose on the ocean.—The children cannot steer. They have no compass, and would not understand it if they had.—They have no power over the rudder, and their little skill is at the mercy of winds and waves.—Many may see from the shore and feel compassion for them, and wonder how far they will be carried out, and while the gazers are pondering the children are hurried off to destruction. This comes from not having experienced guidance.—Thus those are lost who rely on the human guidance of their own reason in things Divine, and trust to inadequate resources. Is this the case with us Catholics? No. The true Catholic can have no misgivings. He knows that he is safe in the bosom of his Church, and that he, though individually humble, is a portion of the body of the Lord. He does not harbour any doubts.

Let us look around, and must it not strike us that St. Paul, in referring to those who are blown about by every wind of doctrine, has accurately described a state of things which we behold outside the Catholic Church? I do not desire to enter into controversial arguments, but I feel bound to speak out at a time when there may be danger lest error might, under strange pretences, find its way to the weaker members of my flock, and that some might not have the firmness to assert their true dignity as Catholics. Look therefore around at the Protestant Church in this land. See how for the last five or six years it has been tossed to and fro. It is a bark, not like that of Peter, where the Saviour slept, but from which, when it pleased Him to awake, He calmed the angry ocean; but a frail boat, whose pistons know not the path to harbour. Ten or fifteen years ago, it was a cardinal point that Baptismal Regeneration was a settled part of Protestant faith. It is not so now. Many who cherished that doctrine fled from Protestantism and took refuge with us; but a large number remained, and silently allowed a lay tribunal to