

"WHAT IS TRUTH?"

A synopsis of the Rev. Father A. J. Ryan's Lecture.

The St. Patrick's Total Abstinence and Beneficent Society have reason to congratulate themselves on the manner in which the public have appreciated their efforts in arranging for the lectures delivered by the eminent "Poet Priest of the South," the Rev. Father A. J. Ryan, of Mobile. Friday night Benedict's Hall was filled with an intelligent and enthusiastic audience, some of whom, although perhaps not agreeing in matters of faith with the reverend gentleman, could not but admire his frequent outbursts of genuine eloquence. The lecturer's style of address immediately riveted the attention of his audience, and holds them in wrapt admiration. He seeks not for superfluous words to finely round his sentences, but allows his poetic tongue to flash forth his grand ideas with eloquent fire.

The Rev. Father Callaghan, in introducing the rev. lecturer, said he considered it a signal honor. The introduction he considered unnecessary, for his name already shone with superior brightness; it had already been uttered on the lips and enshrined in the hearts of all those who could appreciate his genius as a poet, and his worth as a minister of the Gospel.

Father Ryan, on coming forward, was greeted with applause. Before entering into his subject, he referred somewhat scathingly to the writer of an anonymous letter in the *Witness*. "Anonymous," he said, was the name of a coward, who had not the courage of his convictions. (Applause.) Anonymous had said, among other things, that he was the son of a Southern slave-holder. This he did not deny. He could tolerate all personal insinuations in silence, but when "Anonymous" touched his Church he slapped his mother's face. (Applause.) The use of Latin had been criticized. The priests said, Mass in Latin, was the way the leading language of God's great affirmation. It was the Divine language in the sense that it was the dogma—the language of the Church. The rev. speaker then took his text from St. John's Gospel propounding Pilate's question to Christ, "What is truth?" Pilate, he said, had never forgotten down to the last day of his life the pale face of the Saviour, as these words were pronounced. This had been the question in the world ever since. The nations were looking for God. The Persians asked the sun the question; the Druid priests went into the forests and asked the mistletoe, the Egyptians, the rocks, etc., and the moderns, Truth was still asking the question. Truth, however, was not a thing in the abstract—it was a living personality. (Applause.) There must have been something in Pilate's mind as he gazed on the Saviour and asked the question, "What is truth?" He must have felt the power that slept in his fettered hands as he stood there, and marked how humble He could be without degrading Himself. Pilate's question rushed up from his Pagan heart to his Pagan lips unconsciously. The truth was looking him in the face, and yet he did not see it. It was the same way at the present time, Truth might be staring some people in the face and yet they would not see it. There were also some people in this 19th century who thought they could live without Truth. They could not do it. It would come to them in their dreams, and steal into their thoughts, for Christ had said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall not pass away." "What is Truth?" It was not a book, it was Jesus Christ.

A priest, said the rev. gentleman, is always inferior to his subject, because his subject is dogma—doctrine. He has no humble opinion to offer about Christ. He does not like to see his words reach through the clouds of misunderstanding, he wants them brought cut into the lucid and dispassionate accordingly. The Lord chose His disciples from poor fishermen, who might be likened in strength to grains of sand and battling against powerful waves, but these grains of sand were transformed into solid rocks upon which the Church of God was built. And this Church was given all power. "Go and teach all nations, and I am with you until the end of time."

Continuing, the rev. speaker said, "Vanity is the spice of life, and in the present age, seems to be the spice of religion" (laughter). Call the roll of the various creeds and denominations and ask upon what they founded their religion. They will say "the Bible," "the New Testament." Well, our Church was going on before a line of that book was written. Call the roll of these Churches and say if you believe in a God who contradicts himself, then, to your taste (laughter), pendulum swinging between "yes" and "no." (Renewed laughter.) The rev. lecturer then went on to say that they, as Ministers of the Church, only scoured the arena of doctrine. Their life was intended for one of sacrifice; they held in their hand the crucifix—and crucifix meant sacrifice. He did not measure men by their lips; for lips could lie, and the trick had been easily acquired,—but life could not lie. Professionals meant nothing; it was practice that was necessary to convince. Every nation, like an individual, had an avocation. Look across the world of nations and see one crucified on the cross of scorn, and out of whom came most of the men who wore the black cassock—he alluded to the Irish. The rustic of the dress of the Irish man could not be far off from the gallows. They lived for God, but never lost their victor's rage. In conclusion, the rev. gentleman alluded to Ireland as a nation whole, although last politically, was first everywhere Evangelically. In regard to intolerance he said everything was intolerant that was true. After alluding to the mission which he commences next week at St. Gabriel and asking their attendance, the rev. lecturer sat down amid loud applause.

As will be seen by the foregoing *resumé*, the lecture was very general in its character, and was, therefore, somewhat difficult to connect. Even at best a *resumé* of the lecture can give the reader but a faint idea of its excellence, either in an oratorical or literary point of view. The effort was, however, the best the rev. gentleman has yet made during his stay amongst us, and favorably impressed his hearers of his ability as a man of high literary attainments.

At the close of the lecture the Rev. Father Callaghan proposed the vote of thanks, which was seconded by Mr. B. D. McGibbon. The latter gentleman said, as a Scotch Presbyterian, he could not be expected to endorse the religious views of the Rev. speaker, but he was anxious to pay his tribute to genius and literary excellence. The author of the "Mystic" he was proud to have the advantage of knowing, delighted to have heard him, and he would give him the credit of having treated a more difficult subject in a manner that the keenest sensibility could not take offence at.

—W. Walcott yesterday in New-York completed the feat of eating two quills daily, for 30 consecutive days, on a wager of \$250.