

THE PRIESTS AND PEOPLE OF IRELAND IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

PAPER READ AT THE CATHOLIC CONGRESS

BY HIS EMINENCE CARDINAL MORAN.

(Concluded.)

In no country in the world will you find more practical or more effective institutions in every branch of charity than in Ireland; and, countless though these institutions are now, they have all sprung into existence, and have been organised, since the beginning of the century. On the occasion of my last pilgrimage to Ireland, I visited St. Vincent's Hospital in Dublin, and found eighty-six Sisters of Charity and nurses there, ministering to the sick in all the most repulsive phases of disease and suffering. The same Sisters have under their charge in Dublin and its suburbs the Children's Hospital and the Convalescent Home, and the Hospice for the Dying, besides the famous Institution for the blind at Merrion. The Sisters of Mercy, with no less heroic devotedness, minister to the sick in the Mater Misericordiae Hospital, which has been justly styled the palace of the poor sufferers; in the Jervis Street Hospital, in St. Michael's Hospital at Kingstown, and in the Sanatorium at Drumcondra. All these are public monuments and abiding proofs of charity and religion in Dublin on the part of two Sisterhoods. In all the other cities—Waterford, Cork, Belfast, and elsewhere—we see the same heroism of charity linked with the religious life. There is no class of sufferers, or straying ones, but are brought within the sphere and influence of Catholic charity. The poor, the blind, and the deaf and dumb are cared for, and are trained and instructed in various branches of industry. The Magdalens are brought to the feet of the Good Shepherd. Provision is made for orphans and widows. The indigent and helpless sick are visited and nursed in their own homes. May it not be truly said that in the daily work of the Irish convents we see combined in all their perfection religious culture and charity of religion? I entered an unpretentious building, the Loreto Convent, in Stephen's Green. I found in one department

Seven Hundred Poor Children

receiving all the blessings of religious education. In another department two hundred young ladies were being trained under the rules of the intermediate schools, whilst in a third department fifty or sixty others were being prepared for the University honors. I entered King's Inn Street School, and had one thousand four hundred poor children trained in every branch of knowledge that can be useful to them in their future career of life. At Gardiner street I see one thousand six hundred children under the Sisters' care; at North William street one thousand five hundred, and so on in countless other primary and intermediate schools. I do not hesitate to say that in no part of the world will you find greater religious culture or charity more happily blended with religion than in the Irish convent schools. When we speak of the Irish nuns, it must be borne in mind that their apostolate is not restricted within the four seas of the Western island. They are to be found in flourishing communities in the United States and Canada, here among ourselves in Australia, and wherever the Irish emigrant has found a home. But, further, they will be met in all the approved congregations on the Continent; they minister to the sick and teach schools in Rome itself. Irish convents of devoted nuns will be found in Rio Janeiro and Gibraltar, in Madrid and Lisbon and Seville. Amongst the martyred Sisters of Charity at Tientsin, in China, was Sister O'Sullivan, from the County Cork, a nun whom I may claim as one of my own kith and kin. An Irish bishop, on pilgrimage to Jerusalem a few years ago, visited the hospital in that holy city, maintained at the expense of the Sultan. He found three Irish Sisters in charge. He went on to Damascus. The schools there are under the care of the French Sisters of Charity. He asked was there any English-speaking Sister amongst them. He found an Irish Sister from the County of Wicklow, who for so many years had been teaching in Arabic that she had almost forgotten the English language. When I was returning some time ago from Australia, I met in Colombo six Irish Sisters who were teaching in the Singhalese schools, and whom, as children, I had confirmed when Bishop of Ossory.

