

# The Church.

COBourg, CANADA, FRIDAY, JULY 21, 1843.

[WHOLE NUMBER, CCCIV.]

VOLUME VII.—No. 2.]

ADDRESS DELIVERED AT THE OPENING OF THE IRISH COLLEGE OF ST. COLUMBA, STACKALLAN.  
(To the Editor of the Irish Ecclesiastical Journal.)

SIR,—Having been earnestly requested by the Warden and Fellows of the Irish College to give publicity to the following Address, I shall be glad if it is thought suited for insertion in the Ecclesiastical Journal.

I am only desirous of adding, that the delivery of it was wholly accidental and unpremeditated: otherwise such an office would not have fallen upon the individual who has the least right to take a part in the foundation of such an Institution.

In its present form, one or two additional remarks have been inserted; and some few alterations have been made: but so far as I can recall what was said, without preparation and almost in private, it is substantially the same.

I am, Sir,  
Your obedient Servant,  
W. SEWELL.  
Exeter College,  
May 14, 1843.

DEAR MR. WARDEN.—It was only a few minutes before we assembled here for our morning prayer that it occurred to me to ask permission of the Governors, my colleagues, as I now ask permission of yourself, to address a few words to you, and your brother Fellows, at this moment so full, to us all, of solemn and affecting considerations.

It has pleased Almighty God, of his great goodness, to grant to those who undertook the foundation of this College, the object of their labours and prayers for more than two years past; and to have established it thus far upon a basis, and under circumstances, which, if human eyes may dare to judge, seem to betoken His blessing upon the work, and to promise its happy consummation. And they are now about to leave you for the first time, having placed in your hands much of the power which they hitherto exercised; and trusting you to Him, "the keeper of Israel, who neither slumbereth nor sleepest" [psalm for the day, cxxi.], to guide and protect you in your new and most responsible duties.

I did wish, as one who had spent the greater part of his life in a Collegiate society like your own—as having owed to it under God's good Providence, the greatest blessings—and on preparing to return to it immediately to a home, in which from the time I entered it, I can scarcely recall an angry or bitter word of brother against brother;—I did wish, and I knew you would indulge me an opportunity of suggesting, especially to the younger members of this Society, some of the chief advantages of their new position, and some of the modes which might preserve them in that unity, and concord, and brotherly love, without which the whole fabric of this Institution must fall to pieces. This was all that I originally intended.

But now that I am standing before you, other things occur to me, which it is right for a variety of reasons that you should hear from some one of the Governors, in a more formal and public way than they could express by private conversation, especially in the hurried circumstances under which we have hitherto been placed; and though they would come, if time allowed, with far more propriety from other members of the body, yet rather than that they should be wholly omitted, I will take upon myself the responsibility of stating them, knowing that we have all acted hitherto with one heart and one mind, and endeavouring to say nothing which they would not approve and sanction.

I cannot begin without first offering up to Almighty God, our most humble and hearty thanks for his many mercies vouchsafed to us, not only in permitting us thus far to witness the realization of this great work, but in guiding us through difficulties; in overruling us by His providential arrangements, so that even against our wishes and intentions it has been finally commenced upon a spot and under prospects which we now recognize to be full of advantages; in preventing us, by circumstances which at first seemed disappointments and vexations, from laying our foundations on too narrow a plan; in strengthening and enlarging our work by every delay and check; in preserving us from any disunion or relaxation of interest; and in finally bringing together, to undertake its first execution, a body of his servants, such as twelve months back our most sanguine desires could not have dared to anticipate. May He who only can "build the house," and "keep the city," accept from his unworthy servants this public acknowledgment of His great goodness; and may His past mercies encourage us to labour in this work with still more earnestness, and more faith.

Next to this, the first and chiefest thought in our hearts, it is natural to remember that such a moment those human instruments of his will to whom this Institution owes its first origination, and to name them with honour and gratitude, even though the present unhappy and distracted state of the public mind may have prevented them from taking as yet a part in its completion.

