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FATHER BURKE'S LECTURE

"The Volunteers of '82"

THE SOPHISTRIES OF FROUDE REPUTED.

(From the N. Y. Irish American.)

The following lecture was delivered by the Rev. Father Burke, on the 17th of October, in the Academy of Music, New York City: Ladies and Gentlemen:—Before I proceed to the subject of my lecture, which is one of the most glorious in the history of Ireland—namely, the "Volunteer Movement of 1792"—circumstances oblige me to make a few preliminary remarks. I have known in Ireland, and out of Ireland, many Englishmen; I have esteemed them; and I have never known yet an Englishman who lived for any length of time in Ireland without becoming a lover of the country and of its people. Their proverbial love for Ireland was on their faces, in olden time, as a reproach. It was said of the English settlers that they were "more Irish than the Irish themselves." Now, an English gentleman has come amongst us, great in name, great in learning, and also professing a love of our Irish nation, and our Irish people. But there is an old proverb that says: "No man can tell where the shoe pinches so well as the man that wears it" (laughter). I would not mind or pay much attention to an old bachelor's description of the joys of matrimony (renewed laughter); nor would I pay much heed to the description of the sorrows of a man who had lost his wife, as described to me by a man who never had a wife (increased merriment). And so, in like manner, when an Englishman comes to describe the sorrows and miseries of Ireland, or when he comes to impute them to their causes, the least that can be said is that he must look upon this question from the outside; whilst a man of Irish blood, of Irish name, and of Irish birth, such as I am, looks upon them, and is able to say: "My fathers before me were the sufferers, and I myself have beheld the remnants of their sorrow" (cheers). With the best intentions possible, a public lecturer may sometimes be a little mistaken, or he may be reported badly, or his words may convey a meaning which, perhaps, they were not intended to convey. I read, for instance, this morning, that this learned and, no doubt, honorable man, speaking of the "Golden Age" of Ireland, said that we Irish were accustomed to look upon the time that went before the English invasion as the "Golden Age" of Ireland; and then he is reported to have gone on to say: "And yet, for two centuries that preceded the English invasion, all was confusion, all was bloodshed in Ireland." It is perfectly true; but the "Golden Age" of Ireland is not precisely the two centuries that went before the English invasion. Irish history is divided into three great periods, from the day that our fathers embraced Christianity, when St. Patrick preached to them the Catholic faith, early in the fifth century, and Ireland embraced it (cheers). For three hundred years after Patrick's preaching, Ireland enjoyed a reign of peace and of sanctity, which made her the envy

and the admiration of the world; and she was called by the surrounding nations, "The Island home of Saints and of scholars." Peace was upon her hills and in her valleys. Wise Brehon laws governed her. Saints peopled her monasteries and convents; and students, in thousands, from every clime, came to Ireland to light at her pure blaze of knowledge the lamp of every art and of every highest science (great cheering). This is the evidence of history; and no man can contradict it. But at the close of the eight century, the Danes invaded Ireland. They swept around her coasts, and poured army after army of invasion in upon us. For three hundred long years, Ireland had to sustain that terrific Danish war, in defence of her religion and of her freedom. She fought; she conquered; but the hydra of invasion arose again, and again, in the deadly struggle; and, for the nation, it seemed to be an unending, unceasing task. An army was destroyed to-day, only to yield place to another army of invasion to-morrow. What was the consequence? The peace of Ireland was lost; the morality of the people was shattered and disturbed by these three hundred years of incessant war. Convents and monasteries were destroyed, churches were pillaged and burned; for the men who invaded Ireland were Pagans, who came to lay the religion of their Pagan gods upon the souls of the Irish people. What wonder if, when Ireland came forth from that Danish war, after driving her invaders from her soil,—what wonder if the laws were disregarded, if society was shaken to its base, if the religion of the people was greatly injured and their morality greatly influenced for the worse by so many centuries of incessant war. When, therefore, the historian or lecturer, speaks of the time preceding the English invasion as the "Golden Age" of Ireland, let him go back to the days before the Danes invaded us. No Irishman pretends to look upon the three hundred years of Danish warfare as the "Golden Age," for, truly, it was an age of blood. The confusion that arose in Ireland was terrible.—When the Danish invaders were, at length, overthrown by the gallant king who was slain upon the field of Clontarf, the country was divided, confusion reigned in every direction; and her people scarcely yet breathed after the terrific struggle of three hundred years. Yet, in the brief period of sixty years that elapsed from the expulsion of the Danes, before the landing of the Anglo-Normans, we find the Irish Bishops assembled, restoring essential and salutary laws to the Church. We find St. Malachi, one of the greatest men of his day, Primate of the See of Armagh; and on the Archbishopric throne of Dublin, the English invading tyrant found an Irish Prince, heart and hand with his people, who was ready to shed his blood for his native land; and that man was the great St. Laurence O'Toole (loud cheers). It has been asserted also that the Danes remained in Ireland. It is true that they founded the cities of Waterford, Wexford, and Dublin. The Danes remained there; but how did they remain there? They conformed to the manners and customs of the Irish people; they submitted to the Irish laws; they adopted the Catholic religion, and became good and fervent Christians. On these conditions they were permitted to remain in Ireland. It is all nonsense to say that they remained by force.—What was easier for the victor of Clontarf, when he had driven their Pagan fellow-warriors into the sea,—what was easier than for him to turn the force of the Irish arms against them, and drive them also into the sea that lay before him? No; the Danes remained in Ireland because they became Irish; aye, "more Irish than the Irish themselves." What were the men whose brave hearts so loved Ireland, that in her cause, they forgot all prudence and all care for their lives? Who were the men of '98? They were the fighting men of Wexford and of Wicklow; they were the men of Danish blood and name, the Roohes and the Furlongs; but they loved Ireland as well, if not more, than our fathers did (loud cheers). It has been asserted, also, that,—such was the confusion, and such the disruption of society,—that "there was one man above all others necessary; and he was the policeman" (laughter). Well, now, the policeman is a very ornamental, and, sometimes, though perhaps rarely, a very useful member of society. And, according to the statement as reported, the Pope selected a policeman, and sent him to Ireland; and Henry the Second, of England, was the Pope's policeman (loud laughter).—Well, my friends, let us first see what sort of a policeman he was or man likely to make.—Henry came of a family that was so wicked, that it was the current belief in Europe that they were derived from the devil (loud laughter). St. Bernard does not hesitate to say of the house of Plantagenet, from which Henry the Second came—"They came from the devil, and they will go to the devil" (renewed laughter). This man, who was put forth as "the

