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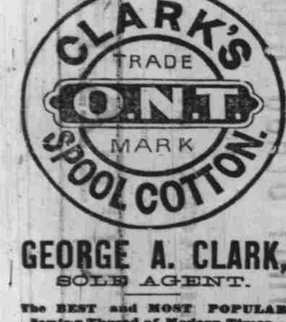


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## FATHER GAVAZZI'S LECTURE.

This lecture was delivered on Sunday evening the 13th inst., in the Methodist Church. After the usual opening services, the Rev. Mr. Barrows introduced the lecturer, who immediately came forward and announced the subject of the lecture, namely:

THE PROGRESS OF THE GOSPEL IN ITALY.

The speaker said that 22 years ago the gospel could not be preached in any part of Italy; that 10 years ago it could not be preached in Rome, the Pope not permitting it to be taught there. The first thing to be done in Italy was to obtain their national independence. The speaker here related the history of this struggle for national independence, in which he paid a high tribute to his dear friend, General Joseph Garibaldi, who figured so prominently in this long and arduous fight for liberty. Commencing this struggle as early as 1821, the year 1878 brought to Italy freedom and independence, making her at the same time the fifth great nation in Europe. This being accomplished the next thing to do was to work for religious liberty, which was obtained, and to-day, the speaker said—while his dark countenance fairly lighted up by the rays which beamed from his large eyes—"we have as much freedom of conscience and freedom of speech in Italy as you have in your mighty America; and in some respects more"—judging from his experience on his first visit to this country and to Canada—and the only explanation he could offer for making this assertion was, that there were "no Irishmen in Italy." But while the speaker gloried in the religious freedom that this country afforded, there was, he deplored, too much freedom in one direction—the condition of the free churches was not carefully enough looked after; they lived separately from each other, and sometimes they took the liberty to fight against each other.

After many efforts, the speaker and those prominently interested succeeded in bringing together some 23 of these churches in the capacity of a general assembly for the purpose of understanding each other. They met in June, 1870, when they laid down the theory of their Christian profession of faith, which embraced the principal dogmas of Protestant Christianity, and also christened their church, calling it by the name of "The Free Christian Church in Italy." Other general assemblies afterwards convened in Florence, Rome and other places, and church constitutions, order of discipline, etc., agreed upon; and in this way a united Christian Church had been organized having for its purpose the evangelizing and re-Christianization, if possible, of Italy. Many of his Protestant brethren had fallen into error when alluding to this work as "A reformation in Italy," and to themselves as "Reformers." The speaker said they were not reformers, he declined the honor of being called by that name, for the reason that there was nothing to reform in Italy, therefore nothing could be reformed, and consequently it would be illogical to call them reformers. It was useless, he said, to attempt to reform the Church of Rome—it was unreformable. Was there anything good in the Church of Rome? No—no—no, no! and to maintain this position the speaker would say, that he was an old chap and knew his business, and when with his dear Garibaldi from '48 to '67—not of course in a fighting capacity—but during his campaigns, he worked with the sick and wounded in hospitals, and acquired an extended hospital experience and practice, and learned many things. For example: If a soldier suffered from gangrene in a finger, the skilful surgeon would immediately take his knife and cut off the diseased member in order to save the hand; if the hand were affected with the same disease, the surgeon would use a larger knife and over the hand to save the arm; if the arm, however, was diseased, the surgeon would take a larger knife still and amputate the limb; but if he found that gangrene ran through the blood from head to foot, no surgeon would cut the patient in a hundred parts to attempt to save him; but would commit him to the care of the undertaker, who alone could do the last offices for the poor man. This, said the lecturer, was his case. Now, the Church of Rome being diseased with gangrene from head to foot. What, he would ask, are you going to reform? Nothing! The only thing that could possibly be done would be to commit it to the public undertaker, and the sooner the better, to bury it and save us from the stench (holding his nose.) The work with which he was identified in Italy was therefore not to reform the Church of Rome; it was to re-Christianize and restore in Italy at least their ancient, primitive Apostolic Church established in Rome by the glorious Apostle Paul without Pope or Popery. The Church they had made approached the nearest of all to that of the Apostle Paul, for purity of doctrine and simplicity of worship.

