VOL. XIV.

MONTREAL, FRIDAY, MAY 27, 1864.

No. 42

OLIVER PLUNKETT.

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

It is commonly said of us, by the writers of a

neighboring country, that we Irish are always

looking back; that we are worshippers of the

past; whereas the nation against whom and by whom we are thus disparagingly compared, is remarkable for looking closely after the present.-The taunt—the boast—is certainly less complimentary to those who utter it than they themselves very probably perceive. Virtue can afford to look back. Those for whom 'all is lost but honor' can afford to look back. We know by every-day experience what class it is that fain would wipe out the past. The uneasy conscience finds torture in retrospect. Those who have thriven well by means that will not bear scrutiny, love to philosophise on the folly of looking back, and on the wisdom of forgetting there ever was a yesterday or ever will be a to-morrow. Yes, the Irish are fond of looking back, and well they may. The present may be embittered upon us; but the past cannot be destroyed. If stripped of all else, we have, at least, the heritage of glorious examples. The very circumstance alleged against us as a failing, is a testimony of high virtue. If we were a sordid people-if we were a selfish or a grovelling race-with no loftier ambition than the gratification of the passions-what pleasure would be found in the mournful history that is oursunavailing struggle, unending suffering. It might be evidence of a pernicious failing in a people to pay such worship to the chronicles of deeds which aggrandised them—to a past that hoarded acquisitions, luxuries, and wealth for enjoyment in the present. But none save a noble race would love to dwell upon and glory in records of sacrifice, ruin, loss, so disastrous as ours. Of course, I am aware there is a character with which ours may be confounded; that of a people weak, spiritless, and abject; compounding for the miserable cowardice of the present, by trading upon references to the bravery of ancestors who lived very long ago, or to the heroism of sacrifices really repented, or which would not be repeated by their descendants of the present day. But ours is not such a case. As a people we are full of energy, activity, and ambition; and out of Ireland, where our energies have free scope, we rise to positions of wealth and p We are not cowards, or cravens either. On all the battle-fields of the world Irish valor is imperishably recorded; and this is as true of the present as of the past. The Irish are bravest of the brave, whether they serve beneath the French tricolor, the American standard, or the Union Jack. Whether they fight for a good or bad cause, they fight well; they are no cowards. In arms, as in literature, art, science, statesmanship, industry, commerce, the Irish of our own day have no superiors. Yet it is only abroad that all this avails us. Here in Ireland. we are poor, oppressed, broken, because our fathers stood up for what the world would call "a failing cause," and because we, their children, though unable to cope in strength with the power that cramps our energies and binds our freedom, are inveterately averse to accepting accomplished facts and making terms at the price of final surrender. With all our ambition and desire for wealth and power, we Irish of the present day prefer our loss of wealth, property, and power at home, to the enjoyment of all these by the forfeiture of manhood and conscience; and there is not a trial or a sacrifice recorded of ready to emulate to-day. It is on a chapter in those records I purpose to fix attention more particularly just now. I mean deliberately to midst of the busy turmoil and strife of our more material ambitions to arrest you for a moment by one of those lessons which serve to balance us in the giddy race, and show us how noble it is to suffer; how man, fortified by faith, can soar above and beyond the troubled scene-can smile at misfortunes, and triumph in death. That is our history. Plunkett's career lay within the -at the time. To this end it will not be necessary to extend our retrospect beyond the beginning of the century in which Plunket lived. It opened on the close of the last; greatest, and physical features which peace, security, most nearly successful attempt of native Irish learning, science, religion, alone could bestow. our purpose here to discuss how or why. What our poor people that they lack these features, as