Pope's policeman," was just after slaughtering St. Thomas a Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury, at the steps of the altar. Three knights came straight from the king, and at the king's command slaughtered this English Saint,—this true Englishman,—for Thomas a Becket was not only a Saint, but he was a true Englishman, as Laurence O'Toole was a Saint, and the heart's blood of an Irishman (loud and prolonged cheers). Thomas of Canterbury stood up, bravely and manfully, with English pluck and English determination, for the liberty of the church, and for the liberty of the platform. And the tyrant king,—this Pope's policeman,—said, stamping his feet and tearing his hair,—"Will no man amongst you,"—(and mind you, these knights were standing around him), "will no man have the courage to rid me of that priest?" Three of them took him at his word, and went down to Canterbury. At the Altar they found the Saint; and, at the foot of the altar, with their swords, they hacked his head and spattered his blood upon the very altar. That blood was red upon the hands of the English tyrant. And is that the man, I ask you, that the Pope, of all others, had chosen to send to Ireland to restore order! Oh! but men will say, "the Pope did it; there is the document to prove it; the Bull of Adrian the Fourth." Well, now, my friends, listen to me for a moment. If a sheriff's officer came into your house to turn you out on the street, would not the first question you would put to him be,—"Sir, show me your warrant." And, if he said, "I have no warrant," the next thing you would do would be to kick him out (renewed laughter). Henry the Second came to Ireland,—men say to-day that he came upon the Pope's authority,—with the Pope's Bull in his pocket. If he did why did he not show it when he came to Ireland? If he had that document, he kept it a profound secret. If he had it in his pocket, he kept it in his pocket; and no man ever saw it or heard of it. There was only one man in Ireland, on that day when the English invaded us,—there was only one man in Ireland that had a mind and heart equal to the occasion; and that man was the Sainted Archbishop of Dublin, Laurence O'Toole (great applause). He was the only man in Ireland that was able to rally the nation. He succeeded in bringing sixty thousand Irish soldiers before the walls of Dublin. Henry the second was afraid of him; and so well he might be (cheers). He was so much afraid of him, that he left a special order that, when St. Laurence should come to England, he was not to be let go back to Ireland any more. Now, if Henry had the Pope's brief or rescript, why, in all the world, did he not take it to the Archbishop of Dublin, and say to him: "There is the Pope's handwriting; there is his seal;—there is his signature." If he had done this at that moment there would not be another word said; he would have run no risk; the saint would have never moved against the Pope; and Henry would have paralyzed his greatest and most terrible enemy. But, no; he never said a word at all about it; he never showed it to a human being. St. Laurence died without ever knowing of the existence of such a document. Henry came to Ireland, but he had no warrant; and the very man, who, if Irishmen had been united, would have succeeded in kicking him out, did not see it. When did Henry produce this famous document or Bull, which he said he got from the Pope? He waited till Pope Adrian was in his grave;—the only man that could contradict him: There was no record, no copy of it at Rome. He produced it, then; but it was easy for the like of him. How easily they could manufacture a document and sign a man's name to it. He waited till Adrian was years in his grave before he produced it. And I say, without venturing absolutely to deny the existence of such a document,—I say, as an Irishman and as a priest; as one who has studied a little history,—I don't believe one word of it; but I do believe it was a thumping English lie, from beginning to end (great applause). It has also been asserted that our people lived in great misery; that they burrowed in the earth like rabbits. That is true. Remember; three hundred years of war passed over the land. Remember that it was a war of devastation, that all the great buildings in the land were nearly utterly destroyed by the Danes. Convent and monasteries that were the homes of hundreds and thousands of monks, were levelled to the ground. It is true that the Irish were in misery. It has been asserted that there is no evidence of their ancient grandeur or civilization, "except a few Cyclopean churches, and a few Round Towers." I would only ask for one; if there was only one ruin in Ireland, of church or Round Tower, I could trace that ruin back to the first day of Ireland's Christianity; and I lay my hand upon that one evidence, and say: "Wherever this was raised, there was a civilized people that knew the high art of architecture" (great and

