

**A - C R O S S**

*a Century*

# CONTENTS

A QUIET PRAYER (POEM)	2
APOLOGIA	6
A GLANCE AT THE PAST	8
OBLATAIGH MHUIRE GAN SMAL	20
SHRINE OF MARY	22
CHARITY IS PATIENT	26
FATHER W. M. J. RING OMI	30
THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD	33
I WAS A STRANGER	37
13 MEMORABLE HOURS	38
THE INCHICORE CRIB	49
YOU ARE MY FRIENDS	54
INCHICORE AND DISTRICT	60
80 YEARS IN THE WICKLOW HILLS	69
ROBERT FRANCIS COOKE	72
PEREGRINARE PER OBLATOS	81
A REVERSAL OF ROLES	88
MAN OF COURAGE	93
THE THREE RS IN A STABLE	97
STORMING HEAVEN	103

1856



1956

# A - CROSS A CENTURY

CENTENARY OF THE OBLATES OF MARY IMMACULATE  
AT INCHICORE, DUBLIN

*Nihil obstat:*

GULIELMUS HAWKES,

*Censor Deput.*

Dublina, die 4a Junii, 1953.

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# CENTENARY

## *A quiet prayer*

The kindly hand of a protecting Mother  
Has led us all the way:  
And filled our hundred years with fruitful blessing—  
Precious beyond repay.

To her our hearts go out on this glad morning  
That crowns our waiting years—  
Her name upon our house-hold flag the proudest  
Of all our souvenirs.

To you, dear friends, who helped to make this morning  
A precious dream come true,  
May Mary be our Messenger of blessing  
And gratitude to you.

When all around, where now our Shrines rise proudly,  
Was naught but virgin sod,  
Your fathers rallied round an Oblate stranger  
And raised a Shrine to God.

We are the brethren of that Oblate stranger,  
Yea, and your brethren too,  
Paying our tribute to a noble people  
Paying our debt to you.

A hundred years have passed unto the reck'ning  
Of Him who judges all:  
May every future day of ours be worthy  
Of those beyond recall.