We are bound openly and unaffectedly to acknowledge that if this great work shall prove a blessing to this Church and Empire, the praise of it, under God, is primarily due to those whose zeal and energy first endeavoured in recent days to convey the Gospel to the Irish people in their native tongue; and who constructed for this purpose the machinery of the Irish Society. Without alluding to improvements which might be suggested in the operations of that body, as of almost all our modern societies, and which would bring our religious associations more into conformity with the system of the Church, and under stricter subordination to regular, ecclesiastical authority, it is sufficient to declare, that the sight of the work wrought by the Irish Society among the Irish peasantry by means of their own native tongue, first impressed on our minds the necessity of undertaking this supplemental work; and that one of their most respected and zealous agents, the Rev. Mr. Moriarty, Curate of Ventry, was the first person in whose heart God put the thought of realizing it. By Mr. Moriarty it was suggested to that Nobleman, who has now been repaid for all his exertions by placing you with his own hands in that chair. With Mr. Moriarty it was sketched out in its general outline by two other Governors, seated, as I can well remember, on one of the wild Atlantic cliffs of that desolate but interesting coast, where he has gathered round him 400 converts, and is training them in the principles of the Church; while on the one side he pointed to the Blackrock Islands, where the light of God's Word was just then beginning to penetrate among a grateful peasantry; and on the other he called up from every cabin and rock some anecdote of ferocity or superstition, tamed by the all-powerful spell of the Irish language. And it was on that spot, with that Clergyman for its chief director, that it was at first intended to establish the present Institution, though on a far humbler scale, and with far less powerful instruments of good, than Providence has now placed within our reach.

It is right that we should pay to such men, this tribute of our gratitude and respect; and whatever unhappy prejudices may exist at present to prevent their hearty co-operation with us, we trust that, within these walls, their names will never be mentioned without praise and honour; and that so far from meditating any opposition to the Irish Society, we shall refuse, as we have refused already, assistance offered to ourselves at their expense, and regard ourselves as workers in the same vineyard, under the same Divine

Master, though in different portions of it, and upon a different plan.

Next to them, Mr. Warden, the gratitude of the country and of the Church is due (as an Irishman, you will rejoice to hear it) to an Irish Nobleman, and to the two members of his own family, whose necessary absence we have deplored on this occasion, so full to them of the deepest interest. That nobleman is present, and, therefore, I will not trust myself to speak of him; but if any pledge is wanting to the Heads of the Church, and to the country generally, that the work which the Governors have commenced they will prosecute to the last, faithfully and unshrinkingly, it is to be found in the patient, unwearying energy, with which that Nobleman, as their President, has laboured in it from the first moment; sacrificing to it, not money merely, which any one might give, but time, and labour, and domestic enjoyment; and increasing in hopefulness and devotion to it, with every delay and discouragement. I will not pain him more by further alluding to him; but when you are called on to pray and to give thanks for the first and principal founder of this College, you will know whom to name.

I trust also, that it is no idle superstition to feel pleasure in the recollection, that so many of our preparations for this great work, have been matured within the walls of the University of Dublin; that we have been honoured by the sanction and co-operation of the Rev. the Provost; that the Regius Professor of Divinity is one of our own body; that the first stone of our plan was laid within Trinity College, by the foundation of our Irish Scholarships; that yourself, Mr. Warden, with others of the Fellows, were there educated; and that the individual among ourselves, to whom we are most indebted for framing the details of the system, is himself a Fellow of that College; and drew up our statutes, and adapted our forms after the models of that Society.

It has been one of our maxims throughout, to build upon old foundations, and graft on existing institutions. For this reason, it was a subject of congratulation that we were permitted, during the holy season just passed, to meet so often in the Chapel of Trinity College, as the fittest place in this country where God's blessing might be invoked on a new school and seminary for religious and useful education. In this spirit we purposely assembled there once more on the morning of our taking possession of this place. And the same feeling of filial respect will, I trust, never be eradicated. Let us pray that the mutual interest and affection which binds together the great public schools of England to its Universities, may bind us to the University of Dublin, and that, although our Institution as yet is weak and young,

"Parva sub ingenti matris se subicit umbra," it may be recognized as springing from one and the same root of the Church; and never have occasion to add the lamentation—

"Nunc alite frondes, et rami matris opacant,  
Crescentique adimunt folia urantque ferentem."

