

## THE IRISH PEASANTRY.

Lecture by Mr. Justin McCarthy.

Mr. Justin McCarthy, M.P., recently delivered a most instructive address on "The Irish Peasantry," under the auspices of the Irish Literary Society. The attendance was large and the lecturer unfolded a most interesting story in his own inimitable style.

Mr. McCarthy said that his recollections—for his remarks were only recollection of years ago—would be mainly confined to the Irish peasantry of the South and West of Ireland. The Irish peasant always impressed him as being the distinct descendant of some race which had lived in a southern climate and under a southern sun. The Irish peasantry seemed to be a race transferred from some genial and sunny clime, and dropped down by some strange chance on an island in the North Atlantic Ocean, on which they had settled and to which they had clung and cleaved, and the Irish of his (the lecturer's) time delighted in open air amusements, loved music and the joy of the dance as did the people who lived in sunny climes, where there was no adverse weather to interfere with these amusements, and he therefore believed that the Irish peasant was descended from a sunny race whose every pore was alive to the influence of mild weather, the delight of music and the joy of the dance. He did not know whether the dance was as general in Ireland now as it was in his early days; but certainly no Neapolitan could have been more fond of the fascination of the dance than was the Irish peasant, under all his troubles and grinding poverty. He hoped it was so still to-day, and that the Irish peasants would keep up that love of music and delight in the dance which they displayed years ago.

One characteristic of the Irish peasant which was unlike that possessed by any southern race was his extreme amount of patience, and the quiet, ungrudging, unmurmuring patience with which he took every trouble in life. Over and over again he (the lecturer) had met in Ireland an old woman who seemed to him to have led a life of utter poverty and misery; but yet, if spoken to, she had nothing to say but—"The Lord has been very good to us always!" Again, if an Irish peasant was met on a day when the wind was screaming and the rain was falling in drenching showers, he would simply remark, "A fine, soft day, your honor!" If the day were bitterly cold it was sure to be good for some plant or animal, and if a day were so extremely bad that nothing good could be said of it, the Irish peasant would say, "Sure it is the will of God, and that is enough for us."

An English lady once told him that all the peasants that she met in Ireland on a visit there appeared to be "born gentlemen," they were so courteous, polite and considerate. There was another peculiarity of the Irish peasant, that he hoped remained still, despite railways, telegraphs, telephones, evening papers and other delights of civilization. The Irish peasant half lived in the supernatural. It was said of Joan of Arc that the kingdom of ghosts was easily opened for her—that is, she could with ease see something that was not of our earth. The Irish peasants (in his time at all events) were in very much that mood of mind and frame of temperament. They then believed as fully in the supernatural as the peasants of other countries believed in the cows and the horses and the pigs. The "fairies" and the "ghosts" lived for them; and the angels were alive for them, and they heard the wail of the "Banshee." These things lifted them above the mere materialistic conditions of life, and made them into unconscious poets. He did not know whether the Irish peasants believed in the evil of having thirteen at dinner, but they certainly believed in what he might call the more poetic superstitions, and of these they had the keenest sense. The belief in the "Banshee" existed in his day in Ireland. He did not know whether it existed now. He rather hoped it did. He had an affection for the "Banshee." The McCarthy family had retained theirs when they did not retain anything else. In her they had a property which could not be appraised in any court of law. Years ago a member of the McCarthy clan died in a Liverpool hospital, from the effects of an accident, and the nurses declared that his death was accompanied

by a wailing sound which disturbed the dying man. That he knew to be a fact, and at least it was a very remarkable coincidence.

Some of the superstitions of the Irish peasantry were ridiculous, such as the idea that there was no good making a journey or an expedition if one met a red-headed woman at the outset; but the mass of them were elevating and refined. They formed a vein of poetry in the nature of the peasantry just as similar ideas did in the nature of the ancient Greeks. He did not know whether such noble feelings could endure against the rough feelings of the present world; but he did declare that if civilization was going to banish the "fairies" from the paths and valleys, to get rid of the "Banshee," and to suppress all the other forms that belonged to what was called superstition, he for himself would rather that the Irish peasantry did not get wise all at once.