Some people were anxious to know more about their Church. As to doctrines, they were all taken from the Word of God. He was proud of that; he gloried that there was not a single doctrine of their Church that was not based upon Holy Writ. There was no dogmatic authority in their Church; their doctrines were exclusively scriptural. As to their government, of course, they had no Apostles, no Bishops, etc., but they had a church government established by the Apostle Paul to the Corinthians and the Ephesians, consisting of doctors, pastors, elders, etc. As to their teachings, they adopted a catechism, which was neither long nor short, a catechism which they had not to go to Westminster or Wittenberg to obtain. Oh, no, no, no! It was a national patrimony to them from their fathers. It was an ancient one; it was Paul's Epistle to the Romans—the first catechism, written to their fathers, the Romans. They had no need for the rituals and orders of the Romish Church, but were content with the simple rituals and orders of the Christian Church. Here the lecturer bristled up, and gesticulating most freely, asked the congregation to imagine for a moment that he had before him an Italian audience. In the midst of the address, yet finished and artistic gestures, the speaker's words and loud claps against the desk rolled rapidly and vehemently from his lips. Said he, he held in his hand the epistle of St. Paul to the Romans. "Ah! you say, do you read in this epistle of St. Paul to our people anything about the doctrine of trans-substantiation? No. Do you read there of the presence of Jesus Christ in the sacrament—body, blood, bones, sinews, soul and divinity? No. Do you read of the counting of rosaries? No. Do you read there of the sacrifices, mass, service propitiary for the dead? No. Do you read in that epistle of the worship of the Virgin Mary and other Saints? No. Do you read of purgatory, of indulgencies? No, no! Do you read of the supremacy and infallibility of the Pope? No, no, no, no! [Spank on the table, more peculiar gestures, and laughter, from the audience.]

As to the form of their Church the speaker said, it was a beautiful combination, a kind of triune unity, it was a delightful mixture, consisting of a bit of Presbyterianism. Ah! A second bit of Congregationalism. Good, eh? And a large bit of Methodism. Good, good, good! ah! We mix them up together, that is—ah, ah!—that is a beautiful, a delightful combination! Here the lecturer went on to show how these three distinct and separate religious denominations were represented in the form and government of the Free Christian Church in Italy. Also that the name of their church had not, as some supposed, been taken from the Free Church of Scotland; their church having been named before it was known by them that there was such a church; they claimed that name very naturally, having come out from the Church of Rome, come out from paganism and from under the chains of Popery and priestcraft to the light of the blessed gospel. He claimed that the founders of his Church were wiser than some who lived in the 16th century, who too threw off the yoke of Romanism, they, like them, had made no compromise with the mother Church, they had forsaken her in toto; and he felt no little chagrin to be obliged to admit that there were some Protestant churches in England and America who still retained the "mark of the beast"—its ritualism, which was nothing more than Popery in disguise. Here the speaker descanted on the significance attached to the word *in*, as part of the name of their Church—the Free Church *in* Italy—in contradistinction to the word *of*; also on the rapid growth of the movement. When they united in Milan, some ten years ago, they numbered some 23 churches, many of whom were from obscure villages; now they number 71, including 35 stations, regularly visited by pastors. At that time they numbered scarcely 400 members, now they number above 2,000; and some 1,000 Sabbath school children. These converts, it must be remembered, were from the Romish Church; and the great majority of them had been made during the last year.

