Evening Telegraph

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 24, 1864.

O'CONNELL AS AN ORATOR.

From Temple Bar Magazine.

A stranger, bending his steps towards the hall of the Four Courts, enters the Court of Exchequer, and beholds a portly figure standing in the centre of the inner bar, with head erect and shoulders thrown back; he is the very embodiment of oratorical power. What is he doing? Addressing Mr. Attorney-General Saurin; descanting upon the farrago of helpless absurdity with which the honorable gentleman had regaled them; he is telling the court and jury that the speech distinguished by congenial vulgarity, and stained no poetry at all; and with unusual pathos he is browbeating the law-officers of the crown. That remarkable and most versatile man—"Hercules amongst the orators—is Daniel O'Connell, or more frequently called Dan. Behold, again, that round and stalwart form. Again he is seen in the Four Courts, pleading the cause of one who professed to have been injured by a man that which is dearest to all men—his personal honor. I say professed, because the client was one of those whose own character was questionable; yet he came forward, according to the present usages of law, to demand justice for a wrong which he had himself inflicted. The advocate pleaded the cause with great energy and eloquence; described the agony, real or assumed, felt by the husband, and the loss which he had sustained from the alienation of the affections of his wife, and brought tears to the eyes of the opposing counsel, who was likewise his political opponent and polemical antagonist—the courteous Mr. Serjeant Litton.

O'Connell had wonderful power over his auditors, quite as great as that possessed by Sheridan, or greater; he could deal with any theme in masterly manner. Now, in my judgment, it was a greater triumph to extract tears from Ned Lytton than a thousand pounds from a jury, because no one better knew than he did what a master of oratorical flourish his celebrated opponent was, and no one had stronger political dislikes than Ned. The appearance of the orator was greatly in his favor; he had a commanding presence; an eye like Mars or Apollo; a voice soft and flute; mellifluous or strong, overwhelming and terrible—the breathing of the flute or the roaring of the thunder.

He was not alone his voice that spoke, his hand, his eye, his mouth, his foot—each and all was a language of persuasion, coercion, insinuation, or imitation. Never in all my experience of men and I know one who had such power over the multitude; who so thoroughly ruled the people and led him; none so influential in swaying and controlling the minds and passions of his auditors, or who had more completely in his grasp the reins of the political Pegasus. His scowl was terrible, his anathema withering, his revenge crushing. I have seen a description of Brougham and O'Connell, in which it was said Brougham dispaged his enemies, while O'Connell contented himself with killing them; but in my opinion Brougham never excelled O'Connell in the resistless use of the scalping-knife.

Never brooked a single voice that chimed not with his own,
Woe, when he had power to crush, a rival near the throne,
Never spared a friend or foe, if such could serve his turn;
Gone to flatter and to fawn, as curse, condemn, and spurn.
Men was he ever known to hide or check his scathing hate?
Bold enough again to brave his matchless 'Billingsgate!'
Poets paint the good and bad with an impartial pen—
Grandest, blandest, boldest, coldest, best and worst of men!"

I wrote the foregoing lines at the foot of a poem by Dennis Florence McCarthy, which I need not say was unlimited praise; and I ask any candid person to assert that any human being deserves such a eulogium as this. If any one doubt Mr. O'Connell's ability to abuse in the most genuine Billingsgate style, let him read the dialogue between him and Biddy Moriarty, when, in mathematical parlance, he called her a whisky-drinking parallelogram, and the porter-swiping similitude of the bisection of a vortex.

I have seen O'Connell upon very great occasions; I have seen him conducting a great case at Nisi Prius; I have seen him on his political forum in the Corn Exchange; I have seen him Lear, an uncrowned king; I have heard him in all his moods—tender, ferocious, apathetic, sarcastic, scornful, satirical, political, rhetorical; and I hesitate not to say, that he touched each chord with the hand of a master. Never was a task easier when I listened to him spellbound, riveted to the spot, and wondering how such an orator could have been produced. In many respects disenchanted; and it is my opinion that after the passing of the Catholic Emancipation Act, and the Municipal Reform Bill, his mission in Ireland had terminated; and it would have been well for society, though possibly not well for those who had feathered their nests in other lands, if he had been promoted to the bench, and selected as Lord Chief Baron, to which office his talents entitled him to aspire, if not indeed to the very highest station on the bench—a consummation that constitutional restrictions could alone have prevented. I have nothing to say to his political career; still less have I reason or necessity to speak of him personally. I have no inducement either for praising or dispraising him. He was to me always courteous; and, upon one occasion, as the medium, as chief magistrate of the city of Dublin, of putting from the chair, in the assembly house, a resolution of thanks there voted to me for a matter in which I was then concerned. I therefore write without political rancor or ill-will. I am disposed to be just, and speak of him as I would of a celebrated character dead five hundred years; as one of the great orators from Demosthenes to himself. I have to deal with him merely as a tribune and as a great advocate—an orator, native, natural, persuasive, powerful, and unsurpassed.