Another characteristic of the Irish peasant was that he clung to his home with passionate devotion. When, however, he was compelled to emigrate, he could be traced all over the world. In every nook and corner of the United States and Canada there were to be found men who, springing from the Irish peasant class, who had risen to positions of independence, comfort and honor. Of South America the same could be said, notwithstanding that there Irishmen had to contend against the obstruction of a language of which they knew absolutely nothing when they landed. It was a curious paradox that, up to a certain point, it appeared almost impossible to remove an Irishman from his own soil. When, however, conditions forced him, he became enterprising and pushing, and moved from place to place seeking where he had best to settle; and, when he did settle, his thoughts ever turned back to the land he had left. Often in New York and Boston he (the lecturer) had noticed little groups of Irish people sitting outside their doors, on a summer's evening, and invariably their talk was on the Old Country. On board a steamer in the Bay of New York he heard an Irishman, after listening to anecdotes of Ireland, exclaim, "God be with those dear old days in Ireland!" He, too, would say—God be with those dear old days when the Irish peasant was still young and among the best; when there was impassioned love for Ireland, that love for music and the dance, and he would even say that love for the fairies and the ghosts and the "Banshees," and all the other strange, mysterious beings who then peopled the hills and valleys, and made, if there was nothing else to make it, the poetry of the peasantry of Ireland (prolonged applause).

A vote of thanks to Mr. McCarthy, proposed by Mr. Martin McDermott, seconded by Mr. Flannery and supported by Rev. W. Pepper of New York, Mr. White and Mr. W. P. Ryan, was carried with acclamation.

In replying, Mr. McCarthy referred to the necessity of preserving and extending the knowledge of the Irish language. —*The Monitor.*

## RELIGIOUS NEWS.

New Jersey Catholics are going to erect a monument to Father Corrigan's memory.

Four nuns at the Convent of St. Joseph, Port of Spain, Trinidad, died in January of fever.

The Congregation of Rites has expressly prohibited the liturgical celebration of the birthday of any saint except of the Blessed Virgin and St. John the Baptist.

Over 7,000 men and women made the mission recently concluded at the Church of St. Francis de Sales, Roxbury, by the Redemptorist Fathers McInerney, Crosby and Grimes.

Fifteen thousand Spaniards have already enrolled themselves for the pilgrimage which is being organized by the Archbishop of Valencia and which will visit Rome early in April.

The Pope has accorded an extraordinary jubilee to France, extending from Easter to Christmas. The occasion of the jubilee is the fifteenth century of the baptism of Clovis, King of the Franks.

The great Lenten mission in London has been very successful. It is the largest general mission of the Catholic Church ever held in the English Metro-

polis. No less than 140 clergymen are engaged in conducting it, and they are daily preaching in sixty-eight churches. Cardinal Vaughan made special reference to the mission in his Lenten pastoral, and he is taking a deep personal interest in the work.

The Christian Brothers in Paris have opened a restaurant for their former pupils and for workmen, where good, wholesome food may be bought at moderate prices, and where young people will find themselves in none but honest and respectable company.

Twenty-three converts to the Catholic faith were received into the Church recently as a result of a mission of one week given to the men in St. Patrick's Cathedral, Fifth avenue, New York. A more remarkable result followed a recent mission in the Church of St. Francis Xavier in West Sixteenth street, where the number of converts was over seventy.

## ROSEBERRY AT EDINBURGH.

EXPLAINS HIS PREVIOUS REMARKS.

