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# The True Witness

AND POLITICAL CHRONICLE

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## BIANCONI RECALLED.

The Career of a Remarkable Italian-Irishman of the Last Century Brought to Mind.

The fact that the new Lord Mayor of Dublin is named Nannetti, and that he is the son of an Italian father, recalls to mind a man of Italian birth who, seventy or eighty years ago, had a most remarkable career in Ireland, rising by his own unaided efforts from the lowest circumstances to a place of honor and distinction in his adopted country. In America, the self-made man is a commonplace of our social and industrial life. On every hand may be seen examples of the axiom that "America spells opportunity." But no time or country has been devoid of illustrations of what hard work and perseverance can do in lifting out of obscurity and poverty the man who is willing to pay the price of success. Ireland is the last country in the world one would think of as offering a field for ambitious youth, yet Ireland was the scene of the extraordinary rise of Charles Bianconi.

Charles Bianconi landed in Dublin at the age of sixteen in the summer of 1802. He came from near Corno, in Italy, was the son of respectable parents, but, because of a dislike for study and a certain strain of wildness in his nature, he was bound apprentice to one Andrea Faroni, a dealer in prints, barometers, etc. This man got a goodly sum for the maintenance of young Bianconi, and it was stipulated that the lad should be brought to England, but, instead of going to London, Faroni went to Dublin. He had three other boys besides Bianconi "bound out" to him in similar fashion. Landed in Dublin, Faroni at once set to work making small leaden picture frames. He had brought from Italy some cheap religious pictures. These he fixed in the frames, "and then," says Bianconi himself, "all was ready for what seemed a singular operation. We were to sell those for him in this strange land, whose language we did not know. He pushed us into the street, however, and I can never forget the ludicrous figure I cut there with some of those things in my hands saying 'buy,' to everyone I met. When asked the price I could only point to my fingers for the number of pence I wanted. I soon, however, picked up a little English, and I was then sent off into the country every Monday morning with two pounds' worth of these pictures and four pence pocket money, understanding that I was to return the Saturday evening following.

It should be borne in mind what kind of an Ireland it was this young Italian boy was traversing at that time. The penal laws were still in full force. The bloody rebellion of '98 was only four years suppressed, and echoes of it still lingered in many places. The infamous Act of Union, which the Irish party at present in the House of Commons are trying to have repealed, had just been passed. Robert Emmet's daring attempt at insurrection in Dublin was still in the seeds of time. Napoleon Bonaparte was at the height of his power, and threatening to invade England. On all sides was a disturbed state of public feeling. This is well shown by Bianconi's autobiography, which records:

"In this way I traversed all the County Dublin and went even as far as Wexford and Waterford. In Waterford I found the demand for my small prints very considerable; but besides the Scriptural pieces I had portraits of the royal family, of Bonaparte, etc. Once in the Passage, a small place south of Waterford, I was much surprised to find myself arrested by order of an over-loyal magistrate for the treasonable act of selling Bonaparte's likeness. I was kept all night perishing in the guard room, but in the morning I was set at liberty."

When young Bianconi's eighteen months' time was up his master offered to send him home, but the youth would not think of such a thing. Instead he set out selling prints on his own account. He worked hard, but, he says, "I felt netter discouragement nor fatigue, for I felt that I had set to work to be a great man."

And a great man indeed he became,

writes. "They are advanced progressively according to their respective merits, and as opportunity offers. In case of old age or accident they are pensioned off on full wages, and only their own willful, improper conduct can deprive them of this reward. As to the popularity of my service, I never yet did an act of generosity or common justice, publicly or privately, that I was not met by manifold reciprocity. . . I do not treat my men as slaves, but as fellow-citizens, differing from me only in gradation. I make them feel that in doing their work they confer on me a greater benefit than I do on them by payment of wages.

In 1844 Clonmel elected Bianconi mayor—the first Catholic mayor for generations. The Tories whose power was thus overthrown were furious and the old corporation even made away with the official paraphernalia, so the new mayor had to buy his own chain of office. His mayoralty was a great success. Whatever he undertook to do he did it efficiently. He was not a mayor for revenue only. In fact, he took no salary for his years of office, but sent the money to be divided among the poor schools of the town.

One of Bianconi's dearest friends was the renowned Daniel O'Connell, who sent him once a characteristic piece of advice. As Mayor of Clonmel, Bianconi had to sit on the bench as a magistrate and hear and decide petty cases. He was naturally anxious that his legal decisions should be really legal. He wrote to O'Connell for advice, and the immortal Dan, who could drive a coach-and-four through the most drastic Act of Parliament, replied: "My dear Mayor—If you wish to discharge the duties of the mayoralty with perfect satisfaction act upon your own common sense, and do not look into any law-book!"