continued cheering). What nonsense to say, "there were only a few Round Towers." Surely, they could not have built even one, if they didn't know how (laughter and applause). If they were ignorant savages they would not have been able to build anything of the kind (laughter). But, if they were "burrowing in the earth," how were their English neighbors off? We have ancient evidence, going back nearly to Patrick's time, that the Hill of Tara was covered with fair and magnificent though, perhaps, rude buildings. On the southern slopes of the hill, catching the meridian glory of the sun, you had the Queen's Palace. Crowning the summit, you had the great Hall of Banqueting; within the enclosure was the palace of King Cormac. Four magnificent roads led down the hill-side, to the four provinces of Ireland, because Tara was the centre and the seat of the dominion. About two or three hundred years later, when St. Augustine came to preach the gospel to the barbarous, pagan Saxons in England, how did he find them? We have one little record of history that tells us. We are told that the king—one of the kings of the Saxon heptarchy—was sitting in his dining hall; and one of the lords, or attendants, or priests, said to him: "Your Majesty, life is short. Man's life, in this world, is like the bird that comes in at one end of this hall and goes out at the other." Why, were there no walls? Apparently there were not (laughter). Surely it was a strange habitation or house if it had no walls; for, even if it was a frame house, a bird could not come in at one end of the dining-room and go out at the other (great merriment). All these things sound beautiful until we come to put on our spectacles and look at them (renewed laughter). It is true that the Irish, after their three hundred years of war, were disorganized and disheartened, and that they burrowed in the earth like rabbits. Ah! to the eternal disgrace of England, where has the Irishman in his native land to-day, a better house than he had then? What kind of houses did they leave our people? Little mud cabins, so low that you could reach the roof with your hand, scarce fit to "burrow a rabbit." For century after century, the people that owned the land—the people that were the aboriginal lords of the land and soil—were robbed, persecuted and confiscated in property and in money; hunted like wolves in their own land; until, to this day, the Irish peasant has scarcely a much better house. I have seen, in my own day, the cabin which the English historian tells us of. And whose fault is it that our people are in that position? We are told, moreover—at least it is reported in the papers—that, "for nearly five hundred years, England had not more than about 1,500 men in Ireland," and that they were able to keep down the "wild Irish" with 1,500 men. There are some things that sound so comical that all you have to do is to hear them (laughter). When Hugh O'Neill was at the Yellow Ford, and the English Field Marshal was advancing against him, was it 1,500 men he had? And if it was 1,500, how comes it that the Yellow Ford, on that day, was choked and filled up with the Saxon soldiers' corpses (loud cheers)? Our history tells us that Queen Elizabeth had twenty thousand men in Ireland, and that she had work enough for them all. Ah! She had, this sweet English Queen! She found work for them all; there was Catholic blood enough in the land to employ twenty thousand butchers to shed it. Moreover, we are told that the Catholics of Ireland, at the time of America's glorious revolution, were all opposed to America's effort to achieve her independence; and that the Protestants of Ireland were all helping America. Well, listen to this one fact. The King of England demanded four thousand men—Irishmen—to go out and fight against America. The Irish Parliament gave him the four thousand men. There was not a single Catholic in that Parliament. No; they were all Protestants (tremendous cheering). When these men returned, covered with wounds, and began to tell in Ireland what kind of treatment they got from Washington and his people, they were hailed by the Catholic people of Ireland as the very apostles of liberty. Amongst them there were men that went out in that four thousand, but don't imagine that they went out to enforce the slavery of Ireland upon the American people. Lord Edward Fitzgerald was one of the four thousand (cheers). Was he ever an enemy of the people? No! he died for Ireland and for her cause. When these four thousand men were called for by England, we may readily believe that the majority of them were Protestants, because the English were not fools enough to be putting arms in Catholic hands, as we shall see in the course of our lecture. When they came to this country, who gave them the warmest reception? It was the Catholics of North Carolina (applause). It was Catholic America that met them foot to foot and drove them back, until Bur-