That he was the best Irishman that ever lived I totally deny; still less do I think that he was the greatest man. Such assertions are simply absurd. This is a country of exaggerations; declamation is all-powerful in Ireland, at least with a certain class; and he who talks big, looks big, and is most abusive, is sure to be regarded as a very great fellow. So far with reference to the magnifying powers of our public speakers, I do not prone to exaggerate, because for an ignorant multitude you must paint in oils—mere water-colors will not suffice. To O'Connell, I do not imagine that the tribunes of old possessed more power over the Roman people than that great demagogue.

The Gracchi, Rienzi, Massaniello, Mirabeau, could not have had higher powers to lead and dismade the multitude than O'Connell. They, however, used the sword—he threatened to draw it. The Government awaited the fulfilment of threats; a few cannon dispersed the assemblage; and the peaceful agitators put up the emblems of war, with which they had garnished the scene of bloodless opposition. The Government laughed at his pasteboard and confectionery cuirassiers, his ginberbread, ginger-beer, and Aunt Sally processions, his mimic war, his ephemeral displays.

These remarks are not made for the purpose of parraging the courage of Irishmen. The words of Arthur, Duke of Wellington, in the House of Lords, uttered by him before Catholic emancipation was passed, must be acceptable to all impartial men:—"We must also consider, that without Catholic blood and Catholic valor no victory could ever have been obtained." Again:—"The hour of danger and glory is the hour in which the gallant, the generous-hearted Irishman best knows his own duty." In conclusion, his grace says, and the words deserve record: "My lords, it is a great additional gratification to me to advocate these principles in conjunction with a distinguished member of my family, so early at the head of the Government of his native country—a country ever dear to me from the recollections of my infancy, the memory of her wrongs, and the bravery of her people."

Such were the Irish on the battle-field when, in the expressive language of Scott, they "marched to death with military glee." But the Irish in a quiet procession of pasteboard heroes are of a different class. Who is there that witnessed the cavalcades of the monster meetings, and the return of O'Connell from Richmond Bridewell, not liberated by the judgment of the law lords, but did not perceive, in the procession that occupied the streets of Dublin a few days since, the whole description of theatrical manifestation? It was orderly, decorous, decently attired, and good humored; but in some respects the characters portrayed had as much to say to Ireland as the man in the moon has to do with an underground railway. There haunted, in dazzling attire, Don Cæsar de Bazan; then came a hero of Agincourt or Bosworth; next followed a composite of the Duke and Scaramouch, characters suitable for a carnival, but the converse of what was said of the Guelfs and Ghibellines—less Irish than of any other country in the world.

Of all the great speakers, O'Connell spoke slowly, with measured cadence and emphasis, so that his meaning might be understood; and his aim was to impress what he felt upon the minds of his auditory, at the risk of being considered monotonous and too prone to repetition, more than to say that which was novel and sensational. It is said that he never prepared a speech; that he never took a pen in his hand and indited what he desired to express. If he did not do so, he certainly was a perfect speaker; and his speeches might, in most instances, be printed in the same words as those in which they had been delivered. I have heard that he complimented one or two first-class Irish reporters—excellent short-hand writers—on having expressed his sentiments more clearly than he had done.

Indeed there are few, if any, extemporaneous speakers whose orations may not be improved by a judicious application of the rules of composition. The expression of his face was as varied as the tones of his voice; his manner as varied as either. He was master of all the avenues of the human heart; and I never knew him to be unequal to the occasion requiring his abilities. He was always self-sustained, self-reliant, and commanding. I have not, as I have already said, any reason personally to like or dislike him; still, I cannot help admiring the great power which he possessed; the mighty lever of eloquence, experience, and energy by means of which he moved his followers.