M. FITZSIMONS, O.M.I.

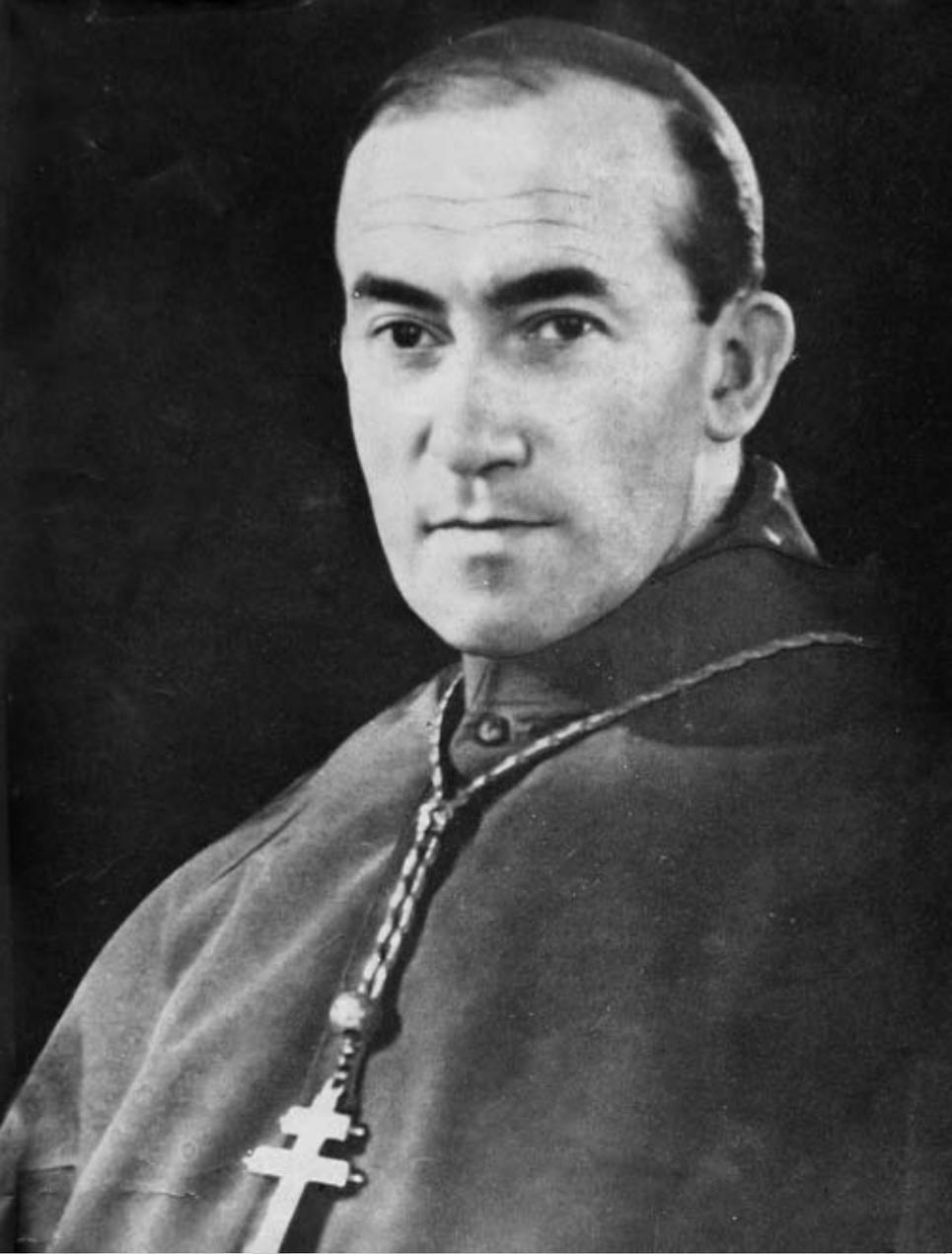


Our Most Holy Father, Pius XII



His Excellency, The  
Most Rev. Albert  
Levame, Titular  
Archbishop of  
Chersonesus,  
Apostolic Nuncio  
to Ireland

*Benedictio Domini super  
vos et super filios vestros  
+ Theobaldus Levame*



**His Grace, The Most Rev. John Charles McQuaid, D.D.**  
**Archbishop of Dublin**  
**Primate of Ireland**



# Apologia

We have called the present booklet, "A-Cross a Century", in an effort to give a hint as to what is within. In the Rule he wrote for his sons, Bishop De Mazenod, the founder of the Oblate Fathers, laid it down that the religious habit they should wear was to be a plain soutane and cincture as worn by the clergy of France at the time, but they would be distinguishable by the image of the Crucified, which they would always wear upon their breast. This Cross would be their credentials wherever obedience would send them and to themselves would be a reminder of the humility, patience and charity they would need in their vocation "to preach the Gospel to the poor".

The Cross given to every Oblate on the day of his profession has for 140 years been carried through the land of France, through the Western World by Canada, then under the Southern Cross on the African veldt. One hundred years ago the Oblate Cross was planted in Ireland, at Inchicore, beside the city of Dublin. To try and tell the story of this planting, of the tree that has grown and of the fruit that has been garnered was the motive that inspired the putting together of the present booklet. The effort is not pretentious. The story itself is not calculated to have all the elements of the dramatic or the arresting. It is a simple story, yet withal, having the unmistakable imprint of the hand of God upon it—in its beginnings, in its shaping and in its overall outline. It is the story of apostolic men, themselves imbued with the spirit of the Gospel of Christ, seeking to spread that spirit abroad. It is the story of a truly unusual spirit of co-operation between priests and people in bringing about the establishment of a home for the Son of God. It is the story of the growth and beautification of that home, of the steady continuation and consolidation of that original harmony between priests and people, and of the golden thread of the patronage of the Immaculate Mother of God shot through the whole fabric of the weave of the hundred years.

For what God has deigned to accomplish through the priestly ministry of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate in 100 years at Inchicore and from Inchicore, we can be humbly grateful: *non nobis, Domine non nobis; sed Nomini Tuo da gloriam*. For the unflinching bond of their loyalty and love that the people of Inchicore have maintained for a century, the Oblate Fathers will ever be grateful. For the future that lies buried in the next one hundred years the sons of De Mazenod offer a continuation of their service, their zeal and their charity to God and His people through Mary Immaculate.





L. J. C. & M. L.  
SUPERIOR GENERALIS  
MISSIONARIORUM OBLATORUM B.V.M. IMMACULATE

ROME, April 10, 1956

NUM .....