we have to do with is the historical fact that a if a half a century could remove the effects of struggle, which, with varying fortune, had been six hundred terrible years. intermittingly prolonged for 420 years-the longest and most vehemently maintained struggle against invasion and subjugation recorded in modern history-about the period to which we are referring burst forth into an effort which, for military skill in its direction, bravery in its prosecution, and promise of success, surpassed all others, and showed a passionate love of national independence which four centuries of desperate but disastrous endeavor were unable to appal. It failed, however; and, at the beginning of the seventeenth century, for the first time an English king claimed and exercised practically undisputed sovereignty over all that remained of Ireland. Alas! what a spectacle of ruin was there! Never, in all probability, since God fashioned this fair earth was sight like it seen. Four bundred years of war tells a great deal; but it is as nothing to the whole truth of the story. Four hundred years of war, at the very best, and even supposing it carried on according to the usages of what is called 'civilised warfare," would suggest to most minds a frightful result. But four bundred years of a war of extermination—a war without one single principle of humanity or mercy-a war which outlawed a whole people and classed them as wild beasts of the morass and forest, rermin of the land-nay, classed even the sacred sex of woman with the she wolf, and the wild deer-things to be hunted and hounded, trapped, smoked out, starved, shot, and slain !-Yet, this was not all. An agency of desolation, the most awful that ever warred impiously against Heaven's goodness itself, was resorted to. The fruitfulness of the earth was sought to be extinguished, that existence might become impossible. Armies went out when there was nothing of human life to slay, to kill the living bounty of God's hand; to hunt out growing corn, and trample it to mud; to waste and burn -to blacken with sterility the very briars on the way, lest they might bear their bitter wild fruit capable of ministering to famished humanity --In a word, reading the accounts the spoilers themselves have left us of these awful proceedings-perusing the records written by the actors themselves-it is obvious that if they could but have borrowed for a moment the power of God, they would have blasted at a stroke the fecundity of the soil-would have stricken it with blood of him who had fled amongst them confidbarrenness, upon which living thing could not ingly for sanctuary. The very year of dolors crawl-rather than that the seed of their victims | that saw Oliver Cromwell, the apostle of crime should have a chance to survive.

Centuries of a war like this, what must they have lest behind? That is what we have to peace, set out for Rome, where he entered magine in order to contemplate the scene of Plunkett's life and labors. That is what must be understood in order to know what Ireland was in 1631. But the picture is not complete. To all this was added another species of warmore direful still-which sprung from, and accompanied the other; one which had for its end and result a fate more terrible than any death barbarity could impose—the war that assailed in the Irish the attributes given by God to man to distinguise him from the beast of the field-the war that sought to quench the mind and debase the soul-that sought to make us fellows with, or lower than, the brute species-that sought to make us a race of things hateful to ourselves and to each other, abhorrent to all mankindthat sought to extinguish intelligence, intellect, reason-to take from us our common humanity, and give us all the habits, the deformity, the repulsiveness, ignorance, and ferocity of the brute creation. What was to come of all this? -What sort of a race was likely to spring from our fathers, that we have not proved ourselves | the beings depicted in the despatches and reports of Carew-the memoirs and writings of Carte and Leland? What deformities of the buman species were likely to affright posterity offend against this canon of " Progress;" in the in their progeny? "Creeping and crawling on their bellies out of caves and holes in the earth, whither we had driven them"-say these chronicles-" and where they, hiding, tried to live by digging up and eating wild roots and carrion ;they looked not like unto mankind at all-pale, baggard, emaciated, cadaverous; they seemed like ghouls or animals of some hideous sphere. the lesson I read in the Life and Martyrdom of Sometimes discovering their burrows and holes, Oliver Plunkett. Our annals abound with such we smoked them like rats." Yes, those were glorious episodes; but many considerations sug- the days when mothers brought forth their young gested this one to me as best illustrating one of the most instructive and memorable chapters in reared them in some earth or cave, shared with the badger or the fox. What was likely to middle period of the seventeenth century. Nu- come of all this? Were all the laws of nature to merous of the events which I shall have to no- be suspended and reversed, so that cause and eftice in that career, require that I should fix fect might no longer bear relation -so that out of strongly your attention on the circumstances of circumstances like these the Irish race should the country-of the Church, and of the people arise with none of the terrible brand upon their brows, upon their souls-should arise, not debased, but erect-not brutified, but civilisedauthority to overthrow the English power in Ire- Yes; in our own days this expectation of miracle land. That attempt failed. It is no part of survives, and we hear the taunt put forth against

