

AN ELOQUENT ADDRESS.

"THE IRISH RIGHT TO FUTURE GREATNESS."

DELIVERED BY MR. MILES D. KILEY, OF ST. LAURENT COLLEGE, BEFORE THE ST. PATRICK'S SOCIETY OF THAT INSTITUTION, ON THE 17TH APRIL LAST.

In accordance with a time honored custom of our society, we are assembled here this evening to celebrate the memory of our Patron Saint. Year after year, and from this very platform, have our predecessors, in language at the same time beautiful and instructive, shown forth the virtues of one to whom the world is indebted for much that it now enjoys. And so successfully have they portrayed the glories of St. Patrick and of Ireland that I shrink from the task of imitating them, lest my inability, to do justice to the cause, might detract from the Emerald Isle the tributes which are duly her's. There is, however, another question which I am sure must concern, either directly or indirectly, almost every one present, and this shall form the subject of my discourse this evening, "The Irish right to Future Greatness."

Those of you who are Irish or of Irish descent will, no doubt, claim for yourselves a brighter future than any my faint words can picture; while our French brethren must ever feel that the virtues and advancement of the Irish race, reflect no little glory upon France's children, especially when they remember that St. Patrick, Hibernia's first and greatest liberator, was, doubtless, by birth, a Frenchman.

Mr. Kiley opened with a most attractive and learnedly historic account of Ireland in the pre-historic and pre-Christian period. Coming down to the dawn of Christianity in the land, he thus continued:

When in the year 432 of the Christian era, St. Patrick ascended the hill of Tara to proclaim from its heights the glorious truths of Christianity, he found in the Druid chieftains of Ireland resolute, determined and logical adversaries who neither deemed the intruder worthy of death, nor yet yielded to the force of his doctrines, until by sound reasoning, and even by miracles, he proved the importance of his mission and the veracity of his assertions. Even in their pagan state, therefore, they were a fair-minded and considerate people. No bigotry lurked in their breasts nor malice in their hearts. They weighed well every word that fell from the lips of the Apostle, and, with minds long steeped in the waters of civilization, they perceived the instability of their idolatrous worship, and regardless of the cost of the renunciation, they sacrificed their paganism on the altar of humility; then led on by truths and the chiefs of the nation, they bowed in submission to the God of creation.

The seeds of Christianity once sown in the Irish heart immediately took root in that fertile soil, and then, like some delightful flower, whose beauty attracts and fragrance purifies, burst forth into all its loveliness, and soon, as by the zephyrs of heaven, wafted o'er the lofty hills and through the green valleys of Ireland, until Catholicity became the ruling passion of the Irish. It is needless to relate how for centuries after the adoption of Christianity, Catholic Ireland made progress in science and virtue; how her fame spread into every land, and the Irish schools and Irish scholars became the all-absorbing topic of the age.

THE RECORDS OF THESE THREE HUNDRED YEARS,

when Ireland, unmolested, basked in the sunshine of Christian peace, marked the most glorious epoch in the annals of the nation. For from that very hour when the dark cloud of discontent first dimmed the lustre of Ireland's purity and Ireland's peace, her sun of independence has been gradually sinking towards the western horizon, never again, I fear, to shed the rays of his glory on the Isle of saints and scholars. This period of peace and prosperity was first broken in the eighth century by the arrival of the Danish troops on the shores of Ireland. The sword that was drawn to defend the country against these invaders was returned to the scabbard only after three hundred years of constant

warfare, on that memorable Good Friday, 1014, when Brian Boru drove the formidable Dane forever from these hallowed shores, and fell a victim to a treacherous assassin. Then, peace once more cast its light upon the land, and we realize, for the first time, what a curse war has been to Ireland.

Look at her now as she emerges from that dreadful conflict, drenched in the blood of her bravest heroes. Her brow is no longer adorned with the crown of unstained purity; the smile of innocence and peace has faded from her cheeks; frugality supplies the place of virtue; poverty has led to degradation; degradation to sin, and sin to crime of every description. The leaders of three generations have been swept away by one awful blow on the plains of Clontarf; the people without a leader vie with one another for distinction; civil feuds ensue, and the powers of hell goad them on to vengeance: through the instrumentality of a woman, the agents of the infernal are invited over the channel, and from that day, even until ours, a tyrant hand has pressed heavily upon the Irish.