Very Reverend Michael Fitzsimons, O.M.I.  
Provincial Superior Oblate Fathers,  
Oblate House of Retreat, Inchicore,  
Dublin W 3, Ireland

Dear Father Provincial,

It gives me the greatest pleasure to accept your gracious invitation to attend the celebration of the Hundredth anniversary of the founding of Inchicore. I deem it an honour and a duty to take part in the ceremonies.

The day of the arrival of the first Oblates of Mary Immaculate at Inchicore is memorable in the history of our missionary Congregation. It was the first stage of our flourishing development in Ireland and the opening of a new, glorious chapter in our world-wide missionary record. England, Australia, Ceylon, South Africa, Canada, the United States, the Philippines, Japan will join you in thanking God for the hundreds of Irish Oblate Missionaries who have crossed the seas to spread the Irish faith and Marian piety of which Inchicore is a striking symbol.

The centenary of Inchicore is a striking symbol. Its importance, certainly merits the utmost in ceremony and celebration. Therefore I approve your plans most heartily and I pray for their entire success. Asking God to bless you and your co-workers, I am, dear Father Provincial,

Yours paternally in Our Lord and Mary Immaculate,  
*Leo Deschatelets, O.M.I.*  
LEO DESCHATELETS, O.M.I.  
Superior General



The Silva Gaedelica pays tribute to his virtue: "From Shannon to Ben Eadair he was a tower of piety, and in his own time a vessel of salvation and sanctity. ..." The Four Masters under 782 note the death of "Feargus Ua Fidhchain, a wise man of Kilmainham", and the Book of Lecan refers to Eochaidh, "Master of Kilmainham".

A church dedicated to St. Molloy "at the west end of New Row by Thomas Street" was ascribed to St. Molua, an Irish saint, but later research reveals it to have been a Norman foundation to St. Eloi of Rouen, patron of silversmiths.

However, it is generally accepted that in Celtic

## *A Glance at the Past*

*with SEAMUS BARRETT, M.A.*

Though Inchicore was not constituted a separate parish until 1933 its history is almost as ancient as that of Ireland itself. Standing athwart the main thoroughfare to the south, and close to the seat of recurring waves of invasion, its terrain has re-echoed through the centuries to the tramp of armies, foreign forces bent on conquest, and the hosts of the Gael striving for independence. In their reference to tangible and familiar landmarks the annals of our parish interpret and bring home to us many aspects of our country's struggle which might appear abstract and remote.

Until 1953 the parish of Inchicore was co-extensive with that of St. James, which incorporated the parishes of Kilmainham and St. Catherine's, and so our narrative will treat of the parochial unit in which Inchicore was integrated.

The earliest historical record of the district is in the Leabhar Breac which mentions that during St. Fursa's itinerary of Ireland, from 627 to 637, he visited St. Maignan at Kilmainham. St. Maignan, Abbot of Kilmainham and Bishop of the surrounding district, was the son of Aldus, Prince of Oriel.

and Norse periods a church or shrine dedicated to St. Catherine stood in the vicinity of the Porto Nova or New Gate which crossed Cornmarket from Lamb Alley.

Before the middle of the 9th Century the Norsemen had established a settlement near the Liffey and on September 15th, 919 a battle was fought at the Ford of Kilmehanok, where Islandbridge now stands, between the Norse settlers and the forces of Niall Glundubh, the Ard Ri. Niall Glundubh fell mortally wounded in the encounter and his army was forced to retreat. Irish chronicles refer to this conflict as "The Battle of Dublin".

In 1012, according to the Four-Masters, "Murchadh, son of Brian, plundered the country as far as Glendalough and Kilmainham, burning the whole country and carrying off innumerable prisoners." Kilmainham was the seat of Brian's camp during his siege of Dublin in 1013, and again in 1014, before the Battle of Clontarf he encamped there. Here too under a granite cross in Bully's Acre lie the bodies of Murchadh, Brian's son, and Turlough, his grandson, both slain in the fight.

