

Dublin's Tribute to John McCormack

An interesting letter (says the *Southern Cross*, Buenos Aires) has been written by John McCormack to his friend, D. F. McSweeney, following the two concerts which Mr. McCormack gave in Dublin for the benefit of the St. Vincent de Paul Society and the Mater Hospital, the net proceeds of which amounted to approximately 20,000 dollars. Mr. McCormack writes:—

"Dublin was by all odds the greatest triumph of my career, and many times we remarked: 'Too bad Mac isn't here, how he would have enjoyed it.' One of the most touching episodes of the whole thing was the presentation of a beautiful laurel wreath by 'All the Singers and Teachers of Singing in Dublin,' to the singer (as they expressed it) 'who had achieved the greatest fame for Ireland.' And still they say singers are jealous. I said in my few words of thanks that this was a refutation in fact of such a vile slander of a great profession, and that I was glad the refutation came from my own people.

"My father's comment on the concerts was: 'How do you keep it up?' Of course, mother was moved to tears by 'Mother Machree'; so was I, and the audience!"

Another letter from an independent source, a very highest authority, brings the information that secret orders were issued from both the Free State Headquarters and that of the Irregulars that no disturbance of any kind should take place in Dublin from the day preceding the first concert until the day following the second concert, with the result that not a shot was fired in Dublin for four days. It is to be regretted, the writer added, that "John cannot keep singing to us all the time."

"Jacques," who is regarded as one of the foremost music critics of Europe, writing in the *Irish Independent*, said:—

"Personally two things I heard yesterday I can never forget. They were Franck's 'Panis Angelicus,' with 'cello obligato, and Robinson's setting of 'The Snowy Breasted Pearl.' Here were the songs that gripped the heart and dimmed the sight. Every note of them had music, every line of them had a subtle something of pathos and tenderness. The Robinson melody was a memory song. It reached down into our hearts and touched the responsive chord of memory. Years and years ago John McCormack made us sob when hearing this song, with its haunting 'We laid her in the grave'—sob and then cheer. Since then the hard has been in the borderland of shadows, and prayer has brought him back to life and to us. . . . Yesterday again we sat silent with tear-dimmed eyes and then—then we cheered.

"The 'Panis Angelicus'! It was, thanks to singer, pianist, and 'cellist, a soul-searching utterance. It sank its message deep in the hearer's heart. It sprinkled little dew-drops of celestial melody. It seemed to wrap us in the sunshine of a different, cleaner, newer world than that in which we live and strive.

"Our John,' as he is popularly known to his friends, is going from us to keep his pact with nature, for he must share with the world the great gifts bestowed upon the chosen of my children.' He will come again in the summer days gently to stroke the gray hairs of Mother Machree, to uplift the heart of dear old Dublin, and to bring the light of joy and hope to the shaded eyes of Dark Rosaleen."

The following comment appeared in the *Freeman's Journal*:—

"The young man, whose voice of beauty charmed Dublin people then, has grown into a great artist, a musician of profound ability. It is not the same voice. It is a greater one, and its owner passed from the stage of beautiful warbler to that of inspired songster. There is not much left to be said that would be to the point here, though one can travel with good memory for a long time over the history of music in the capital of our country, without touching an episode anything like so interesting, and, indeed, in the larger sense, so important. It is all real. McCormack is our product. He had in his audience young men officers in the uniform of the Irish Army. The house, under the spell of the great artist, forget the troubles that threaten Ireland, and there was encouragement and hope in the cheers with which they sped him on his way."

Music in Emergencies

Musicians have sometimes been obliged to exercise their talents under very strange circumstances. The great Cherubini had one experience that he could never forget. It was during the French Revolution.

The streets of Paris were filled with a howling, struggling mob of men and women, who called themselves citizens and patriots, but to whom history has applied other names. It was a hazardous thing for any one not of that horrible crowd to be found in public; but Cherubini, having pressing business, rashly ventured forth. Excitement was at its height. The guillotine had just disposed of a good number of victims of the popular hate, and the *Sansculottes* were looking for an adequate way to express their impious joy. Finally, one of them espied Cherubini, whose musical genius had delighted kings and queens. Here was the very kind of man they wanted.

"Come," they cried—"come and lead the Carmagnole!" He appeared to hesitate. "Come on, citizen!" they repeated. "If you do not lead our band, we shall think you sympathise with those accursed aristocrats before whom you play." "I am in a hurry," said Cherubini, "and I cannot go with you."

At that a suppressed cry of "The Royalist!" rang through the nondescript ranks; and no one knows how Cherubini might have fared if a friend in the same predicament had not come to his rescue. "Take this (pressing a violin into his hands), and play for these creatures, if you value your life."

Cherubini was at last roused to the seriousness of the situation, and yielded with an appearance of cheerfulness. All day he and his friend marched in advance of the hooting and frenzied mob, who were delirious with delight at having possession of the genius that had previously given pleasure to royalty.

At night the two musicians mounted barrels and fiddled away, while the rioters feasted at a noisy banquet in one of the public squares. But they had saved their heads, and were no doubt thankful; for many men and women were giving up their lives at the command of the Revolutionary tribunal, before which a mere verbal accusation was often sure condemnation.

An anecdote of a similar character is related of Garcia, the celebrated vocalist. He happened to be in Mexico, giving operatic performances, when war broke out. "My goodness," he said to himself, "I must get out of this country while I can!" And forthwith he packed his trunks. But, although he escaped the soldiers, he fell into the hands of some roving brigands, who took from him his horse, his money, and even his clothes. The leader, who lost no time in searching the pockets, finding a piece of musical manuscript, exclaimed: "This fellow must be a singer. Come, come, master singer, give us a song!"

But Garcia, being led to a conspicuous place that all might hear, found that fright had taken his voice away, at which the highwaymen began to jeer. That angered the famous tenor, and, making a supreme effort, he sang as probably he never did before or afterward.

When he had finished, the leader then clapped him on the back and said: "It would be cruel to rob such a singing-bird as you are. Take your things again, master singer; and one of my men shall escort you to the frontier. —*Ave Maria.*

No Union Jacks for Belfast Schools

During the last stage of the Six-County Education Bill it was proposed that the Ministry of Education should prepare a book on civics to foster patriotism and bear the cost of the provision of Union Jacks and flagpoles for use in the schools on Empire Day and the public holidays. The Chairman said that as this proposed to create a new charge the sanction of the Ministry was necessary before it could be moved. The mover of the motion replied that he had not received the sanction of the Ministry, and now asked for it. There was no response from the Ministerial benches, and the Chairman held that as the Ministry had not given any intimation of approval the new clause fell to the ground.