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FATHER BURKE'S LECTURE

"Genius and Character of the Irish People."

(From the N. Y. Irish American.)

On Sunday, September 22nd, the Rev. Father Burke delivered the following lecture, in the Coliseum, Boston, before an audience of 40,000 persons. He said:—
It is usual for one in my position to address himself to the ladies and gentlemen. If you will allow me to change the programme I will address myself on this occasion to Irishmen and Irishwomen; Irish ladies and gentlemen.
On a certain remarkable occasion, the Corporation of Limerick were divided upon the question of making a Lord Mayor of the city. They could not elect this man or that; and, at last, they agreed that they would elect, as Lord Mayor of the city, the first man that came in through the gates of the city on a certain morning. The man who approached the city walls the first, on that morning, was a poor fellow with a load of brooms on his shoulders, who came from the wood of Cratloe. His name was Adam Sargent. The moment he arrived in the city they made him Lord Mayor.
[Here the great crowd in the back gallery of the Coliseum made a rush for the front seats. The noise was so great that Father Burke could not proceed, but stopped and laughed at the precipitous rush and tumble of the eager multitude that made for the best places like a flock of sheep after a bushel of salt. When quiet had been partially restored, Father Burke proceeded.]
They took the poor broom-seller, and they put him on the bench, with all his grand robes, as Lord Mayor. Not returning in the evening, his mother missed him; and she came to inquire what was the matter. She went into the city; and after looking for him for two days she found him in the Court House, on the bench, with all the magistrates about him. When she came into the court and looked at her boy she said:—"Arrah, Adam, don't you know me?" And Adam said:—"Arrah, mother, I don't know myself!" (Laughter.) I feel myself precisely in the same position. I have been speaking to my countrymen in Ireland, I have been speaking to my countrymen since I came to America; and all I can say is that, if the poor old woman in Galway that calls me her son were here to-day, to see me surrounded by this vast, intelligent, and magnificent assembly of my countrymen, she might stand there at the foot of the platform and say:—"Father Tom, jewel, don't you know me?" And all that I could say is—"Mother dear, but I don't know myself!" (Great laughter.)
Men of Ireland—men of Irish blood,—men of the Irish race, I, an Irish priest, am come here to speak to you of "The Genius and the Character of the Irish People." (Applause.) I am come to speak to you of the history of our nation, and our honorable race. I am not ashamed of the history of my people. (Cheers.) I am not ashamed of my country. I say, taking all for all, that it is the grandest country, and the most glorious race of which the genius of history can bear record. (Great applause.)
There are two elements that, constitute the

character and the genius of every people.—These two elements are—the religion of the people, and their government. I need not tell you that, of all the influences that can be brought to bear upon any man, or upon any nation, the most powerful is the influence of their religion. If that religion be from God, it will make a God-like people. If that religion be from heaven, it will make a heavenly people. If that religion be noble, it will make a noble people.
Side by side with their religion comes the form or system of government under which they live. If that government be just and fair, and mild and beneficent, it will make a noble people. If that government be the government of the people,—governing themselves as glorious America does to-day,—it will make every man in the land a lover of his government,—a lover of the land, and a lover of the institutions under which he lives. (Applause.) But if that government be a foreign government,—the government of a foreign race,—it will make an alienated people. If that government be an unjust and tyrannical government, it will make a rebellious and revolutionary people. If that government be a mere travesty or caricature of law it will make a false-hearted and a bad people.
Now, when I come to speak of the genius and the character of my fellow-countrymen, I am reminded that, in the character of every people on the face of the earth, there is light and shade: There is the bright side and a dark side; there is the sunshine and the shadow. There is the side which we love to contemplate: the side in which the virtues of the people shine out; the side which the better part of their nature governs. And there is also the bad side; the side that we are ashamed to look upon; the side, the contemplation of which makes a blush rise to the cheek of every lover of the land. And so there are lights and shades in the character and in the genius of our Irish people. As it is in nature, this world, in all its beauty, is made up of light and shade.
[Here, again, the confusion caused by the people crowding up through the aisles and corridors, in their efforts to get nearer, caused Father Burke to pause. A glass of water was handed to him; he took it, and making a temperance bow to the vast assemblage, drank to the health of his audience. This act of courtesy occasioned much laughter and loud applause. Father Burke then resumed: ]
My friends, there is no sunshine without shadow: there is no light perceptible to the eye of man unless that light bring out all that is fair and beautiful, whilst at the same time it casts its shadows over the dark places. I have said that in the order of nature, and in the beauty of God's creation here below, there is light and shade. But there is this distinction to be made; the light comes from Heaven—from the sun rolling in its splendor over the clouds above us; the shadow comes from the earth; from the clouds that are near the world; from the deep forest glade; from the overhanging mountains;—from these comes the shadow, but the light comes from Heaven.—So, in like manner, in the character and in the genius of our Irish people there are both light and shade. There is the bright side, the beautiful side, and the glorious side, to contemplate; and there is also the dark side, but with this difference, that the lightsome, the beautiful side of Irish genius and character is derived from above—from Heaven—from God—from the high source of Irish faith; whilst the black side of our character, the dark and the gloomy shade, comes from below; from the mis-government of those who ruled us; from the treachery, the depravity and the wickedness of man.
And, now, so much being said, let us approach the great subject of the genius and the character of the Irish people.
In speaking to you, my friends, on this subject, I am forcibly reminded that the character and genius of every people are formed by their history. In going back to the history of Ireland, I am obliged to travel nearly two thousand years in order to come to the cradle of my race. I am obliged to go back to the day when Patrick, Ireland's Apostle, preached to the Irish race, and in the Irish language, the name and the glory of Jesus Christ and of His Virgin Mother. And coming down through that mournful and chequered history, I find that our people have been formed in their national character and genius, first of all by the faith which Patrick taught them: and, secondly, by the form of government under which they live.
What is the first grand feature of the Irish genius and the Irish character? It is this: that, having once received the Catholic faith from Saint Patrick, Ireland has clung to it with a fidelity surpassing that of all other peoples. She has known how to suffer and to die; but Ireland's people have never learned to relinquish or to abandon the faith of their fathers. (Immense applause.) They received that faith