If we pass quietly from this scene of misery over

ANOTHER SHAMEFUL PERIOD OF FOUR HUNDRED YEARS,

during which Ireland, disunited, defended her national rights against the powers of England, we will be in the midst of events which have a more direct bearing upon the subject in question. In the many conflicts which took place during these four hundred years, the Irish, though sometimes victorious, were often defeated, and at length became subject to the laws of England. The Supreme authority of this land is now in the hands of Henry the Eighth, under whose gentle administration several changes take place which make this particular epoch a remarkable feature on the pages of history. Within the sacred bounds of Catholic liberty, this amiable monarch finds too little scope for the excessive gratification of his carnal appetites; then raging, like some caged inhabitant of the sylvan confines, he bursts the sacred bands of matrimony, and, through the medium of the divorce-case, rends the veil of conjugal felicity, and blights forever the comforts of domesticity. But pride yet swelling in his breast permits him not to tarry here; he defies in his madness the powers of Rome; proclaims himself head of another church, and calls upon Ireland to give up her faith. Did she do so? I need not answer.

The Irish had often been deluded by the false promises of ambitious princes, they were, in fact, never united on political principles, after Henry the Second, King of England, at the suggestion of Dermot MacMurchad, invaded Wexford. But when they were called upon to give up their religion,

THAT SACRED TREASURE WHICH THEY RECEIVED FROM ST. PATRICK,

they sternly refused to accede to the demand, and were once more united on the basis of religion. Their power was now too far exhausted by the eruptions of the seven hundred preceding years to enable them to defend themselves against the force of the invaders, and they were, consequently, made to suffer every imaginable species of the cruellest persecution. Their homes were ransacked by a rapacious soldiery; their libraries and other institutions of learning were razed to the ground. To learn, in fine, became for them, treason, and it was a crime to be ignorant. By the devastation of the fields, and the confiscation of the Irish soil, the physical strength of Ireland was undoubtedly weakened; but by the destruction of her schools, and the plundering of her monasteries, the moral and the intellectual faculties of the nation were blighted, and the hopes of the people laid prostrate in the dust. For a time, indeed, the Catholics of Ireland were reduced to a condition compared with which the most abject form of slavery would be blissful. They had no voice in the affairs of their government; they were forced to pay tithes to an apostate clergy, and, by supporting an opposing power in the land, give fuel to the fire that consumed them. They were forbidden to practise the sacred rights of the holy code, for which they had given up all that was once and ever should be theirs. Yet, in defiance of all these calamities and persecutions, they never ceased to trust in God, but strained every energy, and embraced every opportunity to be faithful children of their holy church, and their confidence was not misplaced. For God

raised up among them at this critical moment the immortal O'Connell, into whose noble soul seems to have been centred the whole reviving strength of his dejected people, with which he shook the very basis of a crime-stained Parliament, and wrung from the hands of a prejudiced hierarchy emancipation for the Catholic world. In a word, he guided his shipwrecked nation through the narrow straits of British bigotry; instilled new hope and courage into the hearts of his injured countrymen. During his lifetime, Ireland, slowly emerging from her lowly state, seemed destined to regain, with liberty of conscience, the freedom she for centuries had striven to attain. For a time, indeed, hope rallied around her flag and the day of her deliverance seemed near at hand. But in the autumn of '46, there came a famine in the land, and O'Connell was doomed to see the people he had emancipated dying by thousands for want of bread; to see his last appeal for mercy in behalf of his starving countrymen scornfully rejected by the English Parliament. The sight was more than his noble soul could bear, his heart broke within him. In May, 1847, he breathed his pure soul into the hands of his Creator, and then, to paraphrase the words of the poet Campbell:

"Hope in Old Ireland spoke its last farewell,
And freedom shrieked when Dan O'Connell fell."

We must now leave this land, made sacred by the blood of martyrs, and follow its exiles into foreign climes, that in doing so we may more easily see how the blood of Irish martyrs became the seed of Christians in every quarter of the universe.

By observing the rise of Christianity, anywhere and everywhere, from that day,

WHEN IRELAND BECAME CATHOLIC,

to the present day, we find her sons among the foremost promoting its sacred cause, and with it, I feel assured, they are destined to rise from the lowliest to the loftiest positions mankind has ever occupied. To those, however, who would speak more at length on this question I resign all the rest, and will look only to America for matter sufficient to prove my proposition.

Were it possible to note the progress of the Irish in this country without speaking, too, of their religion and their persecutors, the task would be, for me, a less difficult one, and the narrative, to my hearers, a little more interesting. So much, however, have the joint struggles of fourteen hundred years given in common to Hibernicism and Catholicism that it is now utterly impossible to speak of the one, without having also some references to the other. That the Irish should be persecuted in America is a fact which almost defies credulity. Jealousy, nevertheless, and the superstition were prominent features in the character of the Puritans of New England, and while bigotry narrowed the scope of their intellects. Ignorance, the offspring of such a union led its dupes into a state of unrelieved depravity, which gave rise to that deep rooted prejudice and leaves and indelible blot on the character of the English colonist.

