

The True Witness,

AND

CATHOLIC CHRONICLE.

VOL. XXII.

MONTREAL, FRIDAY, AUG. 9, 1872.

NO. 52.

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FATHER BURKE'S LECTURE ON The National Music of Ireland.

(From the New York Metropolitan Record.)
The Rev. Father Burke delivered the following lecture, in the Academy of Music, New York, on the 31st of May:—

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN: The subject on which I propose to address you this evening is ready, I am sure, sufficiently suggested to you by this beautiful harp which stands before me. (Applause.) The subject of the lecture is "The National Music of Ireland, and the Bards of Ireland, as recorded in the history of the Nation." I have chosen this lecture, my dear friends, whereon to address you, because amongst the titles of the most ancient land of my birth, we find her, not only entitled "The Island of saints and of scholars," but we, also, find that one of Ireland's most ancient titles was, "The Island of Song." She is the only one amongst the nations that exhibits upon her national banner a musical instrument. (Applause.) Other nations, advancing to the fight unafraid to the breeze of Heaven their national banner, upon which is some emblem of their prowess and of their glory. It is, perhaps, a lion rampant in a field of gold; or it is, perhaps, a shield with all the quarterings of its ancient heraldry upon it; but in the days when Ireland was a nation, in the days when her armies arose in her name to assert her sovereignty, and when Irish soldiers stood entrenched upon Irish battle-fields for their native land, the banner that floated over their head, as it spread out its green folds to the winds of heaven, displayed the Harp of Erin, the type of her national existence. (Loud applause.) That which the national banner attested the history of our native land proves, that amongst all the nations, Ireland was distinguished, from remotest times, by the tradition of her most excellent music.

Before, however, I approach more nearly the subject of our national music, it is necessary that we should consider, briefly, the philosophy of this divine science. You know, my friends, that there are two natures united in man. There is the nature of the body—gross, material, sensual and corruptible, but in that perishable body, there is enshrined a pure spirit, fashioned into the most glorious image and likeness of the Almighty God, namely; the soul of man; spiritual in its nature, like the God, who made it, lofty in its aspirations, not clinging to the earth, but rather seeking the upper air and the higher things of Heaven, sublime in its intelligence and magnificent in the freedom of its will—this soul, which is enshrined in the body of man, comes from Heaven as the body comes from earth. For, when the Creator's hand formed, out of the slime of the earth, the human body, He breathed into it the inspiration of life and of His own divine and spiritual existence, which was made present in the soul of man and which he received from the lips of God Himself. But, these two natures or beings are so united in the one creature, man, that, high and glorious as the soul is, it derives all its knowledge, all its joy and all the fruition of its intellectual existence from the senses of the body. It is made dependent upon the body for all its ideas and for all its emotions, and through these five senses—the eye that sees, the hand that feels, the tongue that tastes and so on, does the soul derive all the fullness and the exercise of her spiritual being. Now;

