

THE VILLAGE CONCERT.

An Ambitious Affair That Surprises Father Dan.

By Rev. P. A. Sheehan. "My New Curate." Late one evening in November a deputation waited on me. It consisted of the doctor, the schoolmaster and one or two young fellows, generally distinguished by their vocal powers at the public house, when they were asked for their fish and their song."

The doctor opened negotiations. I have a great regard for the doctor and he knows it. He is a fine young fellow, a great student, and good and kind to the poor.

Well, the doctor knew how much I appreciated him. He was not nervous, therefore, in broaching the subject. "We have come to see you, sir, about a concert."

"A what?" I asked. "A concert," he replied, in a little huff. "They have concerts every winter at Labbawally, and at Balredon, and even at Moydore; and why shouldn't we?"

"I thought a little. I was always under the impression, I said, that a concert meant singers."

"Of course," they replied. "Well, and where are you to get singers here? Are you going to import again those detestable harpionns that illustrated the genius of Verdi with rather raucous voices a few weeks ago?"

"Certainly not, sir," they replied, in much indignation. "The boys here can do a little in that way; and we can get up a chorus among the school children and—"

"And the doctor himself will do his share," said one of the deputation, coming to the aid of the modest doctor.

"And then," I said, "you must have a piano to accompany you, unless it is to be all in the style of the 'come-all-yens'."

"Oh, 'twill be something beyond that," said the doctor. "I think you'll be surprised, sir."

"And what might the object of the concert be?" they all shouted.

"Of course, the poor," they all shouted. "Wait, your reverence, said one diplomatist, 'till you see all we'll give you for the poor at Christmas."

"Visions of warm blankets for Nelly Purcell, and Mag Grady; visions of warm socks for my little children; visions of tons of coal and cartloads of timber; visions of vast chests of tea and mountains of currant cake swam before my imagination; and I could only say—"

"Boys, ye have my blessing," said the doctor, "but what about a subscription?"

"For what?" I said. "If we all have to subscribe, what is the meaning of the concert?"

"Ah, but you know, sir, there are preliminary expenses—getting music, etc.—and we must ask the respectable people to help us there."

This meant the usual guineas. Of course they got it.

The evening of the concert came, and I was very reluctant to leave my armchair and the fire and the slippers. And now that my curate and I had set to work steadily at our Greek authors, to show the Bishop we could do something, I put aside my Homer with regret and faced the frost of November.

The concert was held in the old store down by the creek; and I shivered at the thought of two hours in that dreary room, with the windows open and a sea draught sweeping through. To my intense surprise I gave up my ticket to a well-dressed young man with a basket of flowers in his buttonhole, and I passed into a hall where the light blinded me, and I was dazzled at the multitude of faces turned toward me. And there was a great shout of cheering; and I took off my great coat and I was glad I had come.

tra; and the doctor saw my amazement and stooped down and whispered: "Didn't I tell you we'd surprise you, Father Dan?"

Just then a young lad dressed like a doll, and with white kid gloves, handed me a programme.

"I charge a penny all around, but not to you, Father Dan."

I thanked him politely with reverence. "Who's that young gentleman?" I whispered.

"Don't you know him?" said Father Letheby, smothering a laugh. "I never saw him before," I said.

"You cuffed him last Sunday for ringing the bell at the Agnus Dei." "I cuffed that young ruffian, Carl Daly," I said.

"That's he," said Father Letheby. Then I thought Father Letheby was making fun of me, and I was getting cross, when I heard "Hush!" and Miss Campion rose up and passed on to the stage and took her place at the piano.

One by one the singers came forward, timid, nervous, but they went through their parts well. At last, a young lady, with bronze curls cut short, but running riot over her head and forehead, came forward. She must have dressed in an awful hurry, for she forgot a lot of things.

"What's the meaning of this?" I whispered, angrily. "Sh! 'tis the fashion," said Father Letheby; "she's not from our parish."

"Thank God," I said fervently. I beckoned to Mrs. Mullins, a fine motherly woman, who sat right across the aisle. She came over.

"Have you any particular use of that shawl lying on your lap, Mrs. Mullins?" I said.

"No," she said, "I brought it against the night air."

"Then you'd do a great act of charity," I said, "if you'd just step up on that stage and give it to that young lady to cover her shoulders and arms. She'll catch her death of cold."

"For all the money you have in the National Bank, Father Dan," said Mrs. Mullins, "and they say you have a good little nest there, I wouldn't do it. See how she's looking at us. She knows we are talking about her. And her mother is Julia Lonergan, who lives at the Pike in the parish of Moydore."

Sure enough, Phoebe Lonergan, for that was her name, was looking at us; and her eyes were glinting and sparkling blue and green lights, like the dogstar on a frosty night in January. And I knew her mother well. When Julia Lonergan put her hands on her hips and threw back her head, the air became sulphurous and blue. I detested to mind the scantiness of the drapery, though I should not like to see any of my own little children in such a state. Whilst I was meditating thus, she came to the end of her song, and then let a yell out of her that would startle a red Indian.