from the glorious Apostle whom God and Rome sent to them, early in the fifth century; they struggled for that faith during three hundred years, against all the power of the North—unconquered and unconquerable—when the Danes endeavored to wrest from Ireland her Christian faith, and to force her back into the darkness of Pagan infidelity. They have struggled for that faith during three hundred years of English tyranny and English penal law. They have suffered for that faith loss of property, loss of nationality, loss of life. But Ireland, glorious Ireland, has never relinquished the faith which she received; and she is as Catholic to-day as in the day when she bowed her virgin head before St. Patrick, to receive from him the regenerating waters of baptism. (Renewed and enthusiastic cheering.)
This, I say, is the first beautiful light in the character and the genius of the people of Ireland. Every other nation of whom we read, received that faith slowly and reluctantly. Every other nation, of whom we read, demanded of their apostle the seal of his blood, to ratify the truth which he taught them. Ireland alone, amongst all the nations of the earth, received that faith willingly; took it joyfully; put it into the hearts and into the blood of her children; and never ceased her Apostle one tear of sorrow, nor one drop of his blood. (Applause.) More than this; every nation on the face of the earth has, at some time or other, been misled into some form of heresy. Some doctrine was disputed; some discipline was denied; some Anti-pope set up his unholy pretensions to be the head of the Catholic Church. I claim for my nation, and for my race, that with a divine instinct, they never yielded to any form of heresy; they were never yet deceived in the instinct which drew them to the true head of the Catholic Church—the real Pope of Rome. (Applause.)
In the fourteenth century, there was a protracted schism in the Catholic Church. An Anti-pope raised himself up. France was deceived, Germany was deceived, Italy was deceived, England was deceived; but Ireland, glorious Ireland, with the true instinct of a divinely inspired and guided people, clung to the true Pontiff, and adhered to the true head of the Catholic Church. (Applause.) Whence came this light? Whence came the fidelity that neither bloodshed nor death could destroy? It came from that high heart and high mind in Heaven that inspired Patrick to preach the Gospel to the people of Ireland, and inspired the Irish people to receive the message of Christian peace and love from his mouth. (Renewed cheering.)
The next great light of our history,—the next great point in the genius and character of the Irish people,—is a bravery and valor and courage that have been tried upon a thousand fields; and, glory to you, O Ireland! Irish courage has never been found wanting; never! (Loud applause.) They fought for a thousand years on their own soil. The cause was a good one; the fortune of the cause was bad. They were defeated and overpowered upon a hundred, yea a thousand fields; but never,—from the day that Ireland's sword sprang from its scabbard to meet the first Dane, down to the day that the last Irish soldier perished on Vinegar Hill,—never has Ireland been dishonored or defeated by the cowardice of her children. (Renewed cheering.) Why? Whence comes this light of our people? I answer, that it comes from this,—that Ireland, as a nation, and Irishmen, as a people, have never yet drawn the nation's sword in a bad, a treacherous, or a dishonorable cause. We have fought on a thousand fields, at home and abroad; we have been, from time to time, obliged to shed our blood in a cause with which we had no sympathy; but Irishmen have never freely drawn the sword, except in the sacred cause of God, of the altar of God, and of sacred liberty—the best inheritance of man. (Loud applause.) Search the annals of the military history of Ireland. Did we fall back before the Dane, when for three centuries,—three hundred years,—he poured in army upon army, on Irish soil? He endeavored to sweep away the Christ, and the name of the Christ from the Irish land. Did we ever give up the contest, or sheath the sword, or say the cause was lost? Never! England yielded, and admitted the Dane as a conqueror. France yielded, and admitted the Dane as a ruler and a king amongst her people. But Ireland never,—never for an instant, yielded; and, upon that magnificent Good Friday morning, at Clontarf, she drew the sword with united hand, swept the Dane into his own sea, and rid her soil of him for ever. (Loud applause.)
Ah, my friends, Irishmen, for three hundred years, were fighting in the cause of their God, of their religion, and of their national liberty. Then came the invasion of the English. For four hundred years our people fought an unsuccessful fight; and, divided as they were, broken into a thousand factions, how could they succeed, when success is promised only to