After speaking of all that America owes to Catholicity, the speaker continued: Among the many things of which every worthy citizen of the great republic is justly proud, are the freedom of its institutions, the liberty of his conscience and that broad-mindedness which lends an air of superiority to the characteristic American. From this the questions naturally arise: Who are the Americans? And to whom are we indebted for the above legacy? Leaving the Indian out of the question, all others who live, or have lived in the country, are either foreigners or of foreign extraction, because they or their ancestors came here within the last four hundred years, and as such, when they become citizens of the country, have equal claims to its rights and titles.

There has, notwithstanding, been a continual war waged by non-Catholics against the Catholics, the former declaring themselves to be the authors of all that is good and noble in the country, which they picture the Catholics as a superstitious people from whom no good could arise. It becomes necessary for us now, in consequence, to reflect a little on the policy pursued by the Catholic settlers of this country, and also on the policy of the others, that we may be able to judge for ourselves, which is more likely to be a source from which

that stream of liberality takes its rise.

At Plymouth, on the fourteenth of October, 1657, a law was passed, the following extract from which will clearly display a liberal

POLICY OF THE PURITANS

of New England: "And it is further enacted," says this law, "that every Quaker who shall come within this jurisdiction shall, for the first offence, have his ear cut off; and for the second offence shall have the other ear cut off, etc. And for every Quaker, be he or she, that shall a third time herein again offend, shall have their tongues bored through with a hot iron." "It is hard to say," says an eminent writer of recent date, "whether the Puritan was more ferociously in earnest in his persecution of Quakers and Catholics, or in his extermination of witches."

Let us now compare these evidences of enlightenment with what Bancroft, the historian, says of the Catholic colony of Maryland: "Yet the happiness of the colony," he says, "was enviable. The persecuted and the unhappy thronged to the domains of the benevolent Lord Baltimore, etc. Emigrants arrived from every clime; and the colonial legislation extended its sympathies to many nations as well as many sects. From France came Huguenots; from Germany, from Holland, from Sweden, from Finland, and, I believe, from Piedmont, the children of misfortune sought protection under the tolerant spectre of the Roman Catholic. Bohemia itself, the country of Jerome and of Huss sent forth their sons who were at once made citizens of Maryland with equal franchises." He further remarks that, "the disfranchised friends of prelacy from Massachusetts, and the Puritan from Virginia, were welcomed with equal liberty of conscience and political rights in the Roman Catholic Province of Maryland." The Protestants, however, soon became masters here, then the Catholics were persecuted for their tolerance and generosity.

Having traced the story of persecution against Catholics from 1796, in the days of President Adams, on down to the famous—or rather infamous—Know-nothing movement of the nineteenth century, the lecturer said that, to day we find the same band of insatiable ingrates, in the persons of those public disturbers of religious tranquility who prowl through the country infesting society by their nefarious impositions, under the initial title of A.P. A's, which evidently means American Peace Antagonists. Their conduct is already too well known to all to need any repetition from me, while their vain clamorings against Pope and Popery clearly show whose disciples they are. Suffice it to say, therefore, that they have not the sympathy of the honorable and enlightened classes, even among Protestants. Their aims, too, are so low and their accusations so groundless that they are unworthy of refutation, and are sure to be the authors of their own destruction.

Great, however, as America is to-day, she is destined yet to be greater, but she shall arrive at the summit of potency on that day only, when she shall be Catholic. That day, too, may surely come, the following figures and facts will prove. In 1784 when Pope Pius VI. appointed Rev. John Carroll, Prefect Apostolic to the American Church, there only twenty-four thousand five hundred Catholics in the whole country. Then less than one hundred and twentieth of the entire population. To day the Catholics in the United States number from ten millions upwards, more than one-seventh of the population, which is equal to one-third of the church-going people; far outnumbering therefore, any one of the sects, and showing in defiance of all the bigotry of her opponents a wonderful increase in the Catholic population, while the others are proportionally decreasing. Bryant, Boston's renowned, but bigoted poet, must have foreseen this when he said:

"Truth, crushed to the earth, shall rise again,
The eternal years of God are hers;
But error wounded writhes with pain,
And dies among its worshippers."

Yes, in the dreams of poetic fancy, Bryant must have visited the Roman catacombs, where, nineteen hundred years ago, the Catholic Church, the mother of truth, took refuge.

FROM THE TRAWLS OF PAGANISM.

He must have seen her, too, as she emerged from her subterranean confines, surmounting every obstacle, rising sup-