After referring to the financial condition of their organization, giving his reason for traveling in the interest of his Church and soliciting material aid, the two funds they have established for their own support, namely, the Organization fund, and the Sustentation fund — the former receipting for voluntary contributions, the latter a direct tax upon its poorly paid ministers, Father Gavazzi then spoke of his having to fight great battles to establish their evangelical school system, it being objected to by his foreign brethren, on the grounds that there already existed in Italy the system of compulsory education, and hence no need for them; but the speaker could see that in order to perpetuate their church organization it was necessary that these schools be established, that it was folly in the extreme to expect Christians as the product of Roman Catholic schools. After referring to the success of his endeavors to establish an evangelical school system in Italy, saying that to-day there were no less than 16 schools connected with their churches, with 1,800 pupils enrolled, boys and girls, two-thirds of whom were children belonging to Roman Catholic parents, who though Papists themselves, preferred to send their children to these evangelical schools, where, he claimed, they could be better taught in mind and heart through Protestant instruction, he said:

"I must stop here for a moment to make a necessary digression. When my heart is gladdened in Italy at seeing Popish parents send their children to our Evangelical schools to better them, my heart was pained on coming to your country in actually seeing Protestant parents sending their children to Popish schools, and their daughters to convent schools. Shameful perversion! Why is it, my friends, that you send your children—Protestant children—to Popish schools? The common answer is, 'Because they acquire superior attainments under their tuition.' I do not believe it! American schools can afford all the superior attainments that Popish schools can. But it is claimed that the children may learn to read French and German from native teachers, and that they learn music, to dance, embroidery, and to make artificial flowers and other tom-fooleries. Are these, I ask, the 'superior attainments,' which are to make of your children good American Christian citizens? But what of their moral education? Jesuits, priests, friars, conventism—this is what you give to your children, and this presented to them by those finished artists who are the cream of Popery, by those who must conscientiously believe that all Protestants, young or old, are damned heretics, and therefore it is their religious duty to do all they can, directly or indirectly, to try to convert the young hearts of your children from Protestantism to Romanism. This is the way the Romish Church is sowing its seed, which, if allowed, will germinate in due time and afterwards fructify, as it is doing in Great Britain and other Protestant countries. Therefore, as an independent Italian, who fearlessly stands up for truth and liberty, I am here to say, as a man not afraid of anybody or anything, that those who send their children to Roman Catholic schools and convents are not to be called the guardians, but are to be called the moral assassins of their unfortunate offspring." He said further, that on account of the peculiar construction of their language, and the system they had adopted, children at the age of six years, after receiving three months' instruction could read fluently and write correctly, and cited an instance of a little girl of only five years who knew nothing when he left Rome to make this tour, from whom he had received a letter written in a beautiful, clear hand. They had received the compliments of the mayor of Florence, accompanied by a gift of money; also a congratulatory letter from the Minister of public schools for best method of elementary instruction, and expressing regret that he had no public funds at his disposal. Here, in this evangelical training, the speaker held, lay the futurity of their church. About five years ago, he said, they received an orphan girl twelve years of age; she was a bright girl, supported by her poor grandmother. The girl passed a successful examination in the elementary, and at once commenced the normal course. In August, '79, she and 85 other girls from the public schools underwent a public examination, trying for a teacher's certificate, and she came out at the very top of the tree. She was noticed by all, and every means was then made use of to try to win her over to the Catholic Church. Her father was sought out and offered plenty of work; her grandmother was promised a stipend for life, and the girl herself was promised a rich marriage, provided she would renounce her faith and join the dominant Church. The girl, he was proud to say, answered no. They began to persecute her, to escape which she and her grandmother were sent to Florence. But the father got scent of the daughter, and through the aid of the chief of police and his making false statements to the officers, got back the girl. They succeeded in placing her in a nunnery, but instead of converting her, she proved to be a kind of firebrand among the nuns, who, after two months were glad to turn her over to the Cardinal Victor of Rome and thus free themselves of "such a girl." She was honored with private *tete a tetes* with his highness in his own parlor, but without avail. On the following Sunday he went to the church, where she was compelled to teach out of a Popish catechism. On interrogating her pupils the cardinal found that they knew nothing of the catechism, and demanded from her an explanation. She answered, "Please your highness, please question the pupils about Jesus Christ and the Bible." He did so, and to his astonishment they made ready answers. He at once denounced her as a little apostate, saying, "Go! go! leave our holy mother church, and forever! Go, you cursed one, go!" She obeyed, and came straightway to us; and she is now one of our best teachers. This affords a striking example of the effect upon young hearts of early training. "Ah," said Father Gavazzi, putting his forefinger in close proximity to his nose, and with his big eyes taking in the large audience, "I'm an old chap, and know my business." As a fitting finale to the girl's grit, the gentleman said, he had something pleasing to say something that would make the ladies feel good. Here it is: "I am thinking something rather delightful for her in the future, or as you here in America would say, 'I guess' it's marriage. The fortunate one is a young Evangelist, whom we sent on last November to the theological college in Rome. He is a fine fellow, and it will be a beautiful marriage—a thorough Evangelical marriage, with a bright prospect in view, eh! Being a confirmed old bachelor, understanding nothing about matrimonial business, I think I shall say no more."