It is also natural, Mr. Warden, to give utterance to thoughts which have pressed so heavily upon our minds, as well as upon yours, for many days past; when the objects, and duties, and responsibilities, and dangers, and blessings, involved in this great work, have come before us in a more startling shape, at its first visible realization. It was not as a mere form, but as the natural expression of our common feelings, that we all desired, as our first act within these walls, to meet together for divine worship, and to commence at once that regular service, which, I trust, will never fail morning or evening, while you remain as clergymen within them. In the same feeling, we could not bear to add to your present office, without a solemn invocation of God's blessing upon our past and future labours. And now, when we are about to part from you, these thoughts, you can well imagine, are crowding on us still more heavily.

Those who designed this work were, in the first place, most painfully impressed as Irishmen and as Christians, with the state of this country. They compared the manifold gifts which nature has showered upon it, gifts of soil, gifts of climate, gifts of high intellect, and warm affections, with its impoverished, distracted, and tumultuous condition. And when they remembered the period in its history, when the light of divine truth, and of deep learning was preserved alive upon these shores, amidst a thick surrounding darkness, and broke forth from hence to enlighten Europe, they felt that such a melancholy contrast could only be explained by some fatal ignorance or grievous criminality on the part of its governors—meaning by its governors, all those who, whether in the Legislature, or the Church, or the Magistracy, or as masters of the soil, are responsible to Almighty God for the well-being of a people. They deemed it the first duty of the British Empire to wipe out this blot upon its fame; and to endeavour, by every means in its power, to restore Ireland to that state for which Providence would appear to have designed her. They thought that no unexplored region, no savage borders, not even the offshoots and colonies of Great Britain, melancholy as their condition may be, cried out so imperatively upon Christian benevolence, "to come over and help them," as Ireland, an integral and vital part of the central Empire. While the fountain head was left turbid and trodden down by every passing foot, they thought it idle to waste labour in filtering, at a distance, the tainted streams of population which are issuing from it daily over whole continents. When they witnessed the fearful outbreaks, which so recently have alarmed the most hardened economists, in the manufacturing districts in England, they remembered that perhaps one third or more of that dense and fermenting mass of misery and vice had poured itself there from Ireland. When they turned to the increasing pauperism, the diminished wages, and comforts, and virtues of the English agricultural labourers, they recognized in a great measure the effects of an immigration of mendicancy from Ireland. When they turned to the Church, to which they only we can look for the salvation of the country, they saw every blot that paled its energies first struck in Ireland; there its Episcopacy mutilated; there its revenues alienated; there its deadliest enemies encouraged; there its cathedral and parochial systems curtailed instead of enlarged; there the very fountain heads of life and truth poisoned in the wells of education. If there had been no Ireland, on which, with some show of necessity, such acts could have been attempted, they never would have been dared in England. When, as the cause and consequence of such acts, they saw the legislature paralysed, and impotent either to proclaim truth, or to spread the Gospel, or to educate the poor, or to assert its highest functions as a minister of God—compelled to deny its own membership with Christ's Catholic Church, if not its own Christianity, and to propose as a compromise for peace, measures which can only encourage heresy and schism and unbelief; instead of imputing such acts as crimes to individuals, they recognized in them the stern necessity, under which every hand that attempts the representative government of this Empire, must be chained down, so long as a foreign communion is master of the population of Ireland. And when they looked abroad upon the whole earth, and saw what England might become to it—what Providence by its innumerable bounties, has called on her to become—the bearer of God's message to the heathen, and the swayer of the destinies of nations; and instead of light and truth issuing from her, as from a sanctuary of the Gospel, when they beheld discord and dissension, false prophets and teachers of error, so that the very thought of our possessing religion is scoffed at