in this soul of man, thus dependent upon the senses, there is an intelligence capable of thought and capable of deep reflection. There is, moreover, an imagination, capable of picturing distant things. There is a memory, capable of calling up scenes, that have, long since, disappeared, and that exist only in that wonderful power of the soul. There is, moreover, an ear, capable of being excited and quickened to the grandest emotions and impulses under every passion that agitates the spiritual nature of man. In the connection between the soul and the five senses, we find that the master sense of man is the sight. The greatest privation that, ordinarily speaking, man could suffer is the loss of sight. The keenest and the most universal pleasure of life is that which the eye brings to the soul, by conveying to the spirit the images of the external things that pass around us—the beauty of the landscape, the grandeur of the mountains, the silver flow of the stream, the beauty of animated nature—all this is brought to the soul through the eye; but the appeal that the sense of sight makes is rather to the mind and to the intelligence, provoking thought and inviting reflection, whilst the sense of hearing is still more necessary than that of sight. It conveys its impressions more directly, more immediately and spiritually to the soul and acts more directly upon the heart, upon the spirit of man and upon his affections than the evidences of his sight. The sense of hearing is the most necessary of all the senses, for it is by hearing that the very highest grace of God—divine faith—comes into the soul of man. "Faith," says the Apostle, "comes by hearing, and hearing by the announcing of the Word of God." It is by the sense of hearing that man communicates most intellectually and directly with his fellow-man, and, although the absence of sight may cut a man off more from external nature, still the absence of the sense of hearing cuts him off more, isolates him more and separates him more widely from all communication of thought, of intellect, and of sympathy with his fellow-men. The deaf man, born deaf, without hearing, is far more separated and isolated from his fellow-men than the blind man. The blind man sees not the eternal beauty of nature. Oh! but he is able to perceive, and to thrill, too, to every high appeal made to his intellect. He is able to comprehend every heroic sentiment. He is able to enter with keenest sympathy into every want of his own nature, as reflected in his fellow-men. To the blind man the intellect of his fellow-man is open. He may read it through the sense of hearing, but to the deaf man, even the very beauties of nature pass like senseless things before him.—He cannot comprehend, for want of the sense of hearing, the soul, which is in nature itself, animate or inanimate. (Applause.) Now, amongst the appeals that are made to the soul by the senses, the most powerful, is, perhaps, the appeal that music makes when it falls upon the ear. It is, I say, the most spiritual, for the object of the sense of sight is something palpable, something gross and material, like these flowers. The object of the sense of touch is something, also, material, that the hand may lay hold of. It has body, it has compass, and it has weight. The object of the sense of hearing is, merely, the vibration of the invisible air. The air trembles to the sound that it receives. Thus, trembling, it forms wavelets, most delicate and invisible, and nearest it is, of all material things, to the pure, invisible spirit in man. Thus, trembling upon these waves of sound, the air touches the most delicate—the most refined of all the portions of the human body—the tympanum or drum of the human ear, and there the slightest vibration of the air resounds upon that most delicate instrument overveys, by the wonderful agency of sense upon spirit, a distinct idea to the soul of man. (Applause.) That sound may be deep; it may be immense in its volume, as, for instance, the sound of the cannon, roaring upon the battle-field; or the mighty sound of the ocean waves dashing against the shore. Still, it conveys to the soul of man some distinct idea of majesty, of terror, of fear. Or it may be again the gentlest, sweetest and the purest melody of the song of a little bird, or it may be the artless and inarticulate, yet most expressive laugh of the little infant in its mother's arms. But, it conveys a distinct idea, either of joy or of sorrow, and that appeal, through music, comes so directly to the soul of man, that emotions are stirred up within him, and his heart and his spirit are either soothed or excited, without a moment's reflection. If you look at a fine picture you have to dwell upon it for a long time before you can master its beauties. You have to compare it with others. You have to reflect, until the eye drinks in the depth of color, the delicacy of tint, the wonderful blending and harmony of one color with another—in short, all the varying feature, which it pretends to represent. But, if you listen to a splendid strain of music—the clash of a martial band, or the thundering forth of a mighty organ, at once, without a moment's reflection, you feel your soul stirred up within you, and emotions of the keenest and most powerful kind throb through the heart and the spirit of man. (Applause.) Hence it is, that of all the agencies that nature

brings to bear upon the soul, the most direct and the most powerful is music. Hence it is, that in our trouble it instantly begins to soothe us; that, in our drooping it raises our hearts and our spirits once more. Behold the first king of Israel! He abandoned the Lord his God, and Almighty God, in punishment, allowed an evil spirit to come into Saul and agitate him. Moments of racking despair, moments of terrible remorse, moments of ungodly anger shook the frame and the soul of the unhappy monarch. No hand of physician could heal him. No influence could soothe him, until his wise man sent for the young man, David, renowned amongst the sons of Israel for his skill upon the harp. They brought the comely youth into the presence of the agitated and despairing monarch, and as soon as David with skilful fingers swept the lyre and brought forth the soul of harmony that was there, it fell upon the troubled King's spirit, like the moonlight upon the waters of the sea. It shed a light around the darkness of his despair; it cheered him in his gloom; it soothed him in his sorrow, and he, who a moment before was raging as a maniac through the halls of his palace, at the sound of the young man's harp, sat down and wept and reconciled himself to the greatness of his sorrow, and no longer despaired; even though face to face with the justice of an angry God. (Applause.)