union as a preliminary and a necessary condition? They failed in defending and asserting the nationality of Ireland. At the end of four hundred years, England declared that the war was no longer against Ireland's nationality, but against Ireland's Catholic religion. And England declared that the Irish people must consent, not only to be slaves, but to be Protestant slaves. Once more the sword of Ireland came forth from its scabbard; and this time in the hands of the nation. We have fought for three hundred years; and, five years ago, the government and people of England were obliged to acknowledge that the people of Ireland were too strong for them. They were conquerors on the question of religion: and Gladstone declared that the Protestant Church was no longer the Church of Ireland (great applause.) Whence came this light—this magnificent glory that sheds itself over the character and the genius of my people? I see an Irishman to-day in the streets of an American city: I see him a poor man—a laborer: I see him, perhaps, clothed in rags: I see him, perhaps, with a little too much drink in, and forgetful of himself; but, wherever I see a true Irishman, down upon my very knees do I go to him, as the representative of a race that never yet knew how to fly from a foe, or to show their backs to an enemy (tremendous cheering.) Why? Because of their Catholic Faith, taught them by St. Patrick, which tells them that it is never lawful to draw the sword in an unjust cause; but that, when the cause is just,—for religion, for God, for freedom,—he is the best Christian who knows how to draw his sword, wave it triumphantly over the field, or let it fall in the hand of a man who knows how to die without dishonor (great applause.)
The third light that shines upon the bright side of the history, the character and the genius of my people, is the light of divine purity; the purity that makes the Irish maiden as chaste as the nun in her cloister:—the purity that makes the Irish man as faithful to his wife as the priest is to the altar which he serves; the purity that makes Mormonism and defilement of every kind utter strangers to our race and to our people. I say, the Irish woman is the glory of Ireland: she is the glory of her country. How beautiful is she in the integrity of virgin purity! She has been taught it by St. Patrick, who held up the Mother of God,—the Virgin Mother,—as the very type of Ireland's womanhood, and Ireland's consecrated virgins, as illustrated in the lives and in the characters of our Irish virgin saints. The Irishman knows that, whatever else he may be false to,—whatever other obligations he may violate and break,—there is one bond, tied by the hand of God Himself, before the altar; sealed with the sacramental seal of matrimony; signed with the sign of the Cross,—that no power upon earth, or in hell, or in Heaven, can ever break: and that is the sacred bond that binds him to the wife of his bosom (applause.) What follows from this? I know that there are men here who do not believe in the Catholic religion,—that do not believe in the integrity of our Irish race,—yet I ask these men to explain to me this simple fact:—how is it,—how comes it to pass that, whilst the Mormons are recruiting from every nation in Europe, and from every people in America, they have only had five Irish people amongst them? and amongst these five, four arrived in New York last week: A reporter of the Herald newspaper went to them; and he said to them, "In the name of God, are you become Mormons?" They said, "Yes, we are." "Why! don't you come from Ireland?" The answer he got was this:—"Aweel, we cam' fra' the North of Ireland, ye ken; but we're a Scotch bodies" (uproarious laughter and applause.) Men and women of Ireland, to the honor and glory of our race, there was only one Irishman amongst all the Mormons. What brought him across them? I don't know. I would like to meet him, and have half an hour's conversation with him (renewed laughter.) Maybe he was like the man who joined the "Shakers" in Kentucky. He put on the white hat and the dress, and was a most sanctimonious-looking fellow. He came to the priest with his hands folded and eyes turned upwards, quoting texts of Scripture. When the priest saw him, not knowing who he was, he thought he was a Quaker. But the fellow turned up his sleeve, and showed him the sign of the Cross and the Blessed Virgin and St. John tattooed on his arm. "Look at that, your reverence," said he. "My God," said the priest to him, "aren't you a Quaker?" "Well, your reverence," said he, "I am,—for the time being (laughter)." "And what made you join them?" said the priest. "Oh, to tell you God's truth, I went among them to see if they were in earnest" (renewed laughter.) "Your reverence," said he, "it is bacon and cabbage we get every day, and it agrees with me" (great laughter and applause.)
Five years ago, the English Parliament made a law, the most infamous, the most unchristian