by the heathen—once more Ireland rose before them as the strong hand and arm, which an intrusive spiritual power is now wielding over the forces of the Empire, to strike it dumb, to paralyze its movements, to effect its dismemberment, and to blot out its existence as a nation. On every side, Ireland met their view. It is the black and yet the brightest spot in all the prospect; the Achilles' heel of the British Empire; the point most vulnerable by an enemy; and yet the seat and centre of its greatest power, full of hope and strength to carry us on in the race of a noble and holy ambition, if its wounds could once be healed. And, therefore, not in that vague quixotic restlessness, which spends itself in dreams of distant benevolence, but as confining their labours humbly and modestly to the spot nearest to themselves, to their own duties, and their own homes, they resolved to devote all which they could devote, to the cause of Ireland.

And in selecting the foundation of this College, as the first great act to be accomplished, I do assure you, they did not act hastily or thoughtlessly. It was after making a circuit of nearly the whole of Ireland, crossing it again and again, personally examining the various districts where the peasantry are now beginning to listen with joy to the ministrations of our Church (rather, I should say, of their own old native Church), in their own old native tongue, that the idea of this Institution was framed by them. It was at Kingscourt in this neighbourhood, that, as an Englishman, I myself was first amazed by the power of the Irish language; at Achill, that Lord Adair first announced his intention of founding it; at Ventry, that it first took a definite shape; at Killybegs and Abbeyfeale, and Cape Clear, well known centres of the operations of the Irish Society, that we carried on personal inquiries on the subject, circulating our queries among the clergy from whom we could hope to obtain assistance, and consulting not only persons most experienced on the subject, but the old history of the country, and the documents of various religious societies, to which access was kindly afforded, and from which a large volume of extracts has been made, full of the most curious and valuable information on the present spiritual state of Ireland. I mention these things, Mr. Warden, that those who have thrown themselves with so much trustfulness as yourself, into the execution of this great work, may feel more confidence in at least the thoughtfulness and earnestness of those with whom you have resolved to act. And it is the best reply to be made to a rumour industriously circulated, that our object has been, not to cultivate in a future clergy the Irish language, but to train them up generally in a new system of education. In the name of my brother Governors, I beg to give to this rumour a most peremptory contradiction. We do hope that this College will be available for much other good; for inculcating God's holy truth, and encouraging attachment to his holy Church, in addition to its paramount object of enabling the Gospel to be preached in the Irish language. But if, my Lord, the President of our body were now conveying to you our most earnest and solemn injunctions, they would be, I will know, to place this object constantly before your eyes, to allow nothing else to interfere with it; and though it would be idle to insist that every member of the College should be compelled to learn, what in some cases might interfere with their necessary studies, or be useless to them in their particular professions, to insist upon it, at least in all the scholars on the Foundation, and to encourage it by every means in your power, in all whose position, either as landlords or as clergy, will hereafter bring them into contact with the peasantry of their country.

Although the sons of English gentlemen will probably partake in the advantages of our education, yet this College is a College for Ireland; not only the language of Ireland, but every thing which can bind its rising generation to its interests, its soil, its ancient recollections, its future hopes of peace and good, must be here brought round them, and impressed upon their hearts. It will not vulgarize the tongue of an Irish gentleman, to teach it the old language of his native country. It will not detach minds from England by attaching them to Ireland, if they are united in one Church. We have the highest authority of experience, to assert that to bring the people into the bosom of the one Church of England, by means of the language of Ireland, is the most effectual means of binding them to England in loyalty and affection, and ultimately of diffusing the English language over the whole population. So it has been found in Scotland. And the more we can gather round this country the concentrated affections and energies of all classes of its people, as members of one Church; the more that the Irish gentlemen and the Irish peasantry are devoted to Ireland, and proud of being her sons, the happier it will be for England.