Such as I have described, or endeavored to describe, was the condition of Ireland when Oliver Plunkett commenced life. I have dwelt upon the demoralisation and debasement which was produced, and which prevailed most largely, if not entirely, around the Pale, because, unfortunately, the story of his fate reveals but too plainly the fearful evidence of that demoralisation and debasement. They are revealed in the witnesses who came forward to swear him to the scaffold, amidst the shuddering abborrence even of their hirers; and I have desired to anticipate, by ample explanation, the ignorant reproach-"Were not the perjurers who were procured to betray him Irishmen and Catholics -ave, friars and priests?" Oliver Plunkett was born at Loughcrew, in

the county Meath, in the year 1631; having

been a scion of an ancient and noble family of that name, which, throughout those days of proscription, held, and down to our own have held fast by the ancient Faith-Plunkets, Earls of Fingal. His life up to the age of eighteen witnessed the rise of the celebrated Confederation of Kilkenny, and the desperate effort made by the Milesian and Anglo-Irish Catholics (fighting side by side for the first time) to confront successfully with armed hand the organised plunder and confiscation by which the land was being parcelled out to the very refuse and dregs of English society. Into the history or details of that memorable struggle it is as little my present purpose to enter as it was into that of the Great Hugh, the Lion of Ulster. The results alone concern us. The Irish and Anglo-Irish Confederates, with fatal credulity, were duped by the weak King Charles into believing that he meant to do them ample justice if he could but overcome his Puritan enemies. The unhappy Irish flung themselves to his side and staked their last hope for his cause. Baterly and terribly they paid for it. Well had it been for them, as far as relates to their material interests, however it might fare with them in the judgment of the world, had they displayed less of that devoted fidelity, and more of the self-concern through which the Judases of his own nation, the Lowland or Anglo-Scots, sold for a price the head of their king-sold for a price the and bloodshed, land in Ireland, beheld young Oliver Plunkett, the disciple of religion and as a divinity student in the Ludovisian, or, as it is called, the Irish College. What a pregnant fact this is, which we encounter on the very threshold of his career! In that day Ireland was prostrate and plundered-or was weakly struggling against invading bordes, pouring on her with holy words and cries of "Liberty" on their lips-rapine and defiance of God in their liearts. In that day was defamed to Europe by those who coveted or seized her rights, the plunderers proclaiming that her chiefs knew not how to rule; while every odious story was invented by her foes to brand her with infamy. Yet, in that terrible time she found a friend-one who. the darker grew her misfortunes, but stood the more boldly by her side; who gave her sympathy, gave her prayers, gave her material aid in ber struggles, and blessed her banners; and who. when her people were doomed to brutification, and forbidden education at home, raised for them colleges, universities, and schools, with generous hand. Who was that friend? The Pope.— Yes; God is great and just-Rome was that friend of friends to Ireland; and to-day, when similar misfortunes threaten the Chair of Peter, Ireland is found the foremost in grateful fidelity. To-day the Pope is prostrate and; plundered ;to-day it is his armies who weakly struggle against invading hordes with hypocritical cries of liberty on their lips; to-day it is the Pope who is defemed to Europe by those who covet or seize his possessions, the plunderers proclaiming that he knows not how to govern. Ahthere is something wonderful in this parallel. Let emperors and kings forget their duty, if they will; let the cold and faithless shun their Father because his cause seems failing and his foes prevail. Ireland knows that when her cause wos failing and lost, the Pope did not shrink from her side; the more her foes prevailed, the more his generous aid was given. Hail, Pontiff! glorified by many sorrows, wounded by many ingratitudes-ONE nation, at least, of the many so often succored by the bounties of the apostolic hand, in this thy hour of tribulation, scorns the baseness of those who desert thee. Behold the chile'ren of faithful Erin-behold her grateful

"When the proud and great stood by thee, None dared thy rights to spurn ; And when now they falsely fly thee, Shall I too basely to:n? No! Whate'r the fires that try thee, In the same this heart shall burn."