that could be passed,—a law that a married man could be separated from the wife that he married; and the man that was separated from his wife could go and marry another woman; and the woman could go and marry another man. The English people asked for that law, and acted upon it. They acted upon it so freely and so willingly that the Judge of the Divorce Court was actually killed, in a few months, by the large amount of business that was thrown on his hands. The Scotch people took that law. But what did the Irish do? Every man, woman, and child in Ireland burst into a loud fit of unextinguishable laughter. The women said: "The Lord between us and harm!" And the men said: "They've gone blind mad in England! They've gone and made a law that a fellow that marries a woman can go away and leave his wife, and marry some one else!" (laughter and applause.)
The Irish character and the genius of Ireland is vindicated in the care that the Irish parent has for the education of his children. He will not abandon them to the streets, to ignorance and sin; he will not allow them to go into the schools where they may be taught to blaspheme the purity of Mary, and the Divinity of Mary's child. But, no matter what it costs him, he will ensure to his children the blessing of a pure and a high Catholic education. Look back upon the history of our people, as we are taught of that by the genius of history. The worst law that ever England made,—the most infamous, the most unchristian,—was the law that was enacted during the Penal times; by which it was declared, that if an Irish Catholic father sent his son or daughter to an Irish Catholic school, that man was guilty of felony, and liable to transportation. Their soldiers and their policemen went through the whole country; and the schoolmaster had to fly, like the Priest. But in the midst of the danger, at the cost of liberty and of life, the Irish people, the parents of Ireland, the fathers and the mothers of Ireland, still had their children educated; and England failed in her diabolical attempt to brutalize and degrade the Irish people by ignorance.
The next great light thrown upon our history and upon the genius of our national character is the love that Irishmen, all the world over, preserve for the land that bore them.—The emigrant comes from Ireland in a mature age: the Irishman leaves his native soil after he has had time enough, years enough, to weep over her miseries, and perhaps to strike a blow in her ancient and time-honored cause. The child comes from Ireland in his mother's arms. The son of the Irish father and the Irish mother is born in America, far away from the native soil of his parents. But whether it be the full-grown man, or whether it be the infant in arms, or whether it be the native-born American-Irishman,—all unite in the one grand sentiment that bound together the bards, the sages, the saints and the soldiers of Ireland,—namely, the love, pure and strong, for that ancient land that bore them (great applause.) Such was the love for Ireland the great saint, the blessed Columkille, felt, that he died exclaiming: "Oh! now I die in the hope of seeing my God, because I have shut my eyes to the place that I love most on earth,—green, verdant, and sweet Ireland!" An Irish soldier fell dying on the plain of Lander. When the bullet had pierced his heart, and its blood was gushing forth, Sarsfield, the noble Irish soldier, took a handful of his heart's blood, and, lifting it up, cried: "Oh, God! that this blood was shed for Ireland!" (great applause.) The love that filled the heart of Columkille, in Iona; the love that throbbled in the last movement of that dying heart of Sarsfield,—is the love that to-day binds the Irishman in America, in Australia, and all the world over, to the cherished land of his birth, and makes him hope for high things, and do daring and valiant deeds for the ancient land of Ireland (applause.) Whence comes this love for our native land? I answer, this light of our genius and of our character comes to us from the faith which St. Patrick taught us. The Catholic faith teaches every man that, after his God, he is bound to love the land of his birth,—his country. The Catholic Church teaches every man that, when the hour of danger,—danger to his national liberty, danger to his people and to his nation,—comes, then every man is bound to gird on the sword, and to draw it in the sacred name of God and of country (great applause.)
The last of Ireland's saints was the holy and canonized St. Lawrence O'Toole, who was Archbishop of Dublin when Ireland was first invaded by the Anglo-Norman. If we believe Ireland, the ancient historian, the man who was ordained as a Monk in Glendalough; the man who was the model Bishop and Archbishop of Dublin, came forth and girded on his sword in front of the Irish army, before the English invaders. In the name of the Blessed Trinity, he drew his sword in the sacred cause of Ireland. In him patriotism,—the love of father-