When he spoke, with steady look and form,
The people's shout was like a growing storm:
All feeble men to him at once gave way;
His was the great oration of the day.
However wise or brilliant they might be,
All sank to nothing when great Dan they see.
Again, again the dear king's audits roar;
In all thine life a crown an Irish king.
He breathes his scorn, the people feel his hate;
He smiles with joy, the people are elate;
He weeps, or seems to weep, the people cry,
True burning tears drop streaming from each eye;
He laughs, the people's sides convulse with glee;
He mocks, they jeer in bitterness mockery;
He sighs, they sigh; he wails, they wail;
Condemns, they curse; implores, they pray;
And with a marvellous, unequalled power,
And every phase of passion is an hour.
A vast, gigantic battery, he can sway,
Turn, twist, convulse—his movements they obey;
He stamps, he bounds, the passions dance and play;
And this goes on from day to day.
He speaks of war, invokes the god of fight,—
Troops hold him and their charge promptly to the flight;
Fills them with hope, invests them by charms,
They all turn soldiers and demand their arms;
They watch, they wait, and linger for his will.
But, lo, the tumult dies the waves be still!
The Prospero forms his mysterious wand,
The heroes vanish, and the troops abscond
As all things will form such portentious omens,
Breaks up the pasteboard of this moral farce.

MYSTERIES OF THE CLOISTER

A book has just been published in Florence, entitled "The Mysteries of the Neapolitan Cloister," which has produced considerable excitement in every part of Italy, and has already passed through several edisions. A correspondent of the *Standard*, writing from Tuscany, gives some account of this work, and of the state of monasticism in Italy. He says:—

"The book is from the pen of ex-Benedictine Henrietta Caracciolo di Forino, and bears a very different character from what this somewhat sensational heading might lead us to imagine. Painted in lively but veracious colors, and bearing throughout the impress of a terrible reality, the memoirs of Henrietta Caracciolo will mark an era in the history of public opinion in Italy upon this momentous social question. In an official sense, monasticism has received its death-blow in Italy; and the Parliament will soon set its seal to the decree that pronounces the suppression of a social bondage which, in the three cities of Rome, Naples, and Palermo alone, numbers no less than 30,000 victims of the two sexes, 'strangers to the past, enemies of the present, and sterile to the future of their native land.' The system, I have said, has officially received its death-blow; the convent no longer exists, or will specdily cease to exist, as an institution recognized by the State, and its fanatic inmates will remain immured in their living grave only for such time as their own caprice may direct, or so long as their intellects remain captive to the deadening influences of custom and of tradition; but a complete emancipation from the accursed thraldom must be effected from within rather than from without. The mind of the nun must be thoroughly aroused to the monstrous consequences of a system by which thousands of unsuspecting innocents of either sex are annually subjected to every species of barbarity, coercion, and moral torture, until the fatal 'yes,' wrung from their lips in an unguarded moment, closes the door on hope, and consigns them forever to the moral death of the cloister. The extraordinary success, however, obtained by 'The Mysteries of the Neapolitan Cloister,' is one among many other unequivocal signs that this national reawakening is at hand."

This Neapolitan Princess was immured in the convent of San Gregorio Armeno by her mother, who was a widow, and found her daughter an obstacle to her own matrimonial projects. The tears of the poor girl, and the remonstrances of friends who offered to protect her, were unavailing; and she was forced onward step by step until return was beyond the bounds of hope. She gives a curious description of convent life:—

"A monastery contains all the vices of a city without its advantages or its virtues. By resigning her flowing locks to the scissors, and by taking the vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience, a woman does not change her character; the only difference being that amidst the moral stagnation of the cloister her virtues remain without legitimate exercise, while her frailties or her vices are nourished and developed by the continual struggles of a soured and rebellious spirit at war with its cruel destiny." Accordingly we are not surprised to learn that, when not engaged in making pastry and comfits, or in the mechanical exercises of devotion, the inmates of the convent are perpetually quarreling among themselves, propagating the scandals of the little community, or plotting amorous intrigues with their father confessors. The Princess Caracciolo assures that "the frenzied passion of the nuns for priests and monks passes all belief; and that the jealousies and bickerings of the convent mainly originate in the perpetual competition of the young nuns to secure the monopoly of a young and captivating confessor."