The effect of music upon the memory is simply magical. Have you, ever, my friends, tested it? Is there anything in this world that so acts upon our memory as the sound of an old familiar song that, perhaps, we have not heard for years. We hear it, perhaps, in some lonely glen in dear old Ireland. (Applause.) We have been familiar from our youth with the sound of that ancient melody as the peasant sang it when the horses ploughed the field, as the old woman murmured it while she was rocking the child, or as the milkmaid chanted it while she was milking the cows in the evening. It was one of the traditions of our young hearts and of our young senses; but leaving the Green Isle we go out amongst a strange people and we hear strange words and strange music. The songs of our native land are unknown or forgotten, until upon a day, perhaps, as we are passing we hear the old song sang again. Oh! in an instant, with magic power, the sound of the old familiar notes through the halls of the memory with the dead. There arises, out of their graves, the friends of our youth, the parents and the aged ones whom we loved and revered. Our first love rises out of the grave in all the freshness of her beauty, and so they through the halls of the memory, and, once more, we breathe in the past, and we live with the friends whom we expected never to think of again. (Applause.) Well does the poet describe it when he says:

When through life unblest we rove,
Losing all that made life dear,
Should some notes we used to love,
In days of boyhood meet our ear.
Oh! how welcome breathes the strain!
Wakening thoughts that long have slept;
Kindling former smiles again,
In faded eyes that long have wept!

Like the gale that sighs along
Beds of oriental flowers
Is the grateful breath of song
That once was heard in happier hours;
Filled with balm, the gale sighs on,
Though the flowers have sunk in death,
So, when pleasure's dream is gone,
Its memory lives in music's breath!

Music—oh! how faint! how weak,
Language fades before thy spell!
Why should feeling ever speak,
When thou canst breathe her soul so well;
Friendship balm words may feign,
Love's are even more false than they;
Oh! 'tis only music's strain
Can sweetly soothe, and not betray.

(Applause.)

No words of mine can exaggerate the power that music has over the soul of man. When the glorious sons of St. Ignatius—(applause)—the magnificent Jesuits—went down to South America to evangelize the native Indians, the hostile tribes with their chieftains lined the river banks, hideous in their war paint, and stood ready to send the poisoned arrows into the hearts of these holy men. They would not listen to them. They would not open their hearts to their influence until, at length, upon a certain day these Jesuit missionaries were upon the river in an open boat. The banks on either side were lined with angry and inflamed warriors thirsting for the blood of the saints, when one of these children of God took a musical instrument and began to play sweet chords, and the others lifted up their voices and sang. Sweetly and melodiously they sang, voice dropping in after voice, as they sang the praises of Jesus and of Mary. The woods resounded to their peaceful chants. The very birds upon the trees hushed their song that they might hear; and the savages threw down the river, swam to the boat, and listened with captivated hearts to the strains of music. And thus, upon the wings of song, did the Divine faith and the grace of Christianity reach the savage, rugged breasts of these Indians.—(Loud applause.)

What shall we say of the power of music in stirring up all the nobler emotions of man?

The soldier arrives, after his forced march, tired and worn out, upon the battlefield. He hopes for a few hour's rest before he is called upon to put forth all his strength. The bugle sounds in the morning, and this half-rested man is obliged to stand to his arms all day, to face death in a thousand forms. The tug of war lasts the whole day long, now retreating, now advancing, every nerve braced up, every emotion excited within him, until at length nature seems to yield, and the tired warrior seems scarcely able to wield his sword for another hour. Then the martial music strikes up; then the trumpets send forth their sound to some grand national air; then is heard the loud drum resounding and the clash of the cymbal, and the fire is roused in the man.—Drooping and faint, and perhaps wounded, he springs to his arms again. Every noblest emotion of valor and of patriotism is roused within him, and to the sound of this music, and to the inspiration of this national song, he rushes to the front of the battle and sweeps his enemy from the field. (Loud applause.)