"Why did she let that screech out of her?" said I to Father Letheby. "Was it something struck in her?" "Oh, not at all," said he, "that's what they call a bravura."

I began to feel very humble. Then there was a hunting for shawls and wraps and such a din.

"Wasn't it grand, Father Dan?" "Aren't you proud of your people, Father Dan?" "Where is Moydore now, Father Dan?"

"Didn't we do well, Father Dan?" "And then Miss Campion came over demurely and asked:

"I hope you are pleased with our first performance, Father?" And what could I say but that it was all beautiful and grand, and I hoped to hear it repeated, etc. But then, when I had exhausted my enthusiasm a band of these young fairies, their pretty faces flushed with excitement and the stars in their curls bobbing and nodding at me, came around me.

"It's now our turn, Father Dan. We want one little dance before we go."

"What?" I cried, "children like you dancing! I'd be well in my way, indeed. Come now, sing 'Home, Sweet Home,' and away to Blanketland as fast as you can."

"We came to settle about the concert, sir," said the doctor. "We thought you'd like to see our balance sheet."

"Yes," I said, demurely, "and of course, if the balance itself is convenient—"

"It isn't so much as we thought," said the doctor, laying a small brown parcel on the table. "The expenses were enormous. Now, look at these," he said, softly detaching my hand as it moved toward the parcel.

I read the list of expenses. It was appalling. I cast a corner of my eye farther down, and read, without pretending to see anything:

"Total balance, 41, 11 1/2 d"

"Boys," said I, as I saw them putting their hands over their mouths with that unmistakable Hibernian gesture, "you have done yourself a great injustice."

"I assure you, sir," said the schoolmaster—"You mistake my meaning." I interrupted. "What I was about to say was this—when young men give their services gratuitously, and undertake great labor in the cause of religion and charity, it would be most unfair to expect that they would also make a pecuniary sacrifice."

They looked relieved. "Now, I have reason to know that you all have undergone great expense in connection with this concert."

There was a smirk of pharisaical satisfaction on their faces. But I cannot allow it. My conscience would not permit me. I see no record in this balance sheet of the three dozen Guinness that was ordered for the dressing room. And there is not a William Mesal ordered specially from Dublin; nor any mention of the soda water and accompaniments that were hauled up in a basket through the back window. Really, I cannot allow it, gentlemen. Your generosity is overpowering."

The deep silence made me look around. They had vanished. I opened the brown parcel and counted out the four shillings and eleven pence half-penny in coppers.

THE SAINTS' PRAISE OF MARY.

Since Pentecost, one great feast has followed another in swift succession. First came Trinity Sunday, then Corpus Christi, then the feast of the Sacred Heart. Last Sunday we celebrated the festivals of St. Peter and St. Paul. To-day, the fifth Sunday after Pentecost, users in the week which, ere its close, will bring to us the beautiful day of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, dear, as their special feast, to all who wear the brown scapular.

In the Carmelite order it is called "the solemn feast of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mt. Carmel, titular patroness of the whole order of Carmelites." It will not be amiss, following the train of thought carried on in this series of articles throughout the year, to turn to the proper offices of the saints granted to the Barefooted Carmelites, and translated from the Latin for our own Carmelite convent in Boston, and gather fruit from the abundant treasures therein contained. These offices extend through an octave, and present extracts from the writings of St. Ambrose, St. Augustine, St. Bernard, St. Anselm, St. Thomas of Villanova, St. Bernardine of Siena, St. Isidore, St. Epiphanius, St. John Chrysostom, as well as passages from Holy Writ, that furnish ample material for explaining to Protestants the Church's feeling towards the Blessed Virgin, while they augment our reverential love for her.

The capitulum of the feast, taken from Ecclesiastical, sets the keynote: "As a vine I have brought forth a pleasant odor; and my flowers are the fruit of honor and riches. I am the mother of fair love, and of fear, and of knowledge, and of holy hope. And the antiphons are appropriate to this: "Blessed art thou of the Lord, for through thee we have been made partakers of the fruit of life. Alleluia. Thou art made fair and sweet in thy delights, holy Mother of God. Alleluia. The Creator of all things, and He that made me, rested in my tabernacle. A great sign appeared in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars."

Now listen to St. Ambrose: "What more renowned than the Mother of God? What more glorious than she whom Glory chose? What more chaste than she who, undefiled, hath brought forth the body of Jesus Christ? What shall I say of her other virtues? A virgin not in body alone, but in mind, whose candid disposition was debased, by no windings of deceit. Humble of heart, grave in word, of prudent mind, moderate in speaking, fond of reading. She put not her hope in the uncertainty of riches, but in the prayer of the poor. Her outward appearance was the image of her mind, the picture of virtue. She fulfilled every duty in such a way that she taught rather than learned. Such the evangelist hath shown her; such the angel found her; such the Holy Ghost chose her."