LONDON, March 19.—Speaking at Edinburgh on Saturday to 20,000 enthusiastic Liberals, Lord Rosebery ventured the following explanation of his Home Rule utterances in the Lords on March 13 at the opening of Parliament: "When I spoke in the House of Lords, I declared with frankness and perspicuity, my attitude on Home Rule. Unfortunately, the interpretation my opponents put upon my words was not what I meant when I uttered them in the House of Lords. If rightly interpreted my words must have carried the conviction to the heart of England that what I said was a truism, although not at all in the sense in which the Unionists interpreted the words. The advocates of Home Rule know that if they were to wait for the predominant vote of England, they might never carry anything. The present Government have carried the Parish Councils bill for England with the Irish vote. It is not necessary to demand an English majority to carry a Home Rule bill, or to beat the English vote in order to convince the English people of the justice of Irish Home Rule." The situation to which he had referred, he continued, was a familiar one. The House of Lords, for instance, might be said to have England at its back, yet in the ordinary circles of the country just now the people had risen, ten to one, against the Upper Chamber. He said his remarks had been misinterpreted to make a rupture between the Irish and the Liberals. The Times, he said, was the leader in the movement. Lord Rosebery concluded by promising adherence to the Gladstonian Home Rule idea; disestablishment in Wales and Scotland; a day to be granted to discussing the eight hour bill and its passage, if possible, and reforms to maintain the supremacy of the navy. He also pointed out the dangers of an hereditary chamber.

In addressing meetings held on Saturday in honor of St. Patrick, John Dillon, Edward Blake and Michael Davitt expressed themselves as perfectly satisfied with Lord Rosebery's declaration in Edinburgh, concerning his attitude to Home Rule. Timothy Healy said he was glad that Lord Rosebery had withdrawn his parliamentary statement. "If the Parnellites would only join us," he added, "it would be better than any number of any English declarations."

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*Henry Leblond*  
Postmaster of Aldon, Perry Co., Tenn.

## APPEAL FOR FAIR PLAY.

MR. GLADSTONE WRITES A LETTER TO SCOTCH LIBERALS.

LONDON, March 21.—Mr. Gladstone, in writing to Mr. John Cowan, Chairman of the Midlothian Liberals, from Brighton, last Saturday, in reply to an address of the Edinburgh Liberals, after thanking them says:

"I consider my career as beginning with the Reform Act of 1832, which for England meant improvement and extension and for Scotland political birth. Three score years later they offered us pictures which the historian will recognize. The great legislative and administrative period—perhaps the greatest in our annals—would be the story of emancipation, political, social, moral and intellectual. Almost numberless have been the causes which have been brought to issue in that period and in every instance I rejoice to think that Scotland has done battle royal for the right. Another period opens; a period which has possibly yet greater moral dangers and certainly a great ordeal for those classes which are now becoming largely conscious of their power but have never hitherto been subjected to its deteriorating influence. This influence has been kept to the classes above them because they were the sole possessors of this power. Now is the time of every true friend of this country to remind the masses that they owe their present political elevation to no principles less broad and noble than these: Love of liberty for all without distinction of classes, creed or country, and resolute preference for the interests of the whole people of narrow scope.

"I am sanguine that the Scotch will show the Irish a sense of duty no less lofty than in the past; I do not doubt the sufficiency of her influence and power to obtain without serious difficulty everything needful to satisfy her special wants.

"For myself I need say little more than that I carry with me out of office the political opinions I professed in it. It is indeed a source of satisfaction to me that after 60 years of a highly contentious life, I can be honorably relieved of some of that active participation in the political conflict of which I have had so full a share. But I recognize the great and growing demand of these countries for satisfying their legislative wants. I lament that the discrepancy of sentiment between the two houses of Parliament has been revived to such an extent as to raise a question between the chamber responsible and the chamber totally irresponsible to the nation, and raise it in such a form as will demand at no distant day a conclusive judgment from the constituencies.

"I feel deeply convinced that until the first demands of Ireland are satisfied as the House of Commons tried to satisfy them, neither will the legislative wants of any portion of the United Kingdom be adequately met, nor will the Empire attain the maximum of its union and power, nor British honor be effectually cleared of the deepest historic stain ever attached to it."

Dr. Nethercliffe's examination confirmed the reports which have been in circulation of late that Mr. Gladstone had a cataract on each eye. The oculist informed the ex-Premier that while the cataracts might have the effect to deprive him of his sight entirely before they were in condition to be operated upon, it would not increase the danger attending their removal nor impair the chances of the full restoration of his sight. The operation will be performed in about three months.

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