## **KILMAINHAM PARISH FOUNDATION**

There is a hiatus in the parish history between the Battle of Clontarf and the capture of Dublin by the Normans in 1170. The Knights of the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem, or Knights Hospitallers, formed an important element in Strongbow's army. They were instituted at the beginning of the twelfth century to care for the sick at Jerusalem and assumed a military character when they undertook the protection of pilgrims to the Holy Places. As a reward for their assistance to his expedition Strongbow endowed them with Kilmainham as far as the river, and this grant was enlarged by a further gift from Hugh Tyrrell of the lands of Castleknock which extended their domain into the Phoenix Park. In addition to the lands this gift included a portion of the river Liffey "as far as the watercourse near the gallows", which stood near the entrance to the Phoenix Park in Parkgate Street. In 1545 this parish of Kilmainham was merged in that of St. James, and because of the endowment of Tyrrell's the boundaries of the latter parish still extend as far as the Phoenix Monument. There are many place names which commemorate the Hospitallers —Hospital in Limerick, Spideal in Galway, Spittlefields, St. John's Wood and St. John's Gate in London.

## **ST. JAMES**

Devotion to St. James the Greater, brother of St. John the beloved apostle was a striking feature of the religious life of the Middle Ages and pilgrims from all over Christendom travelled to his shrine at Compostella in Northern Spain. From Dublin, too, they embarked in their long grey pilgrim's gown, staff in hand, with a scallop shell—the emblem of St. James—in the band of their broad leaved hats. Peters' "Dublin Fragments" tells us:

"About the year 1220 a hospital was founded on Lazar's Hill for pilgrims intending to embark for the shrine of St. James of Compostella, the patron saint of lepers. Pope Innocent III when confirming the union of Glendalough with the See of Dublin, enjoined an appropriation of revenues to the support of an hospital, and Archbishop de Londres assigned lands to maintain this hospital, on the sea shore outside Dublin, where the pilgrims to St. James' shrine awaited an opportunity to embark. This hospital, tradition says, stood on the site of the Theatre Royal."

A Church had previously been erected for the use of the pilgrims at St. James' Gate, where Thomas Street and Watling Street now meet. Around this church developed the parish of St. James some time in the middle of the twelfth century. Within the gate stood the Church of St. Catherine.

## **THE ABBEY OF ST. THOMAS**

In 1177 William FitzAdelm, one of Strongbow's knights erected an abbey to St. Thomas of Canterbury, who was murdered at the behest of Henry II. It was situated where the modern Protestant Church of St. Catherine stands. FitzAdelm presented the Abbey to the Canons Regular of the Order of St. Victor and endowed it with the parish of St. James and the Church and the living of St. Catherine, the latter being yet without parochial autonomy. The Abbot of St. Thomas was rector of both and appointed Vicars for their administration, so that the history of these parishes is fused with that of the Abbey until its dissolution in 1539. Some time early in the 13th Century King John constituted it a "liberty" which meant that the lands of the Abbey were independent of civic jurisdiction.

## **THE PARISH OF ST. JOHN**

In the Priory of St. John the Knights Hospitallers had consolidated their position. Their possessions were augmented by grants of land in eight Irish counties, and in Dublin they held the rectories of Kilmainham, Chapelizod, Ballyfermot and Palmerstown. The monastic canons of their order were fulfilled in caring for the sick, in munificent almsgiving and in the establishment of hostels in various parts of the country for the accommodation of their knights. Of this class was "a house called the Frank House in Winetavern Street, near the Church of the Holy Trinity."

Nor was the military character of the order forgotten. In all the trappings and panoply of medieval knighthood, the great red cross of their order emblazoned on their white surcoats, they rode through the wooded plains of Inchicore in their forays against the Irish. At the Battle of Glyndelory in 1274, William Fitzroger, the prior, was taken prisoner and many of his friars were slain.

In 1317, the Lord Deputy convoked a Parliament at the Priory and one of its first acts was to liberate Richard de Burgo, Earl of Ulster, imprisoned by the

Mayor and Commons of Dublin on suspicion of having solicited the invasion of Edward Bruce. Around this period there was a considerable increase in the population of the western suburb of the city and St. Catherine's was constituted an independent parish, though it still remained an appendage of the Abbey of St. Thomas.

### **THE KETTLE CASE**

Shortly after 1317 Roger Outlawe became Prior of the Hospital. Appointed Lord Chancellor in 1321, he was soon after to become involved in the famous witchcraft case, which Lady Longford dramatised a few years ago, the only instance in Irish history of a burning at the stake. He was closely related to the first husband of Dame Alice Kettle, a wealthy Norman lady of Kilkenny. In 1324, together with her daughter Bassilla and Petronilla of Meath, she was accused by Bishop de Ledrede of "holding conference with a spirit called Robert Artison to whom she sacrificed in the highway nine red cocks. ..."