Thus, when we consider the nature and philosophy of music, do we find that it is, of all other appeals to the senses, the most spiritual; that it is, of all other appeals to the soul, the most powerful; that it operates not so much in provoking the mind to reflection as in exciting the memory, as in exciting the imagination and causing the spirit and the passions of man to rise to noble efforts and to thrill to sublime emotions and influences. And, therefore, I say that it is, of all other sciences, the most noble, the most God-like and the grandest that can be cultivated by man upon this earth. (Applause.) More than this, it is the only one, of all the sciences and arts, that is inbred in man, which is natural to him and which is born with him. Every other fine art and science has its history. We come to a day when it did not exist. We trace it in its first beginnings, as, for instance, the art of painting or of sculpture. We watch with interest and delight in its developments. We know the names of its inventors and its great masters; but who can tell when music began on this earth? Surely it must have begun with the unfallen man.—Surely, when rising from the green mound, our first parent found himself in the fullness of his new existence; when he saw all the beauties of the newly-created world around him; when he heard the harmonies of the birds upon the trees; when he heard that indistinct yet most harmonious murmur, the waving of the green leaves and branches as the summer air vibrated through them; when he caught sight, before him, of the mysterious and glorious figure of his Creator, shrouded in some form of wonderful, sensible beauty, we can easily imagine that Adam's first act was to prostrate himself and to give vent to his joy, to his gratitude, and to the delight of his young soul in the harmony of melodious praise and in song to God. (Applause.) Music is inbred in man. It is the expression of joy and of sorrow, even without reason to guide it. The little child is born into this world. If anything pains that child it gives vent to a plaintive melody. It is melody still, and it falls upon the young mother's ear and tells her that her child is in pain. If, on the other hand, that child bursts into the loud, clear, high-ringing inarticulate melody of infant laughter, the mother smiles for she knows that over the soul of her innocent babe the mysterious gleam of sunshine and of pleasure is passing. Take, again the mother herself. She may never have tried to sing; she may never have attained her voice to song, and yet she lulls her child to sleep by melody, nature awaking in her the tenderest and the highest love, that of a mother for her child, and that love finds its vent in song. She is untutored, save by nature, and well, therefore, does the poet say,

The mother, taught by nature's hand,
Her child, when weeping, will hush to sleep
With the tender songs of her native land.

[Applause.] The earliest record that we have of this natural science in man, reduced to the forms of an artistic science, is found in the very first record of man's history. Our first parent, Adam, was yet living upon the earth when, amongst the descendants of his unfortunate son, Cain, there arose one who was called Jubal, and he, the Scripture tells us, was the father of all those that play upon organs and upon musical instruments. It seemed as if, my friends, it were a kind dispensation of a merciful God that the first musicians and cultivators of this science were to be amongst the children of the unhappy man who first stained the earth with blood. He was given up to unavailing sorrow and despair. The black cloud of God's anger and the distrust of his fellow-men had fallen upon him and obscured his faith for ever. Perhaps it was fitting in the designs of God's mercy that his own children should have been the first to invent those musical strains whereby they soothed the troubled spirit of their unfortunate father, and gave vent to their own sorrows and to their own afflictions in the sweet language and in the thrilling notes of melody and of song. Thus do we find the first mention made in Scripture of the art and science of music.