"Faithfully yours,  
 "DANIEL O'CONNELL."

But to the longest and busiest life there comes an end, and the unwearied brain of Bianconi, and the tireless heart at last grew weary and tired, and in the summer of 1875 the great Italian-Irishman passed away from the scene of his many labors to receive the reward of a life spent in doing good to his fellow-men. He should never be forgotten by the country of his adoption, for though he was no political leader, he, in his own way, strove to better the condition of Ireland and her people; and the Irishmen of to-day who are protesting against the emigration of Irish boys to this country may well use, as an argument in favor of Ireland as a field for ambitious youths, the remarkable career of Charles Bianconi.

## O'CONNELL AND DISRAELI.

The Latter Termed a Descendant of the Impenitent Thief.

"Quarrels of Famous Men," is the subject of a series of articles in the *Champlain Educator*. One of the series is an article depicting the famous quarrel between Daniel O'Connell and Benjamin Disraeli. Disraeli was the instigator of this quarrel. When he first entered political life he posed as a Radical, and was befriended and aided by O'Connell. Subsequently, to further his political fortunes, he went over to the Tories.

It was while contesting the Taunton seat as a Tory in 1835 that Disraeli attacked O'Connell. He referred to O'Connell as a "traitor," an "incendiary" and spoke of the Whigs "grasping the bloody hand of O'Connell." The attack was wanton and unwarranted. In a speech at a Trades Union meeting in Dublin O'Connell took occasion to revert to the incident, and in a sudden scathing arraignment, that for lacerating invective has probably never been equalled in the annals of polemics, he administered a castigation that stung his rash antagonist into fury and overwhelmed him with a roar of ridicule. In his opening words he referred to how he had sided with Disraeli, in 1831, when the latter contested his first seat.

"At Taunton this miscreant had the audacity to style me an incendiary. Why, I was a greater incendiary in 1831 than I am at present, if I ever were one; and if I am he is doubly so for having employed

## The Work of The Irish Party.

(From the London Tablet.)

Whatever chances now, and even if the stryggue proves after all to have been in vain, English Catholics owe a debt of gratitude to their Irish comrades, which surely will not easily be forgotten. On Monday the Bill enters upon its Committee stage. The frontal attack has failed all along the line, and the Bill has now to be fought clause by clause. Here, too, the Irish Parliamentary Party has served us well, and with admirable promptitude has already tabled a series of amendments in defence of the Catholic schools. And, so far, these amendments hold the field. Before passing judgment upon them we must come to some conclusion as to what sort of amendments we expect and want. Do we want amendments which, if they could be carried, would give us the ideal school or amendments which are the best possible under existing Parliamentary conditions? For instance, it would be easy to draft paper amendments which would put our schools in a better position even than that which they enjoy under the Act of 1902. That would be as easy as it would be futile. Those are not the lines upon which the Irish Parliamentary Party has elected to work. Their amendments are designed to secure for the Catholic schools the best terms that are conceivable, having regard to the present distribution of parties in the House of Commons. In other words, the terms they propose are not the best that might be invented, but the best that, in the judgment of the Irish members, have any chance of being accepted. That being premised, let us briefly consider them. Mr. Redmond proposes to make Clause 4 mandatory. We have insisted from the first that this clause even if made compulsory, would be useless to Catholics unless we could be certain of having Catholic teachers in Catholic schools all the time. That granted, Mr. Redmond's amendment becomes of enormous importance, securing as it would in most urban areas every day, for Catholic children in Catholic schools, definite Catholic instruction which might be given by the ordinary school staff. Sir Thomas Edmondson would carry this concession further by excising the words "in an urban area." The omission of these words would make the "extended facilities" clause applicable to the rural as well as urban schools, and so include most of the 230 Catholic schools which would otherwise be shut out. Mr. Power moves an amendment which would define a homogeneous school one in which three-fourths instead of four-fifths of the children are of one faith. This again would widen the application of Clause 4, whether in town or country. Mr. T. P. O'Connor proposes to give stability to the new system by enacting that the extended facilities once secured shall be enjoyed for a period of five years. All this is excellent, and, we believe, possible as well as excellent, but the value of these preliminary amendments must stand or fall with that which stands in the name of Mr. Dillon. He proposes that in schools to which the extended facilities clause is applicable the parents of the children shall be at liberty to elect a committee of four persons without whose concurrence no teacher shall be appointed. In that way the danger of a Protestant teacher being appointed to a Catholic school would be fairly met. But would it not be possible to go one step further and give to such a committee the right of recommending the teacher to the local authority. Otherwise it might be difficult for such a committee to resist an unfair discrimination, on the part of the appointing authority, against nuns as teachers. If the nomination of the teachers in homogeneous Catholic schools can be left to a committee chosen by the parents of the children, if a homogeneous school be defined as one having three-fourths instead of four-fifths of the children of one faith, and if the limitation to urban areas is abolished, it seems to us quite possible that a working arrangement may, in spite of all that has passed, be devised between the Government and the Catholic Church in this country.