The Many Beautiful Churches

that have been erected in every diocese of Ireland during the century are a proof, which none can gainsay, of the generous enthusiasm of the faithful people, and of their whole-hearted devotedness to the cause of religion. It must be borne in mind that such stately sacred edifices in Ireland are enduring monuments, at the

same time, of the national and of the religious life of the whole Irish race. The Government will devote its energy to erect out of the public funds palatial residences for its representatives; its army of officials will be fully equipped; barracks will be multiplied for the military authorities; stately buildings will serve as courts-of-law, or as prisons for the evildoers; by a sort of mockery, vast palaces, called work-houses, will serve for the imprisonment of the poor. The Irish people have aimed at higher and nobler ideas. It was religion alone that sustained them in the unparalleled ordeal of the nation's martyrdom; it was the divine lesson of their faith that comforted them and strengthened them throughout the centuries of humiliation and suffering. United with their priests, they bore the brunt of the battle for Catholic truth. As trophies of the glorious victories they have achieved, they will erect the most enduring monuments which art or religion can inspire. Thus it is that the beautiful church and cathedral in Ireland is not only a home of piety and a centre for divine worship; it is, moreover, a symbol and a citadel of faith and patriotism, of enlightenment and progress.

Under the Penal Laws

there were practically no Catholic churches in the kingdom. The cathedrals and other monuments of piety erected in the ages of faith were assigned to an alien creed. It was only in some secret recess in the cities and towns, or in the bogs and mountains in the country districts, that the Holy Sacrifice could be offered. It was penal to assist at Mass; it was penal to celebrate Mass. In the life of the illustrious Dr. Doyle it is mentioned that he made his religious profession in a thatched cabin that served for a chapel. It was in a similar hut that he was consecrated Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin. During my stay in Ireland in 1902 I visited, in the County of Cork, one of those hallowed Corrig-an-Ubhrain altars that are still held in veneration by the faithful. The rude altar, consisting of a heap of rocks, was erected in the deep recess of a cave that opened on a narrow inlet of the sea. On the slope of the hill at the opposite side of the sea-inlet the faithful assembled. A flag signal notified to them the beginning of Mass, the Offertory, the Elevation, the Communion, the end of Mass. The devout worshippers knelt under the broad canopy of heaven, but their heroic devotedness and fervent prayers ascended as fragrant incense before God's throne. When a sort of tolerance at length permitted rude barn-like huts to be used as places of Catholic worship, the Protestant land-proprietors often insisted as a condition that in the harvest time the floor of these chapels would be used for threshing purposes. I found this to have been the case in some districts of my old diocese of Ossory. In a Limerick district, where this condition was insisted on, a new pastor was appointed in charge. The usual message was brought to him that the time for the threshing was at hand. 'Go back to your master,' he said to the messenger, 'and tell him that if he dares to meddle with or desecrate my chapel, I will send him home with a sorer and perhaps a wiser head. The despot and his men came with the corn on the appointed day. They did not thresh the corn, however; the threshing process awaited themselves. The priest was there to meet them at the head of a body of stalwart parishioners, who were fully equipped for the threshing process. And well they performed their task. The landlord himself fully appreciated the firmness and the courage of the priest, and became his faithful friend for many years. At the present day beautiful churches and cathedrals are to be found in every parish and diocese throughout the kingdom.

The Work of Reconstruction

began immediately on the proclamation of peace in 1815. Interrupted for a while by the famine years, it continued unabated till the close of the century. In a memorandum presented to Propaganda in 1846 by the Irish bishops, I find it stated that within the preceding thirty years (1816-1846) about two thousand Catholic churches had been erected in Ireland; and the following details of a few of them are given:—

Cathedral of Dublin, finished in 1824, £50,000; St. Paul's, Arran quay, finished in 1845, £16,000; St. Andrew's, W. Row, finished in 1842, £20,000; St. Nicholas's, finished in 1840, £18,000; St. Francis's, finished in 1840, £12,000; St. Audeon's, finished in 1846, £12,000. St. Lawrence's, finished in 1846, £12,000; Cathedral of Armagh, finished in 1846, £15,000; parish church, Dundalk, finished in 1842, £15,000; Cathedral, Tuam, consecrated in 1836, £20,000; Cathedral, Newry, consecrated in 1840, £15,000; Cathedral, Kilkenny (incomplete), 1840, £20,000; Cathedral Killarney (incomplete), 1840, £20,000; Cathedral, Ardagh, commenced in 1840, £30,000; Cathedral, Carlow, commenced in 1832, £16,000; Cathedral, Killala, commenced in 1832, £12,000. It would be difficult to form an estimate of the amount expended in Ireland in the erection of

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