Petronilla was condemned to death and before being burned at the stake she named Dame Alice's son, William Outlawe, as an accomplice. The bishop had him arrested, but Arnold de Powre, a kinsman of Outlawe's stormed the prison with a troop of horsemen and had him carried away to safety.

Dame Kettle and her son were now cited to appear in Dublin for interrogation but through the influence of their friends and assisted no doubt by their monetary resources they managed to escape to England, and oblivion. It is said that in her chamber were found a sacred host with a diabolic imprint and other appurtenances of diablerie.

In all the proceedings against Dame Alice and her son, Roger Outlawe had thrown the considerable force of his influence on their side, to the intense chagrin of Bishop de Ledrede who now proffered a charge of heresy against the Prior. Outlawe was tried in 1328 before a commission under the Dean of St. Patrick's and was acquitted. Bishop de Ledrede having incurred the animosity of these powerful and widely connected Norman families had eventually to flee the country and return to England. More than 300 years later his name is mentioned again, when Cardinal Rinuccini, Papal Legate to the Confederation of Kilkenny, offered the then very considerable sum of £600 for the beautiful stained-glass windows he had erected in the Cathedral there.

### **HENRY V**

When Henry V besieged Rouen in 1418 the Prior of Kilmainham, Thomas Ie Botiller, described as "bacach", brought a body of 1600 Irish, "in mail with darts and skeins" to his assistance. "They did so their duty," writes the chronicler Hall, "that none were more praised, nor did more damage to their enemies." When one learns of the appalling cruelty with which the siege was conducted by Henry, one is moved to remark that their efforts were little to their credit. Thomas Ie Botiller died on the expedition and it is an interesting supposition that Shakespeare in "Henry V" based the character of Captain MacMorris, "an Irishman, a very gallant gentleman", on him, or on some member of his force.

### **ISLANDBRIDGE**

The construction and care of bridges and highways was the particular charge of monastic settlements in the middle ages and it is probable that Islandbridge in its original form was erected by the Hospitallers. Before it was built the river was crossed by a ford known as Kilmehanok Ford where the bridge now stands. Islandbridge is referred to in connection with the Rebellion of Silken Thomas in 1534 when the O'Tooles made a foray into Fingal by way of it. Troops and citizens from Dublin awaited their return at Islandbridge, but like the Three Wise Men the O'Tooles returned by a different route, and when pursued by the hostile forces they stood at bay at a wood called Salcock near Grangegorman, and inflicted a crushing defeat on them.

Again in 1535 in the month of November, Sir William Skeffington, Lord Deputy of Ireland, when on a journey from Trim to Dublin, learned that a party of Geraldines lay in wait for him near the bridge of Kilmainham. Torrential rain was falling at the time depriving the bowmen in his company of all power of resistance by relaxing their bow strings and washing the feathers from their arrows, but with the help of his cannon he held off the Geraldines until his soldiers defiled across the bridge, which he says was extremely narrow, without the loss of a single man. At this time according to Ball in his "History of the County Dublin", there were two mills of considerable importance near the bridge and nearly all the adjoining lands, including those of Inchicore, were covered with woods. Skeffington did not long survive his success, as he died in the Priory in the following month and his body was removed from there with great pomp for burial in St. Patrick's Cathedral.

At the dissolution of the monasteries under Henry

VIII in 1539 Kilmainham became the seat of the Viceroy, and the Abbey of St. Thomas went to Brabazon, Treasurer for Ireland, the ancestor of the Earls of Meath. Parish priests were appointed to administer the three parishes which were united in 1545 by the Protestant Archbishop, George Browne.

In an inventory taken at Kilmainham before it was given up to the plunder of Henry VIII's minions, its possessions consisted of a messuage (house and adjoining land) called the Castle Yard, three parks and an acre adjacent called the Bayl-Yard. This yard or acre was in charge of a bailiff or "Baily" and was known as "Baily's Acre," subsequently corrupted to Bully's Acre. Another instance of corruption of place names is the former name for Bow Street, which until 1798 bore the lurid appellation of Cut-throat Lane, deriving from no more alarming circumstances than that a well-known family called Cothroit formerly held land there.

