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A JOURNAL DEVOTED TO THE INTERESTS OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN CANADA

Reddite que sunt Caesaris, Caesaris; et quae sunt Dei, Deo.—Matt 22: 21.

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RICHARD LALOR SHEIL.

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SHORTLY after this the passing of the Emancipation Bill relieved Sheil from his incessant toil in the Catholic cause, and opened for him an entirely new field for labour and triumph. In 1830 he received the silk gown, and the same year he adopted the name of Lalor, on the occasion of his second marriage with the widow of Mr. Power of Gurteen, a lady who inherited large property in the county of Tipperary from her father, Mr. Lalor of Cremagh. Sheil now resolved to attempt to enter Parliament. After some disappointment and a defeat in contesting Louth, the Marquis of Anglesea offered him the seat for Milborne Port, which he accepted. His first speech in the House of Commons was made on the Reform Bill in March, 1831, and it produced a very favourable impression.

On the dissolution of Parliament after the rejection of the Reform Bill Mr. Sheil was urged by his friends to stand again for Louth. He hesitated, but at last consented, and this time was returned member. He now took a prominent part in opposing the plan for changing into rent charge the tithes which the Irish groaned under, and supported O'Connell in the Irish Reform Bill, proposing that it should be similar in its provisions to the English bill which had preceded it. His advocacy did not gain anything for the cause. The bill was only a poor imitation of the English one, and instead of giving more liberty to the Irish subject, rather restricted what little he had.

Sheil did not at first take part in the new agitation for repeal of the union, but as time passed on and he found that emancipation had not brought the changes it had promised, he determined to rejoin his old friends the agitators, by whom he was warmly welcomed. At the next general election, in 1832, he was returned for the county of Tipperary, which he continued to represent in Parliament till 1841, when he became member for Dungarvan. His wife's fortune rendering him entirely independent of his profession, he now retired from the bar, and devoted himself exclusively to a political career. His speeches on "Repeal of the Union" in 1813, "Turkish Treaties" in the same year, "Orange Lodges" and the "Church of Ireland" in 1839, the "Corn Laws" in 1842, "Vote by Ballot" in 1843, and "Income Tax" in 1845, were among the most important of those made by him in the House of Commons.

After the death of William IV. Sheil accepted office under government as commissioner of Greenwich Hospital, an appointment which was only temporary. In 1839 he was made Vice-President of the Board of Trade. The acceptance of these offices was resented by his friends in Ireland, and he was stigmatized in some of the more democratic papers as a place-hunter. That this charge was unfounded his speeches and votes in the House of Commons proved. The good of Ireland was always his first consideration. He opposed the movement for repeal in 1840, but did so under the conviction that it could effect no good end, and that the House of Commons would not concede it. In 1841 he was appointed judge advocate-general, a more remunerative office than the one which he held in the Board of Trade.

The repeal agitation was ended, and with the beginning of the year 1844 the O'Connell trial came on. Sheil ably defended John O'Connell, son of the Liberator, and in his speech exposed the system of jury-packing, bringing forward as a sample of this great injustice the case of Charles Gavan Duffy, and his notable trial for an article in the *Belfast Indicator*. About this time a proposal was laid before the House of Commons for providing unsectarian colleges in Ireland, and this measure was warmly advocated by Sheil, whose desire was to have the common truths of Christianity taught in every school.

In 1845 the death of his only son at Maderia, where Mrs. Sheil and he had gone for the sake of the young man's health, threw him into deep melancholy, and for a time he could not be induced to leave the island. Ultimately, in 1846, he was prevailed upon to return to England, and again to enter upon public life. In Parliament he found a new coercion Bill proposed. This roused him from his lethargy, and in an eloquent speech he renewed Sir Robert Peel's Irish policy, and urged the Liberal party to unite in driving the ministry from power. The result of this was the resignation of Peel next day, and the accession of Lord John Russell to power. On this change of ministry Sheil was appointed master of the mint, a state office usually held by members of the cabinet.

The year 1850 saw the close of Mr. Sheil's Parliamentary career, and the failing health of his wife caused him to seek a change of scene and climate. He went to Florence as ambassador at the court of Tuscany, where he spent some very happy days, surrounded as he was by treasures of art in which his poetical nature delighted. His familiarity with French enabled him to mix in society, where his wit and geniality were highly appreciated. In this city he died on the 25th May, 1851, of an attack of gout. His remains, which were conveyed to Ireland in a ship of war, are interred at Long Orchard in Tipperary. Several editions of Sheil's "Speeches" with a memoir by T. McNevin have appeared; also "Memoir and Speeches of Richard Lalor Sheil" by W. Torrens M'Cullagh, two vols., London, 1855.

In a speech delivered at the City Temple, March 22, 1877, Mr. Gladstone thus gives his recollections of the great orator:—"I am afraid no one here ever recollects hearing Mr. Sheil. If nobody recollects him there is nothing which I can appeal to, but if you will consider a tin kettle battered about from place to place, producing a succession of sounds as it knocked first against one side and then against the other, that is really one of the nearest approximations that I can make to my remembrance of the voice of Mr. Sheil. Then again, in anybody else I would not, if it had been in my choice, like to have listened to that voice; but in him I would not have changed it, for it was part of a most remarkable whole, and nobody ever felt it painful when they listened to it. He was a great orator, and an orator of much preparation. I believe, carried even to words, with a very vivid imagination and an enormous power of language and of strong feeling. There was a peculiar character, a sort of half-wildness in his aspect and delivery, and his voice and his manner were all in such perfect keeping with one another that they formed a great Parliamentary picture; and although it is now thirty-five years since I heard Mr. Sheil, my recollection of him is just as vivid as if I had been listening to him to-day."

THE KEY-NOTE OF LIFE.

"Do not say that you did not think." If you forget, it is because you do not care. If people care, they will remember." So spoke a mother long ago to a thoughtless child, who, pleaded, as an excuse for a rude act, that she had forgotten. The key-note of life was touched by the answering, admonishing voice. Forgetfulness is selfishness, and is shown nowhere more plainly than in the many "littles" which "make a mickle" in the trifling, hourly happenings which cause gladness or pain.

Courtesy, real courtesy, is so holy an attribute that one wonders why all true Christians are not polite. When we picture the tender gentleness with which our fancy always invests our Blessed Lord, how can we go about causing inconvenience by the breaking of an engagement; failing to withhold the word that will give comfort; neglecting with careless disdain the promised visit which would have carried sunshine into a darkened life; trampling upon people's most sacred feelings, like elephants upon a harp—forgetting, forgetting, forgetting! Our Lord did not forget. He cared so much that He could not forget, and if we cared ever so little, we, too, would perforce remember.

The courteous deeds which live in history, like the humble ones of every day, have been performed because self was forgotten. Sir Philip Sidney cared, and so remembered, when he gave the cup of water to the soldier whose necessity was his own. And our own General Washington lifted his hat to a poor negro through simple kindness of heart.

It is painful to see how many would be gentlefolk go to work in the most clumsy way, adorning the outward man with expensive trappings, cultivating the prevailing gait or driving a particular equipage, consulting the latest manuals of etiquette, and ending in complete and surprised discomfiture through self-love and self-consciousness. No one is so poor that he can not be gentle and polite; for courtesy is but another name for love. Love is gentleness "writ large." A man may wear a shabby coat; he may, through stress of circumstances, be rough of hand and forbidding of visage, but he will be a gentleman if he is gentle, and he will always remember if he takes the trouble to care.—*Arc Maria*.