

# The Catholic University Bulletin.

*VOL. X.*

*April, 1904.*

*No. 2.*

---

"Let there be progress, therefore; a widespread and eager progress in every century and epoch, both of individuals and of the general body, of every Christian and of the whole Church, a progress in intelligence, knowledge and wisdom, but always within their natural limits and without sacrifice of the identity of Catholic teaching, feeling and opinion."—*ST. VINCENT OF LERINS, Commonit., c. 6.*

---

PUBLISHED QUARTERLY BY  
THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA,  
LANCASTER, PA., AND WASHINGTON, D. C.

## LECTURE BY MR. WILLIAM YEATS.

Mr. William Butler Yeats, poet, dramatist and orator, delivered a lecture on "The Intellectual Revival in Ireland," February 21, at 8 P. M., in the Assembly Room, McMahan Hall, to a very large and appreciative audience of University students and invited guests. Mr. Yeats, although but thirty-six years old, is looked upon by Ireland as one of her staunchest patriots and one of her most convincing and persistent exponents of patriotism. He came to America at the request of the Irish National Society for the purpose of telling Irishmen in America of the progress of the national movement and the recreation of the Ireland of ante-famine days through poetry and dramas written in the Irish tongue. His talk was of absorbing interest because of the unique idea of accomplishing national independence, not by force of arms nor radical politics, but by the gradual weaning of Irishmen from English customs and the English tongue. The folk lore of the early part of the nineteenth century is being revived, said the speaker, and every time the old Gaelic songs are sung the power of England is weakened.

Mr. Yeats is the son of Mr. J. B. Yeats, for many years a celebrated artist of Dublin and London. The son studied art for awhile, but deserted the brush for poetry, and has written several volumes of poems which are popular wherever there is left an ember of Irish patriotism. His most effective work, however, has been done in the founding of the Irish Independent Theater, in Dublin, where the true Irish folk-lore is portrayed, and by means of which Mr. Yeats and his co-workers hope to re-create the land of Erin. He will return to Ireland March 2. He was introduced last evening by Dr. Shahan of the Catholic University.

"To begin with," said Mr. Yeats, "I can tell you something which I know will be welcome to all Irish ears on this side of the Atlantic. Notwithstanding our respective geographical positions, America is much nearer to Ireland than is England. I have gone into the country districts and found the peasants reading American news-

papers and commenting in their own simple manner on American affairs. I know that these peasants have never seen an English newspaper, and some of them have not even read a Dublin paper. Their friends and relatives go to America and send back these souvenirs, which are mighty factors in Irish sentiment. Before that dreadful famine of a half century ago there existed the Ireland of wit; the Ireland of humor; and to-day there are many patriots in and out of Ireland who make themselves believe those old conditions still exist. It is not so. Our politics are different, but the greatest deterioration is to be noted in our literature.

“Following the famine came the invasion of English industries. We imagined we ought to wear English clothes, abide by English fashions and speak the English tongue. The power of imagination in material things is greater than most men are willing to give it credit for. With the adoption of English clothes came the adoption of English thought and the English alphabet. Old Irish customs and those who spoke the Gaelic tongue became objects of ridicule. We sent to England for shoddy cloth instead of wearing better material of home manufacture. We sent to Munich for the worst stained glass the world has ever seen. We got everything, our religion, our thought, the essence of our very life, from England. The worm has turned, and the reaction, begun about ten years ago, is now in the full bloom of prosperity. I may not live to see that ultimate success, but success is inevitable.

“Through the establishment of our theater our Gaelic drama and our Gaelic folk lore, we have compelled a sentiment looking toward a complete recreation of the land of Erin. Old men and old tales are honored again, and the hills and the valleys are echoing once more with the sweet music of the Gaelic tongue. This battle on intellectual issues is the life of the people. The literary revival movement is supported by that proudest aristocracy of the earth, the aristocracy of artists, the only aristocracy which has never opposed the people, and against which the people have never risen. The folk-lore poems of Dr. Dougllass Hyde have attained a wide popularity in the country towns and among the common classes. The country Ireland, which is most Irish, is winning over the urban Ireland, which is least Irish, and the time is coming when the English tongue will have been expurgated. Long-silent mills are humming again. We have our own stained glass factories and manufacture a product mediæval and traditional in character and better than anything that ever came from Munich. We are accomplishing this, not by display of arms, but by undermining Irish dependence upon England through the

Gaelic drama and the simple tuneful verses which describe old Irish life.

"I am one of those few men who look to printed books for no great things. The common people will never get culture out of printed books. They must be reached by poetry and song that can be rehearsed at work and at play; something the plowman can sing as he follows his plow, or that the housewife can sing as she sews or drives her spinning wheel. Lionel Johnson, a man of great intellect, whose poetry and prose rank with the most learned literature in the world, is, after all, only a printed book poet. His poems cannot be sung by the common people, and consequently they cannot effect the culture.

"Lionel Johnson is a noble Irish patriot, but he will never rank with Dr. Hyde, because the latter poet talks to the common people in simple Irish folk lore. Dr. Hyde inspires in the heart and soul that passionate feeling which is the mother of subtlety, and subtlety is mother to the arts. Where there is art there is culture, and where there is culture there is victory. Thomas Davis was another of the great Irish patriot-poets whose verse is heard to-day in the meadows and the farmyards, and whose name is revered by every Irish countryman. These men are all dramatists, whose plays are calculated to educate and cultivate the common people. As an example of the enthusiasm inspired by this intellectual revival, I cite the case of Father Peter O'Leary, a parish priest, who, at the age of seventy turned playwright, and even attends his own productions. He has written many folk-lore plays, which are doing great good in the rural districts of Ireland. Another well-known priest and playwright is Father Dineen, who has met with great success with his miracle plays. No country can prosper unless its intellect be occupied with itself, and this is what we are striving to accomplish. The literary movement is powerful, the people are in sympathy, and I hope we will all live to see the day when Irish will again be spoken in Ireland, to the exclusion of all other tongues. The Gaelic language will be a barrier to the vulgarity and coarseness which are to-day the plague of Ireland."