And here, before I pass on, it is necessary to make one observation. It has been said that the object of this College is proselytism, and that proselytism is but another name for throwing fresh firebrands of religious discord among an inflammable population. In one sense of the word, I trust that no idle hope of conciliating opponents, or of obtaining a valueless support, will ever induce us to shrink from acknowledging this charge to be true. Our object is proselytism. It is our first thought, our daily prayer, the hope which has animated us in our past labours, the greatest reward which the Almighty could bestow on them, to see this nation brought once more by His Holy Word into one flock, and under one shepherd. It is to aid in recalling this nation from darkness to light, from falsehood to truth, from a foreign communion to the bosom of their own ancient Church; from schism and dissension to the true faith; from sedition, and malignity, and bloodshed, to that loyalty and mutual affection for which nature has formed their hearts; it is to aid in this blessed work that the clergy require the knowledge of that tongue, which acts like a charm upon this people, in winning their affections, and dispelling their prejudices. God forbid that in daring to undertake a work of religious education, we should succumb to that maxim of infidelity, that "no man is his brother's keeper," or bound to interfere with his religion; that we should be so ignorant as to deem it possible for peace to be preserved without truth, or truth without unity in the Church, or unity without proselytism. God forbid that, as Christians, we should repudiate the last solemn injunction of our Lord, to go and preach the Gospel unto all nations—that is, to make proselytism the very badge of our Christianity.

But there is another sense of the word proselytism, in which it is as far from our object as irreconcilable with our principles. If it means that the members of this College, and those educated under them, are to commence aggressive controversies, and to intrude upon the functions of the parochial clergy, unsettling the minds of the peasantry, and withdrawing them from their present communion, by the artifices too commonly exhibited in religious rivalry—then, Mr. Warden, you are well aware that no such thought can be admitted. To the bishops and parochial clergy the souls of this people are entrusted, and none can have any right to interfere with their province, or to assume their duties. The first great breach which Rome made in the Apostolical Polity, and thus in the Apostolical doctrines of the Church, was by trespassing on the functions of the regular ministry of Christ, and substituting self-created societies, and irregular missionary efforts for a parochial system controlled by bishops, and for the ordinary ministrations of the clergy. And perhaps no greater cure can fall upon a Church than to create within it, for religious objects, any machinery, however weak at first, which may ultimately escape from the control of the Church, supersede its office, and originate a schism. That this sin may never be committed by us is our daily prayer. Your duties will lie strictly within these walls. Your missionary efforts will be confined to preparing and arming for that conflict, in which the Church must ever be in Ireland, those whom the Church may hereafter send out as parochial clergy, or who, whether rich or poor, as masters or as servants, may, by their position in society, be able to exercise a salutary influence on the minds of their countrymen, by exhibiting in their own lives the order and belief of our Church, and taking such a part in the spiritual improvement of their brethren as the Church may choose to commit to them. It is by such a spectacle—by living, not by arguing, that the conversion of our countrymen is to be wrought. Hereafter, indeed, we do hope to place you in the midst of property of your own, and to unite in your hands the regular parochial charge of it, with the interest of a landed proprietor; that the great experiment may be made of bringing to bear on the condition of this country, the united influences of a holy clergy and of religious landlords—the only combination of powers by which it can be rescued from its present evils. But until our funds enable us to accomplish this great object, your sphere of action must be limited. And the earnest injunctions of the Governors of the College must be laid upon all its members, that they abstain from trespassing the slightest point on the duties of the parish in which it is now placed; giving their aims through the recommendation of its minister; not admitting even your day-labourers to partake in the instruction which you will give to your own domestics, without a recommendation from him; assisting it, may be, but only by his direction, in his schools, or in visiting his people; and not allowing our own daily service, which his ordship the Bishop of the diocese has promised to sanction, to prevent such an attendance at the parish church as may evidence the grand principle of respecting strictly the parochial order and regular polity of the Church. At present, such warnings may appear needless; but it is in little acts, that great principles are best evidenced, and great habits formed.

It is, Mr. Warden, has been a digression. I was about to say, that the Founders of this College in framing their plan, did not confine their view to the Irish language. They looked still farther. As soon as they saw the necessity of establishing a place of education for one object, they resolved to undertake the work on a scale and upon principles which would render it worthy the devotion of their lives, and an offering available to the service of the great Head of the Church, even when the Irish language should become extinct.

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