Before closing the story of St. John's Priory it is worthy of note that in 1556 Sean O'Neill, escorted by "a tail of glib haired gallowglasses wielding mighty battle axes" made his submission there to Lord Lieutenant Fitzwalter who was using the building as a Viceregal Court.

### **ST. JOHN'S WELL**

St. John's Well was situated close to where Rowntree's Chocolate Factory now stands. For centuries it had been a place of devotion and now with its age-long associations with ancient custom and practice it became a rallying point for the Catholics. Joyce in his "Neighbourhood of Dublin" says:

"In 1538 the Bishop of Meath preached to the multitude at St. John's Well against the celebrated Archbishop Browne, of which the latter bitterly complains in a letter preserved in the State Papers." At the end of the 18th Century an alehouse known as the Black Lion was erected by a man named Flanagan near the well, and at the beginning of the same century a lady records that garden mould could be purchased at a house carrying the sign of the Black Lion, Kilmainham and Islandbridge being famous for the market gardens and nurseries established there. Hallowed by the prayers of the devout through centuries of oppression the stonework of the old well now stands in the grounds of St. James' Church.

### **FATHER WILLIAM DONNAGH**

The first parish priest of the united parishes that we

have any reliable information about after the Reformation is the Rev. Fr. William Donnagh or Donohoe. He was an assistant to Archbishop Matthews, and Fr. Mooney, a Franciscan, describes the hunted life they led, their escape over roof tops from priest hunters and Fr. Donnagh's imprisonment in 1617.

After a lengthy captivity he was again at large and the Protestant Archbishop Bulkeley refers to him in 1630: "There is a place in the parish called the Priest's chamber, lately built by one that the Papists call Sir William Donnagh who says Mass there. This house or chamber is situate over one Charles's or Carroll's house, a victualler (in Thomas Street). There is a school kept in that parish by one James Dunne, a Papist, in the house of one John Crosby, a stabler." The prefix "Sir" to the name of Fr. Donagh is not an indication of knighthood but the usual designation of a priest who was not a graduate of a university, a graduate being termed "master".

In 1628 the Irish Catholics had paid a considerable sum of money to Charles I for certain liberties known as Graces, and in the fallacious belief that they would be allowed the exercise of those liberties they began to worship God openly. On St. Stephen's Day 1629, Archbishop Bulkeley accompanied by the Mayor and a troop of soldiers led a raid on the Franciscan Church in Cook Street during the celebration of High Mass and, having dispersed the congregation, they demolished the church. Cook Street, between the river and High Street, was an important centre of Catholic activity. In later years it became the home of coffin makers.

### **THE CENSUS OF 1659**

The census of Sir William Petty in 1659 sheds a revealing light on the racial composition of the different parishes.

St. Catherine's and St. John's—970 English, 386 Irish; Kilmainham (new town)—6 English, 10 Irish; Inchicore—3 English, 5 Irish; Islandbridge—10 English, 16 Irish; Old Kilmainham—60 English, 70 Irish; Dolphin's Barn—17 English, 10 Irish. Total 1,066 English, 501 Irish.

Singularly enough, we learn that in 1661 there was only a single inhabitant in Inchicore.

After the Restoration (1660) there was a relaxation in the oppression of the Catholics and we find

that their place of worship was in Dirty Lane (now Bridgefoot Street), a squalid cul-de-sac off Thomas Street. This was the parish church and remained in use until 1782 when it was replaced by the old church in Meath Street.

### **CANON MICHAEL MOORE**

In 1684 the Rev. Canon Michael Moore was appointed P.P. He was a celebrated scholar and had held a distinguished position in the University of Paris. On the arrival in Ireland of King James II, he was appointed Court chaplain. Lord Tyrconnell, James' Lord Lieutenant, had turned Trinity College into an arms depot some time previously and had quartered detachments of recruits there, raw levies who were not likely to improve the condition of the building. To prevent further dilapidation, Tyrconnell appointed Dr. Moore Provost and gave him a Father MacCarthy to assist him as librarian. It is due to the exertion of these two priests that the valuable library was saved as it was on the point of destruction on their arrival.

King James was particularly intimate with a Fr. Petre, S.J., and this gave rise to the rumour that the University was to be placed in charge of the Jesuits, a measure to which Dr. Moore was opposed.