Referring to the locating of their theological college some are in favor of having it at Naples, others at Florence, but he said, let us have it at Rome, under the shadow of the Vatican itself if possible. Since then this college has been established agreeable to his wishes. Within its walls are 17 young students who in their turn are called before the congregation every friday, and who already read beautiful sermons written by themselves; in these students Mr. Gavazzi hopes to find material that will go far towards evangelizing and re-Christianizing his fellow countrymen. As for himself as an old veteran he desired to say that it it was his greatest wish to be found always in Rome fighting against the Pope. Their college was nearer the Vatican than any other Protestant institution—this was not without its peculiar gratification—the building being not more than 300 yards from the Pope's headquarters; in fact, the windows of the college face those of the apartments where his Holiness now dwells, and being so near each other at the close of their respective councils they could without difficulty recognize each other, "the Pope," said the speaker "being the man in white; I bring the man in black." There, he said, immediately under the window facing the Vatican he wrote his weekly letter against the Pope; and since 1870 he had spent six winter months in Rome, and among other duties, one was to preach every Sunday and lecture every week, which he had done without a single exception when in Rome, and the same he said, with regard to his weekly letter against his Holiness. "That is my business—eh, eh!" Here Father Gavazzi gave a telling exhibition of his wonderful powers as an actor. After describing his office and his writing desk under the window overlooking the Vatican on the other side of the Tiber, he placed himself in position in the act of writing his weekly letter. He paused, then looked up and towards the Vatican as if he wanted to catch a glimpse of the Pope's face as he formed that last sentence—uttered his peculiar eh, eh, exultingly, and then paused—again raised his big eyes, fixing them as it were, this time on the object of his intense hatred — started back, he points and exclaimed, "The Pope! There is the Pope! He is looking at me writing against him. We meet half way; that's the crowning of my wishes. Oh, how he grumbles! That's encouraging. Some people say, Please, sir, the Pope never grumbles. Well, if you say so, be it so. But he roars, roars fiercely, and that's worse than grumbling. And then, he comes by it very naturally. He is called Pope Leo. III. Then let us see; here is Pope Leo! Leo? That means lion; eh! And lion means beast. Yes, no mistake; therefore, lion by name, beast without question. And if he is a beast, why it is natural that he should roar, for all lions roar. Let him roar!"

Father Gavazzi then begged on behalf of his Church an interest in the prayers of those present, and recommended his cause to their American hospitality, and described briefly the great work that lay before them, in the shape of evangelizing 27 millions of Papist souls, whose spiritual condition was worse than that of the barbarian, because having the light sent to them they rejected it, while the barbarian being without law cannot be judged by law. The lecturer desired particularly to impress on his hearers that as the Pope lost his power in Italy, he would seek to regain it through means of proselyting in Great Britain and America. Therefore, he said, beginning his work in Rome, he would continue it