

Cardinal Manning and Ireland

Address before Dunedin Irish Society
by Right Rev. Dr. Whyte

On Thursday evening, August 25, the Dunedin Irish Literary and Historical Society assembled in large numbers in their rooms, where they had the honor and the pleasure of hearing an interesting and scholarly address from their Bishop. Shortly before eight o'clock his Lordship, who was attended by Father Coffey and Dr. Kelly, arrived in the hall, and when the audience had manifested its delight at the Bishop's presence the entertainment began with a spirited rendering of "God Save Ireland," all joining in the chorus. The president, Mr. E. Nolan, having introduced Dr. Whyte, his Lordship delivered the following address:—

The subject that I have chosen for my lecture (or rather, "talk") is "Cardinal Manning and Ireland." Many of the great churchman's friends and acquaintances, both clerical and lay, English and Irish, will naturally come in for mention. And that will be because of their connection with problems that confronted Ireland between, say, 1860 and the time of the Cardinal's death, which took place in 1892. You need not, then, be surprised if, in the course of the next thirty or forty minutes, I mention such dignitaries as Cardinal Cullen of Dublin, Cardinal Moran (who died in Sydney 10 years ago), Archbishop Walsh of Dublin, whose recent death is still lamented as a terrific blow to Ireland, Cardinal Persico whose name cannot be omitted whenever one speaks of the "Plan of Campaign"; nor need you be surprised if reference be made to Gladstone and Parnell, with both of whom Cardinal Manning came into close and frequent contact.

Like many other celebrated Englishmen, Cardinal Manning laid claim to Celtic blood, for his grandfather, William Manning, married an heiress named Elizabeth Ryan. It was from the Ryan family, indeed, that he took his motto, *Malo mori quam foedari* (Death before dishonor). You will be glad to hear or to be reminded that it was the motto also of the late Bishop of this diocese, Dr. Verdon. The Catholics of Dunedin need not be told how perfectly that motto suited the unblemished life of my predecessor. The intimate friends of Cardinal Manning are no less strongly convinced that he, too, would suffer death rather than bring a stain upon his honor.

Of Cardinal Manning's sincere attachment to Ireland there can be no doubt. Ireland's attachment to him is equally certain. He burst into tears on one occasion when assured by an Irish priest that the people of Ireland loved him. It was a calamitous time. Parnell and most of his colleagues had just been thrown into prison, and it was rumored that Archbishop Croke was soon to follow them. "I fear that every link of affection between the two countries is broken," muttered the Cardinal. "Yes," said the priest, Canon Ryan, "all but one, our love for you." On hearing this, the old man was moved to tears.

The first time that he seriously directed his attention to Ireland and her grievances was during the excitement connected with the Fenian movement.

The Fenians

The Fenians were men who took up arms in the 'sixties against England's power in Ireland. From that time till recent years they have been looked on as a well-meaning but misguided body of men whose enthusiasm betrayed them into attempting heroic things, heroic but impossible, heroic perhaps because impossible. At the present time they are regarded as the forerunners of the Irish Volunteers of to-day, well-meaning as are the men of to-day; not misguided, for they, too, aimed at preserving the soul of Ireland, and, in the attempt to do so, were prepared to pay the penalty of losing their freedom or their lives. The Irish bishops, with Cardinal Cullen at their head, vigorously expressed in several ways their hearty disapproval of the Fenian movement, and bitterly lamented its effect upon English public opinion. Striving for the good-will of English politicians has been the insanitary occupation of Irish patriots for a long, long period.

Cardinal Manning grieved over what he considered

the blind, reckless policy of the Fenian leaders, and regarded both themselves and their followers as men who had lost their reason and the Faith. The character of the Fenians, however, could not be given by a more competent or trustworthy witness than Isaac Butt, the leader of the Irish people whom Parnell supplanted. Like Parnell, he was a Protestant, but while Parnell hailed from the South, Butt came from the North. Butt was the advocate who defended nearly all the Fenian prisoners. This is his opinion of them:—

"Whatever obloquy gathered round them at first, there are few men who now deny to the leaders of the Fenian conspiracy the merits of perfect sincerity, of a deep and honest conviction of the righteousness of their cause, and of an unselfish and disinterested devotion to the cause.

There was not one of them who would have purchased safety by a falsehood, by a concession that would have brought dishonor on his cause, or by a disclosure that would have compromised the safety of a companion.

They were enthusiasts of great hearts and lofty minds, and in the bold and unwavering courage with which one and all they met the doom which the law pronounced upon their crime against its authority, there was a startling proof that their cause and their principles had power to inspire in them the faith and the endurance which elevated suffering into martyrdom."

From the Fenian rising comes "God save Ireland." The spirited anthem is associated with the trial of Allen, Larkin, and O'Brien, the "Manchester Martyrs," who were found guilty by a prejudiced jury of the murder of a police sergeant. The anniversary of their death was kept up in my boyhood by holding a huge procession headed by a brass band playing the "Dead March" in "Saul." It is safe to say that England's methods of pacifying Ireland resulted invariably in keeping alive and fanning into a blaze the spirit of opposition that they were designed to quench. Sergeant Brett was not killed intentionally, as Allen and his companions solemnly declared.

"No man in this Court," said Allen, "regrets the death of Sergeant Brett more than I do, and I positively say in the presence of the Almighty and ever-living God that I am innocent—ay, as innocent as any man in this Court. I don't say this for the sake of mercy. I want no mercy. I'll have no mercy. I'll die, as many thousands have died, for the sake of their beloved land and in defence of it."

Condon, who was also condemned to death and afterwards reprieved, closed his statement in these words:—

"We are not afraid to die. I only trust that those who are to be tried after us will have a fair trial, and that our blood will satisfy the craving which, I understand, exists. You will soon send us before God, and I am perfectly prepared to go. I have nothing to regret, or to retract, or take back. I can only say, 'God save Ireland!'"

"God save Ireland!" repeated all the prisoners, and hence the well-known anthem, "God Save Ireland."

The spirit of these men is not much different from the spirit of the men of to-day. "Your Grace will be happy to know," wrote Cardinal Manning to Cardinal Cullen—neither of them, however, had yet been elevated to the Cardinalate—"that the Fenian prisoners in Pentonville have asked for Mass, and the Government has granted it. This is a strange victory, on which I make no comment, except 'Thank God!' But it will console your Grace for the poor men." Cardinal Cullen was able to say in reply that there were never so many penitents at the confessional or so many communicants in the churches as then, notwithstanding all the Fenian agitation. When, therefore, Cardinal Manning said, "Show me an Irishman who has lost the Faith, and I will show you a Fenian," he spoke *untruly* (according to his biographer), "incorrectly," I prefer to say. It would have been still more incorrectly put had he said, "Show me a Fenian and I'll show you an Irishman who has lost the Faith." Those prisoners who asked for the privilege of hearing Mass and who wept when Cardinal Manning preached to them on the Prodigal Son were not unlike the Irish boys who have been flung into the gaols of Ireland and England since 1916. A journalist who, on recovering his liberty in 1917, wrote an account of prison life entitled *With the Irish at Frongoch*, tells of the astonishment of the prison auth-