offerings-bear her voice :-

Reflections like these arise to most minds at the mention of the Irish College at Rome, in which young Oliver Plunkett, as I have said, entered as | in accepting it, and was accordingly consecrated divinity student in the year 1649. Dark as had forthwith at Rome. He might have remained been the tribulations of his unhappy country when he quitted home, darker far were those that succeeded. As Morough of the Burnings devasted in the south, and Cromwell butchered in the north, the island ran red with blood; and the young exile student, pacing the cloisters of Ireland with a heart resolved to face his fate. the College in Rome, often fancied that he could hear borne upon the western breeze the wails of horror and despair. What an assemblage must have been the students in those halls. Here they had crossed Europe that they might find the means denied them at home of entering upon a vocation which they but too well knew was menaced by the dungeon, the rack, the gibbet, and the scaffold. With what characteristic tales they must have whiled their hours of intercourse in the intervals of study - stories of midnight masses in barn and cave, sentinelled by faithful scouts; of holy priests surprised and captured or slain. Day by day some new arrival came with his latest intelligence from the island so dearly loved even amidst such terror. Day by day some one of them set forth for it, to enter upon his perilous duties-

"To run the outlaw's brief career,

The troubled rest-the ceaseless tear." Thus passed away Plunket's student days. He distinguished hunself in all his studies, endeared himself to all who knew him, and even at his early age implanted in the minds of his superiors a forecast of the greatness that yet was to halo his name. Having taken out his degree of Doctor of Divinity, he was appointed public Professor of Theology in the College Dc Propaganda Fide. For twelve years he filled this important office with advancing reputation, and with the marked esteem ad admiration of the Sovereign Pontiff himself. Twenty years exactly had passed since first he entered Rome, when one of sad disorder in these affairs. The bishops in the great epochs of his life arrived. In that exile, the dungeons choked with priests, generayear the Primate of Ireland, Edmond O'Reillybanished, proscribed, persecuted-died an aged exile at Louraine. Twelve years before, O'Rielly had been consecrated Primate in the city of Brussels; and though at home a bloody persecution was striking down the ministers of the faith, he boldly sought the presence of the also have been inevitable amongst the clerical flock over whom he had been appointed. He body. It was impossible to exercise the same set out for Ireland, but at London was arrested, strict scrutiny before ordination. It was out of seized, and dragged to prison. Subsequently he was deported to France, and in 1665 he petitioned the restored Stuart (Charles II) for permission to see Ireland once more. At this time, of all the Irish hierarchy three Prelates alone re- ther re-introduction of discipline in such a state sided in the kingdom; one-great, noble, bravehearted even then - was the Archbishop of Tuam. He, too, had been an exile; but as poverty; inhabiting an humble thatched cabin years and age bowed him down, and he seemed at Ballybarrack, near Dundalk, in which one to stand upon the threshold of the grave, the terror of the persecutor grew not more alarming but seemed as nothing beside the sorrowful thought that he should repose in a foreign soil. Home he turned-not, indeed, in hope to live or labour, but to die. He was borne from the ship to the shore in a litter. 'Bear me,' said he, 'to St. Jarlath's. Let me see once more the faces of my faithful people around me, and let us feel and implacable enmity of a few base and rethat my ashes shall be laid in the tomb of my fathers.' With him there were Patrick Plunkett the Bishop of Ardagh, and the aged Bishop of Kilmore, left in Ireland. The Primate O'Reilly's with as much vigour and fearless independence prayer, if not granted, was not spurned; he returned to Ireland on the 4th June, 1666; but on the 17th September he was seized and dragged, manacled, a prisoner to England, and once more banished the kingdom. A few years after, and as we have already seen, the venerable exile Prelate expired at Louvaine, leaving the Primatial See of Ireland-a post of importance and danger-once more vacant. A post of danger it was, indeed, and well it was felt; for while, on the one hand, it was one requiring all the attributes of deep learning, heroic courage, profound wisdom, earnest zeal, devotion, and picty, so, on the other hand, was its occupation men- Napoleon the Great beheld this fact with aced with danger, of which the simplest could see the bloody end. It is said that Pope Cle- as Pius on a throne. We, in our own day, have ment IX, filled with a sense of the importance seen it, and have heard the wondering exclamaof the appointment at such a crisis in Ireland's history, deliberated long and solemnly. Many were the names laid before him from Ireland all his temporal rights, and shorn apparently of and by councillors within the Eternal City, but all his temporal power, he went on busying himit is told that the Pope exclaimed- Why are we discussing uncertainties when certainty is be- tificate, and exercising his authority all over the tore our eyes?-behold in the City of Rome itself, Oliver Plunkett, a man of long experience, tried virtue, and consummate learning-him I by my Apostolic authority appoint Archbishop most effulgent and triumphant. It is so, indeed, of Armagh and Primate of Ireland. His selection with the functions of the Church; in a dungeon tion was communicated to Plunkett, who received or on a throne—persecuted or exalted by the ed the tidings with mingled emotions. At any world-its spiritual power is the same, and its other time, at any more favorable phase of the assertion of authority knows no change. Priexistence of the Irish Church, he would have mate Plunkett, from his hiding place in some prayed permission to decline the exaltation. But rude cabin near the Boyne, used to issue his he knew that it was a post not only of duty but episcopal mandates with as much authority in of danger, and one, consequently, to decline tone as if he sat in a palace at Drogleda, with namental de l'announce de la companie de la compani