goynes, the famous English general, had to go down on his knees and give up his sword to the immortal and imperishable George Washington (great cheering). Out of that very American war—the uprising of a people in a cause the most sacred, after that of religion,—the cause of their outraged rights, their trampled liberties,—out of that American war arose the most magnificent incident in the remarkable history of Ireland. It is the subject of this evening's lecture (cheers). My friends, one word, indeed, is reported in this morning's papers, which tells a sad and bitter truth. It is that "the real source of England's power in Ireland has always been the division and disunion of the Irish people." There is no doubt about it,—it is as true as Gospel. Never, during these centuries, never did the Irish people unite: I don't know why. The poet, himself, is at a loss to assign a reason. "Twas fate they'll say, a wayward fate Your web of discord wove: And while your tyrants joined in hate, You never joined in love." No; the Irish people were not even allowed to gain the secret of union. From the day the Saxon set his foot upon Irish soil, his first idea, his first study, was to keep the Irish people always disunited. The consequence was, they began by getting some of the Irish chieftains, and giving them English titles; giving them English patents of nobility;—confirming them in certain English rights. On the other hand, all the powerful nobles who went down among the Irish people, who assumed all their forms, gained the secret, and became, as I have said, "more Irish than the Irish themselves" (cheers)—we find that, as early as 1494,—about the time America was discovered,—England was making laws declaring no Englishman coming over to Ireland was to take an Irish name, or learn the language, or intermarry with an Irishwoman. They could not live in a place where the Irish lived, but drew a pale around their possessions, intrenching themselves in certain counties and in certain cities in Ireland. We find a law made, as early as the period in question, commanding the English to build a double ditch, six feet high, between them and the Irish portion of the country, and, at the peril of their lives, not to go outside that ditch (laughter). To keep the natives divided seemed to be the policy of England, from the first day up to this hour. It must have been very difficult; because the Irish, from the evidence of history, seemed to say of the English, although they came as enemies the Irish were most anxious or inclined, to use a common phrase, "to cotton to one another," and become friends. They seemed very anxious to join hands. The Irish had appeared very often, in many periods of their history to say to England—"Although you are here, now, stay, in the name of God, as friends; the country is large enough for us all." But, no; the English laws didn't permit it at all. The English Lord Deputy (as the Lord Lieutenant was called in those days), was constantly striving to keep his people from the Irish; teaching them to hate the Irish; teaching them in all things to abominate and detest the original people of the country. And yet, whenever an Englishman escaped from the Pale, and got in amongst the Irish, in a few years he became the greatest rebel in the country (cheers). Then, in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, among the many other salutary laws that that good lady made for Ireland, she made a law that no cattle or produce were to be exported from the land. Ireland, at that time was prosperous; moreover, if not prosperous, it was at least able to export a large quantity of cereals and of cattle. It was a source of comfort to the people, and a source of revenue.—But the "good Queen Bess" couldn't see that; so she made and passed this law, that there was to be no more exportation from Ireland; and she condemned the people at once, to a life of inactivity and of misery before she let loose her terrible army upon them for their extermination. The Irish, thus turned aside from agricultural pursuits, because they had no vent for their agricultural productions, turned their attention, with their genius and their nimble fingers, to manufactures,—to the manufacture, especially of woollens; and soon Irish poplins, Irish laces, Irish woollen cloth, were well known in all the markets of Europe, and commanded large prices. Yet, we read that, after the treaty of Limerick, William of Orange, breaking every compact that he made with the Irish people, actually laid such a tax upon the Irish woollen trade, that he completely destroyed it and reduced all the manufacturers and all the tradesmen of Ireland to beggary and ruin. But the question does not deal so much with the great parliamentary question. We read that, from the first days of the English settlement in Ireland; they were accustomed, from