Fr. Petre suffered from poor eyesight and when Dr. Moore was chosen to preach before James in Christchurch, the text of his sermon was: "If the blind lead the blind both fall into the pit." Beginning with the ancient Hebrew kings he showed pointedly to what calamities they had been reduced by inept Counsellors, especially when those kings were blind with the greatest darkness of all, the vanity of self-righteousness. Then there were Counsellors, he declared, who having done some little charity in secret, gloried not alone in the intoxication of self-approbation, but within a month, nay a week, they proclaimed their good work from the housetops glorying not alone in the deed itself but in the humility by which they had kept it hidden until then.

As he warmed to his subject his analogies became so apposite and his references so biting that James flew out of the church immediately after the service and in high dudgeon gave an order that Dr. Moore should immediately quit the kingdom. His reply was of acid brevity: "Go I will, without doubt, but remember the King himself will soon be after me."

Subsequently Dr. Moore became Rector of Montefiascone, about fifty miles north of Rome,

The Royal Hospital,  
Kilmainham



President of the College of Navarre, Rector of the University of Paris, and Rector of the College of Cambrai in the north east of France. Among his pupils were Fleury, afterwards as a Cardinal and Minister of State destined to exercise a beneficent influence on European statesmanship, Montesquieu, the famous philosophical writer, and Charles Rollin, the celebrated educational reformer.

### THE ROYAL HOSPITAL

In the year of Dr. Moore's installation as Parish Priest of the parish of St. James, the royal hospital at Kilmainham was completed at a total cost of £23, 559 16s. 11d. It owed its foundation to the efforts of the Earl of Ormond, and was intended to house disabled soldiers of good conduct whose incapacity was due to wounds received on active service. It was built somewhat to the west of the old Priory, then a crumbling ruin save for the mullions of the antique eastern window which were so well preserved that they were used to form the tracery of the existing Chapel window.

One of the earliest provisos enacted was that of December 16<sup>th</sup>, 1700: "That it be an established rule, that it any soldier of the Hospital shall presume to marry, he be immediately turned out of the house, and the hospital clothes taken from him." From time to time drafts from the Hospital acted as the watch in the city or performed light military duties. An order of 1736 reads: "That no more than 180 men including Sergeants, Corporals and Drummers shall be sent to mount guard in town."

The Rev. Nathanael Burton who compiled a history of the Hospital writes with particular commendation of an inmate, Stephen Hill, whose claim to glory was based on the fact that he was one of the yeomen who fought against the Wexford Insurgents in '98. The Chapel clerk in Mr. Burton's time was Mr. John Bradley, "a hero of Vinegar Hill".

One of the last public ceremonies connected with the hospital in its designated role as part of the Imperial regime was an investiture held there in 1921, on the 12<sup>th</sup> July, by General Sir Nevil Macready, to present decorations to Black and Tans who had distinguished themselves in upholding the traditional repute of the British Army.



**A CORNER OF BULLY'S ACRE TODAY**

Under the large stone in the centre of the picture, the remains of Murchadh. son of Brian Boru, are reputed to lie.

### BULLY'S ACRE

The adjoining cemetery. Bully's Acre, has a history peculiarly its own. From the time of St. Maignan until 1832 it had been a public cemetery, and the dust of Irish saint and prince, Norman lord and Knight of St. John is commingled there with that of hosts of anonymous poor.

The churchyard was a place of popular resort and the public regarded themselves as having a right of access to it at all times. The frequency of their visits was however a source of annoyance to the Governors of the Royal Hospital who made frequent attempts to have it walled in. All their efforts proved futile as walls and gates erected by day were demolished by the people at night. Any visitor to Bully's Acre now must be struck by the absence of graves or headstones over the greater portion of it. This is explained by the fact that when General Dilkes became master of the Hospital in 1755 he levelled the graves and removed the headstones, to frustrate the visits of those who congregated there to pray for departed friends or relatives.

Around 1770 an attack was made by a band of "Liberty Boys" from the Coombe on the hospital itself, but when the ringleader, Fairbrother, was shot dead by a volley from a company of pensioners the rest of the attackers dispersed.