which might have seemed a shrinking from the ordeal. He hesitated, therefore, not a moment an exile, as many per force did, and administered the affairs of his diocese through a vicar-general, but such was not his choice. No sooner did the successor of St. Peter place the crozier in his hand than his face was turned homeward to

PART II. The new Primate must have reached Ireland

some time before the 20th of November, and he must have entered it in secresy, for on that date we find the Lord Leutenant informing Lord Conway that the King had privately assured him that 'Two persons, one of whom was Arch-bishop Plankett, had been sent over from Rome, and were lurking in the country to do mischief. I'he Lord Lieutenant commissioned Conway to write that very night to Lisburn to his brotherin-law, Sir George Rawdon, to acquaint him that it would be an acceptable service if he could dexterously find out the Primate and his companion and apprehend them. Lord Conway forthwith sent word to Lisburn, and the bloodhounds of the law were started upon the Primate's track. He stood the country, however, while Ulster was being scoured for him. He pursued his duties, scorning to fly the perils that every hour surrounded him-now hiding in a cave, now disguised as a peasant, passing on the road Rawdon's patrols-now holding an ordination in some mountain fastness. Some time passed in this way, when the persecution slackened a little, and the Prelate was able to go abroad without fear of arrest. This interval he employed with an activity perfectly marvellous in the discharge of the onerous affairs of his distracted diocese. It was not to be expected that the utter disruption of society, the demoralisation already alluded to, would not have wrought tions grew up, on the one hand, in deplorable unacquaintance with the duties of the religion to which, nevertheless, with a faith which God, no doubt, accepted in their extremity, the trampled people clung. Of course, in all this chaos, disorders and irregularities to some extent must the question, in such times, to require the same ex tent of preparatory study; and it is not to be wondered at that the Primate found that a Heronlean task awaited him in the regulation, or raof affairs. He lived, as far as his own personal wants, in a degree scarcely above absolute little room, a few yards square, served him as library, dining-room, and chapel. His entire income at no time seems to have exceeded £60 ner annum. He seems to have been, however gentle in all else, indomitable and stern in his repression of anything like offence or irregularity calculated to scandalise the poor. This fearless discharge of duty obtained for him the deadly creant members amongst the clergy whom he detected in courses impossible to be permitted. In fact, his spiritual authority was exercised just as it he were backed by all the co-operation of the civil power, instead of being a poor hunted and proscribed fugitive, sleeping and hiding alternately in barn and cavern, copse and forest. That however is a feature which has often been remarked and commented upon by observers of the administration of the Church .-Strangers are struck with perfect astonishment that, as far as the exercise of their spiritual functions, it seems to make no difference with Popes. Bishops, or Priest, whether they be captives in a dungeon, fugitives on the mountain, or supported by all the authority of the laws of the land .amazement; Pius in a dungeon was as unawed tions of the British press, that at the very moment Pius IX. was a fugitive at Gaeta, reft of self with the most momentous duties of his Ponworld with a boldness and vigour as great, if not greater, than could be displayed in the days when the temporal power of the Popes blazed with the functions of the Church; in a dungeon