Passing now to the earliest nations, the Chaldeans, the Egyptians and the most ancient na-

tion of the Phoenicians, and we have upon the ancient obelisks in Egypt, dating from the very first times of our humanity, the lyre and other musical instruments carved in solid stone, that tells us how ancient was the science and art of song. The Hebrews cultivated it, as we know from the Old Testament. Thus, in the day when Solomon opened his temple in Jerusalem, all Israel assembled, and there were one hundred and twenty priests who sounded the trumpets within the sanctuary, and all the Levites in their hearing took up the song. The harp of David resounded again to other fingers than his. The golden string sent forth the vibration of glorious melody, and that melody was so pleasing to God and man, that whilst the people, enraptured, joined in the song, heart and voice, the Almighty God showed his presence and his pleasure, for a mysterious cloud filled the House of God, and the melody of the Hebrew people went up through that cloud to the ears of the Most High.

Now, history records that amongst these most ancient nations, before Greece became the great country that she was, before the foundations of Rome were laid, and before the Roman Empire was established, this most ancient nation of the Phoenicians went forth in their galleys out upon the bosom of the ocean, and, among other places they discovered and colonized, they came to a fair green island in the far western sea. They saw that it was fair to behold, fruitful and abundant to those who dwelt within it. They saw the beauty of the oak forests crowning the hills. They saw the lovely valleys, in which the clear silver streams, clear as crystal, met and embraced. They found a balmy atmosphere, unconscious of the rigors of winter and unconscious of the arid heats of summer. They found the whole island wrapped in a mantle of perpetual green; for the mists of the ocean, as they swept over it, broke in refreshing rain. Captivated with its beauty, this most ancient people landed there and took possession of the island, and that land was the ancient land of Erin, which we call, in the ancient language of the Celt, Ireland. (Loud applause.) They brought with them whatever traditions of civilization and whatever knowledge of music they possessed. After a lapse of years another colony migrated, long before the Christian era, and landed in Ireland; and these were the sons of Milesius, an ancient Spanish chieftain. A Druid or archpriest of the Pagan religion among these ancient Milesians, who were Fire-worshippers, predicted that the Chief Cataldus should inherit an island most blooming and fair in the Western Ocean; that land was their destiny; and therefore they called it, its true language, Innisfail, or the land of destiny. (Applause.) They set out in search of it. To find it was the dream of their days. The oracles told them that it was to be either their home or their grave; and the poet thus describes their landing in Ireland:

They came from a land beyond the sea,
And now o'er the Western main
Set sail, in their good ships, gallantly,
From the sunny land of Spain.
"Oh, where is the Isle we have seen in our dreams,
Our destined home or grave?"
Thus sang they as, by the morning beams,
They swept the Atlantic wave.

When lo! where afar o'er ocean shines
A sparkle of radiant green,
As though in their depth lay emerald mines,
"This land through the waves was seen."
"Tis Innisfail! 'tis Innisfail!"
Rang o'er the echoing sea;
Whilst, bending to heaven, the warriors hail
The home of the brave and the free.

(Loud applause.) Landing in Ireland, these Milesians established, long before Ireland became Catholic, a Celtic or Milesian constitution, with fixed laws, a fixed form of government, an elective monarchy. The country was divided into four provinces, each ruled by a chieftain with the title of king, and one elected governor of all by the title of Ardrioh, or higher king. His seat was in the centre of the island; his palace crowned the brow of a hill in Meath, and the name of that hill was Tara. (Applause.) Now, under this Milesian constitution of ancient Ireland, the first place was held by the monarch. After him came the princes of his own blood; and immediately after these, in all public celebrations, at the council table and in the halls of the monarch, the first place was assigned to the minstrels or the bards. (Applause.) And why? They were the historians of the nation. They enshrined all the annals of our Irish history into song. They struck the ancient, time-honored harp of Ireland, and to the measures of a fresh, beautiful, flowing melody, they wedded the record of heroes and monarchs and the great men of the land, and they sent the history of Ireland, floating down upon the stream of the nation's traditions, upon the wings of melody. Every king and every hero knew that his only chance of immortality was to find a name and a place in the song of the bards. Every man knew that unless he were a tried man—tried in council, tried upon the battlefield—unless he were able to attest his nobility, the true nobility of man, by heroic deeds; that no bard of Ireland would give him a place or a niche in the immortal temples of Ireland's melodious