## INFAMOUS INFIDELS.

The Catholic Times, of Liverpool, directs attention to a remarkable statement prepared by M. J. K. Huysmans, the eminent author of "La Cathedrale," in which he sums up the extraordinary number of acts of violence committed against the Catholic Church in France within the past fifteen years. Since 1900 some six hundred churches in various parts of France have been sacked by ruffians, only a very few of whom have been captured. In 1894 thirty-two churches in the department of the Sarthe were sacked in a few days, and many works of art were carried off. In the neighborhood of Lille, in the autumn of last year, twenty-two wayside crosses were overthrown, and some of them so completely defaced that it was impossible to replace them. At Dinan, in September, 1904, the crucifixes which had been taken from the schools were made into a heap in the centre of the principal school of the town, and, after being grossly insulted by the professors of the school, who took their pupils up and ordered them to spit on the crucifixes, they were burnt. M. de Lanessan, whom the English press treats as a serious person, in one of his speeches, delivered on June 18, 1905, M. Huysmans points out, declared that "the danger is not clericalism, but God Himself, who is absolutely infamous." M. Aristide Briand, in a speech delivered at Poitiers in the beginning of the present year, said: "We have driven God (Nous avons chassé Dieu) out of the army, the navy, the schools, the hospitals, the madhouses, the asylums, the law courts, the wayside, and now we must kick Him out of the State altogether. He is infamous; even more so than Christ." These are a few samples of what is going on in France at the hands of a government which the secular papers constantly praise as one of the strongest France has ever known. Surely it is ridiculous to claim to be a sincere friend of Christianity and at the same time to praise such anti-Christians as M. Combes and M. Sarrien. The reading public should at least be informed of the real sentiments of these men who are assailing the Catholic Church in France.

## Villa Maria Alumnae of the United States.

On Saturday afternoon, May 26, the Villa Maria Alumnae of the Congregation de Notre Dame enjoyed their first annual luncheon at the Academy of the Blessed Sacrament, Stapleton, Staten Island, N.Y. Covers were laid for eighty-five, and it was indeed a happy meeting for the many former pupils of Monklands, Montreal. We indulged in reminiscences and lived once again the pristine days of "Auld Lang Syne." Many rich flowers garnished the rooms and tables, with here and there festoons of baby-blue and white ribbon, the colors of our Alma Mater, while the handsome gowns of the young matrons and girls gave untold piquancy to the scene.

The sail down New York Bay had lent piquancy to our appetites, and all did full justice to a well chosen menu. The entertainment committee, Mrs. Thomas J. Ryan, chairman, certainly spared no pains in the preparation of the feast, and their efforts won the hearty plaudits of all whom fortune favored with a day which, in its associations, recalled many episodes of the happy past, a day with those whose presence gave double pleasure; for, while their personalities were enjoyed, at the moment they recalled many old teachers who had passed to the great beyond, but still live in memory.

After the luncheon the following programme was laudably rendered and heartily appreciated:

1. Piano Solo—Miss Ruth Ryan
2. Recitation—Miss Barnette
3. Vocal solo—Miss Florence Lowery
4. Duet—Piano and violin—Mrs. A. McCahill, Miss McCahill.
5. Recitation—Miss Olla de Stephano
6. Song, "My Rosary,"—Miss Sadie Dempsey.
7. Recitation—Miss Morton.
8. Song—Miss Liebnert.
9. Song, Piano and violin—Mrs. A. McCahill, Miss McCahill.

General accompanist, Miss Katherine Harrington. After a few well-chosen words of thanks from the President, Mrs. Guilfoyle, to the hostess of the hour, the Rev. Mother St. Scholastica, and the other religious, as well as to the committee in charge, we wended our way homeward, each heart filled with loving thoughts, and wishing a long and prosperous life to our alumnae and the dear religious of the Congregation. The following are the officers for the present year: Honorary President, Rev. Mother St. Scholastica; President, Mrs. John Guilfoyle; Vice-President, Miss A. Louise Coghlan; Secretary, Miss Elizabeth Lenahan; Assistant Secretary, Mrs. Edward Kilroe; Treasurer, Miss Mary A. Carroll; Assistant Treasurer, Miss Grace Morton.

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 The Solicitor-General was unable to accede to a suggestion in the House of Commons a few days ago, that he would consider the propriety of bringing the divorce law of England into conformity with that of Scotland and other civilized countries. Whereupon Mr. W. Redmond queried, amid laughter—"Is the gentleman aware that in the most civilized country in the world—Ireland—there is no divorce?"

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