The ignorance and frivolity of the inmates of the convent; their sordid avarice, except where it is a question of their own comforts; their inhumanity, or utter indifference to suffering, and their dishonest propensities, are illustrated by a multitude of instances. The author says:—

"Under their rough gowns of serge they wear the finest linen; they sleep on three woollen mattresses, and on pillows stuffed with down and fringed with choice lace; and although only the strictest necessaries of cleanliness are allowed to appear upon their toilet tables, their private cupboards are filled with the most elegant knick-knacks. They have no money upon their persons, but keep it under lock and key in a common room, where each nun has her separate drawer. They have the pious use of abstaining from fresh fruit on Fridays, replacing it by a plentiful consumption of preserves. It should be remembered that we are here speaking of a genteel monastery, inhabited for the most part by ladies of high lineage; in the case of more plebeian institutions the preceding remarks must, of course, be taken with some limitation. For the rest, all the factitious distinctions of the outer world are as jealously maintained in the convent as in the drawing-room. The existence of certain vices, however, can be explained only upon the principle that idleness is the root of all evil. Our author records the astonishment which she felt on being advised, in an undertone, by one of her companions, not to leave her box of sweetmeats in a certain place, "as if she ever saw it again, it would be a miracle." One nun was robbed of five piastres, another of a crown and a medal, another of a bran-new gown, the author of a holy water vase, and of a tablecloth, which was afterwards recovered with the initials half picked out. All the silver spoons of the coffee service disappeared one by one, and, to crown all, an image of the Virgin was on one occasion despoiled of a quantity of precious ornaments, which the thief managed to get smuggled out of the convent. The matter, however, was noised abroad and caused great scandal, but the missing objects were never restored. One morning a sum of six ducats was found to have been deposited, as a conscience offering, upon the plundered altar. This, however, did not represent the value of a twentieth part of the property abstracted.

Of the cruelty of the nuns to their own sick and suffering we have many sad instances, as well as the tyranny exercised by the richer and stronger over the weaker and poorer sisters. The dead seem, according to the writer of the "Mysteries," to be treated in the convent with as little concern as are the defunct members of a community of ants.

Hypochondria, convulsions, and madness are of lamentable frequency among the inmates of a nunnery; and in the book are found some touching narratives of the baneful results of so antisocial and unnatural a mode of existence.

The difficulties of obtaining release from a convent are powerfully illustrated in the history of this unhappy lady.

"After continued entreaties and in spite of the determined opposition of the Archbishop of Naples, who systematically opened her letters and as far as possible thwarted her plans, she obtained a Papal brief, enabling her to enjoy a short respite of suffering under the form of confinement in a retreat called the Conservatorio di Constantinopoli. She was, however, afterwards put under arrest by the civil power, and conveyed by force to the semi-monastic retreat of Moadragone, where she was exposed to new vexations, under which her health ultimately gave way. At length, after several more years of confinement, she was released on the declaration of two physicians, that the continued observance of the monastic rules might cost her her life or plunge her into a state of hopeless mental derangement. But the precious boon of liberty was not obtained without further annoyances and difficulties, and the steps of the exnun were continually dogged, and all her movements narrowly watched by the police, respecting which institution there are some particulars well deserving the attention of all who would form an adequate idea of what Naples was under the Bourbon management. But at the name of Garibaldi the rotten fabric of despotism crumbled into dust, and Naples arose bright and full of hope amid the ruins of the past. On this auspicious day the Neapolitan lady, while the air was ringing with plaudits and hosannas to the Great Liberator, withdrew to a church, and there made a solemn restitution of the veil, which she had donned against her will, and worn faithfully but reluctantly for twenty years. "At last," she says in the concluding words of her history, "I am happy, and in the condition in which God placed woman in the first week of the creation. And why, fulfilling the duties of a good wife, a good mother, and a good subject, may I not aspire to the treasures of Divine mercy?" The Church, however, refused to sanction the marriage, and the ceremony was performed by the minister of another communion.

OUR HYMNS.

It may not be an altogether inappropriate Saturday evening thought, that many of the hymns we sing upon the Sabbath are singularly unsuited for modes of worship. Not a few of them are monstrous in rhyme and totally destitute of elevating ideas. In the public manifestation of religion, as in the possession of it, sincerity of heart is of course the one thing needful. That possessed, the decency and order and beauty resulting from a conscientious employment of taste and talent are not to be contemned. They are to garnish religion, to modestly embellish all its impressions. The duty of worshipping God is not rendered less susceptible because all the gifts of mind and heart are employed to their most refined extent in its performance.