Hear St. Anselm speak from England, Mary's Dowry, as it once was called: "After God, there is nothing more profitable than the remembrance of His Mother, nothing more wholesome than the devout love with which she burned in the remembrance and contemplation of her Son, nothing more delightful than the sweetness of pondering upon the blessed joy with which she abundantly fed in Him, and through Him, her Son. We have seen and heard many men recall these thoughts in moments of danger, and call upon the name of Mary so merciful, whereupon every peril vanished on the spot."

Hear St. Irenaeus, Bishop and martyr, in his book against heresies: "Eve was deceived so that she fled from God; Mary was persuaded to obey God, and this so happened in order that the Virgin Mary might become the advocate of the Virgin Eve. Moreover, it hath thus come to pass, in order that the human race, which hath been made subject to death through a virgin, may be set free through a virgin, the obedience of a virgin weighing in an even balance against a virgin's disobedience."

Then listen to the great Augustine, disciple of St. Ambrose, and marvelously gifted doctor of the Church: "Let us say something, brethren, in praise of the most sacred Virgin Mary. Yet, puny creatures that we are, contemptible as we are in our acts, what can we relate in praise of her, whom not one of us could filly extol, though all our members were turned into tongues? She of whom we speak is higher than the heavens; deeper than the abyss is she who alone hath deserved to be called Mother and Spouse; she hath repaired the losses of the first mother; she hath brought redemption to lost man. Eve hath harmed us by bringing death upon us; Mary hath succeeded us by restoring us to life. The former smote us, the latter healed us. For Mary, in a wonderful and inconceivable way, gave birth to her own Saviour and to the Saviour of all things. Who is this virgin who is so holy that the Holy Ghost hath designed to come to her? Who is she who is so lovely that God hath chosen her for His spouse? Who is she who is so chaste that she could be a virgin after childbirth? She is the Temple of God, the Fountain sealed up, and the Gate which is shut in the House of God. To her, as I have said, the Holy Ghost hath come down and the power of the Most High hath overshadowed her. She is a virgin nursing Him Who is the food of angels and of men. Justly do we extol her as blessed, giving unto her a matchless praise, for she hath shown unto the world an intercourse unequalled. O happy Mary, worthy of all praise! O glorious Virgin Mother of God!"

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the portrait of His Holiness, I will endeavor to describe him—an imprudent and dangerous task.

Cardinal Mathieu conducted and introduced me to the Pope.

It was 8 o'clock in the morning. All the Church bells rang the first Mass, and the streets again teemed with countless crowds of pilgrims.

The blanched appearance of the Pope surprised me, despite what I had learned about his gradual emaciation. The face and hands seemed immoderately white, the blue veins being quite conspicuous. His delicate form is arrayed in white from head to foot.

After the usual genuflections His Holiness asks us to be seated, the Cardinal on his right and I on his left.

The conversation turns at once to my desire to have several sittings for the proposed portrait. The Holy Father asks whether the afternoon would suit me best for light. I protest respectfully, and say that I prefer the morning. But the early morning is devoted to diverse audiences and receptions of pilgrims.

Everything is at last arranged to the satisfaction of His Holiness. While Leo XIII. is engaged in conversation for a few moments with Cardinal Mathieu on Church affairs I am painting the portrait. I have an excellent opportunity to observe the interesting physiognomy of the Sovereign Pontiff—small eyes that twinkle brilliantly; a sharp nose, expressing prudence and wisdom; a mouth that betokens extreme benevolence.

On the following morning at 9 o'clock I am alone with the Pope. My emotion is intense. I am to faithfully depict this grand personage on the canvass.

I forget my task in the rapture of the moment. The Pope seems to know everything that is going on in this world. What a wonderful memory! What vivacious spirit has this old man of ninety years!

"Your great sculptor, Falguire, who has just died, has degraded his art toward the close by painting nudes that shocked decency," remarked His Holiness.

"This is true," I replied, "but he shaped the St. Vincent de Paul of the Phantome, and at no time has an artist created a figure more radiant with charity and pose and gestures, more paternal and affectionate."

"What will you do with my portrait?" "I will give it to Your Holiness."

"I am much touched by your amiable intentions. And you will exhibit it in Paris?" "It is too late to place it in the Palais des Beaux Arts of the Exposition."

"Well, then place it in the building of the Catholic Missions in the Trocadero. You may apply to Admiral Lafont, and Baron du Teil."

"The will of Your Holiness will be executed with promptness."

"Have you witnessed the reception of the 15,000 pilgrims yesterday?" "I had the joy to see this, one of the greatest spectacles in the world, and I shall reproduce this scene as best I can for posterity."

"This will be beautiful. I hope to live to see it."

In this strain the conversation continued. To those who think that the last day of the Pope is near, I only want to say that he speaks with the vigor of a young man.

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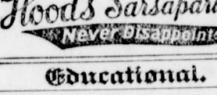
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