The beauty of one of Dr. Watts' most popular hymns is greatly marred by its execrable rhymes. In the sixteen lines generally sung of the hymn "Why should I start, and fear to die," only three words are joined to corresponding rhymes. *Die* is made to harmonize with *joy*, *are* with *there*, *meet* with *gate*, and *haste* with *passed*. The beauty of the last verse, especially, is almost neutralised. How can the heart be duly affected when the taste is outraged with such rhymes as are found in the following verse:—

Death can make a dying bed
Feel soft as downy pillows are,
While on His breast I lean my head,
And breathe my life out sweetly there.

Take the following hymn by TAYLOR: its rhymes are perfect, but its poetical merit is about on a par with the gratuitous contributions to the poet's corner of a country newspaper:—

How long sometimes a day appears!
And weeks, how long a week they!
Months move as slow as if the years
Would never pass away.
But even years are passing by,
And soon must all be gone;
I only pray that I may die
That long, long time with Thee.

The piety here is very good, but the poetry very bad.

As an instance of the decidedly familiar in church poetry, take the lines:—

Prayer is appointed to convey
The blessings God designs to give;
Long as I live I'll pray, and long as I pray
For only while they pray they live.

We have very beautiful hymns, but it has often occurred to many religious people of taste and literary culture, that the words by which they are accustomed in hymn-books to express devotion and praise are too often clumsily put together, or barren of ideas. We admire the purity, the beauty, the majesty, the sublimity of Scriptural language. Why should they not be seduously retained? Why should they ever be deformed and mutilated in versifications of the psalms, or travestied by the attempts of modern poets at hymns? The best treasures of the intellect should be lavished upon the poetry which we dedicate to the service of religion. Our hymns should include all that is most majestic in the domain of poetry. Faulty rhymes here and there are, it may be said, trivial errors. But in the first place, it must be remembered they jar upon a refined taste, and are too often made the exponents of what is little better than nonsense.

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TIME TABLE.
Commencing MONDAY, December 19, 1864. Trains will leave Depot, corner BROAD Street and WASHINGTON Avenue, as follows:
Express Train at 4.00 A. M. (Mondays excepted), for Baltimore and Washington, stopping at Wilmington, Perryville, Havre de Grace, Aberdeen, Perrymans, and Magnolia.
Way Mail Train at 8.15 A. M. (Sundays excepted) for Baltimore, stopping at all regular stations connecting with Delaware Railroad at Wilmington for Milford, Salisbury, and intermediate stations.
Express Train at 1.30 P. M. (Sundays excepted) for Baltimore and Washington, stopping at Chester, Wilmington, Elkton, Perryville, and Havre de Grace.
Express Train at 3.30 P. M. (Sundays excepted) for Baltimore and Washington, stopping at Wilmington, Newark, Elkton, North East, Perryville, Havre de Grace, Perrymans, and Magnolia.
Night Express at 11.45 P. M. for Baltimore and Washington, stopping at Chester (only to take Baltimore and Washington passengers), Wilmington, Newark, Elkton, North East, Perryville, and Havre de Grace.
Passengers for Perryman Monroe will take the 8.15 A. M. Train.
ACCOMMODATION TRAINS.
Stopping at all stations between Philadelphia and Wilmington.
Leave Philadelphia at 11 A. M., 4, 5.30 and 10 P. M.
The 4 P. M. Train connects at Delaware Railroad for Milford and intermediate stations.
Leave Wilmington at 7.45 and 9.30 A. M., 2.30, and 6.30 P. M.
THROUGH TRAINS FROM BALTIMORE.
Leave Washington at 12 M., 4.20, 8.10, and 9.50 P. M.
CHESTER FOR PHILADELPHIA.
Leave Chester at 6.15, 10.18 A. M., 12.00, 3.35, 6.51, 7.20 and 9.06 P. M.
SUNDAY TRAINS.
Express Train at 4.00 A. M. for Baltimore and Washington, stopping at Wilmington, Perryville, Havre de Grace, Aberdeen, Perrymans, and Magnolia.
Night Express at 11.45 P. M. for Baltimore and Washington, stopping at Chester (for Baltimore and Washington passengers), Wilmington, Newark, Elkton, North East, Perryville, and Havre de Grace.
Accommodation Train at 10 P. M. for Wilmington and Way stations.
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