In Bully's Acre was laid the body of Dan Donnelly, hero of the celebrated boxing contest in Donnelly's Hollow in the Curragh with Cooper, the English champion. In an excess of hero worship his admirers were guilty of the extravagance of interring his body in Murchadh's grave. "The tomb of Murrrough", says the Dublin Penny Journal in 1832, "received the mortal remains of Dan Donnelly; and the victor of Clontarf and the victor of Kildare sleep in the same grave."

Bully's Acre was finally closed as a public cemetery in 1832. During the frightful outbreak of cholera in that year there were 3,200 funerals there in six months, and at one period 500 in ten days. The authorities, apprehensive that these internments would produce a further pestilence prohibited any further burials there, which terminated the use of Bully's Acre as a public graveyard.

### THE PERIOD OF THE PENAL LAWS

The Eighteenth Century ushered in a period of unexampled suffering and degradation for the Catholic population, when visitors to this country were at a loss for words to describe the squalor to which the Catholics were reduced by the Penal Laws. "These laws", says Young in his *Tour of Ireland (1776-'79)*, "have crushed all the industry and wrested most of the property from the Catholics, but the religion triumphs, it is thought to increase." Though Dr. Johnson never visited our shores he once declared: "The Irish are in a most unnatural state for we see there the minority prevailing over the majority. There is no instance, even in the ten persecutions, of such severity as that which the Protestants of Ireland have exercised against the Catholics." In the time of George II, Lord Chancellor Bowes stated from the bench "that the law does not suppose any such person to exist as an Irish Roman Catholic", and Chief Justice Robinson made a similar assertion.

The pastors of the Parish of St. James in common with the rest of the Catholic clergy were ordained on the Continent. The Rev. James Canon Brophy, P.P. from 1689 to 1711, was educated at Segovia, about forty miles north of Madrid, Fr. Goulding, who officiated from 1711 to 1719, in

Salamanca and the Rev. Fr. Valentine Rivers (1720-1723) in Lisbon. A dispute which was referred to Armagh arose as to Fr. Rivers' right of succession and it is interesting to note that one of the objections advanced against him was that he was not conversant with the Irish language, knowledge of which was regarded as an indispensable requisite for a confessor. By an Act of Parliament of 1707, the Protestant parish of St. Catherine was separated from that of St. James, and the Catholic clergy found it necessary to follow the same course in 1724.

Early in the 18th Century Fr. Byrne, an Augustinian, converted an old stable in John's Lane, off Thomas Street, into a church and in 1731, according to a report compiled by a commission appointed "to enquire into the state of Popery in Dublin", another Catholic place of worship appeared "on the south side of James' Street in a long yard near Mr Jennet, the Brewer's house." The same report tells us that in this church a Catholic school was kept by "one Carey a reputed priest" and at the west end of the same street "another Popish school kept by one Patrick Keefe". The subjects taught in the former school were Book-keeping and Mathematics and in the latter, Letter-writing and Arithmetic, a curriculum calculated to fit the pupils for a commercial life from which they were not entirely debarred. The report also refers to a school kept in South Earl Street by Thaddeus Norton or Naughton, a native of Roscommon and brother of the famous Irish poet Sean O'Neachtain.

Fr. Richard Fitzsimons became P.P. in 1738 and during his pastorship an event occurred which served to improve the condition of the Catholics. While Mass was being celebrated in the usual furtive way in a ramshackle hiding place in Cook Street a beam supporting the floor collapsed under the weight of the congregation and the priest and many of the people were killed. This tragedy brought home to the more enlightened of the Ascendancy the plight to which their fellow Christians had been reduced, and the wretched shifts to which they had to resort in order to worship God. Lord Chesterfield was Viceroy, an urbane and tolerant gentleman, entirely free from the hatred of the ruling minority, or the obsessive terrors engendered in them by their own sense of guilt. He gave permission for proper chapels to be opened, and Fr. Fitzsimons

availed of the opportunity to build a church at the east corner of Watling Street which remained in use until the modern church of St. James was completed in 1852. The site of the old church is now occupied by the Guinness Waiting Room.

### **COUPLE-BEGGARS**

In the parish register for the 29th September, 1782, is the curious entry: "Patrick Jordan and Mary Fagan were married by Mr. Mahan the couple-beggar sometime in the month of October and afterwards renewed their consent in the chapel of St. James before Mr. McGuire." These "couple beggars" were also known as "Tackums", and Dr. Chart says: "Cook Street was noted as a residence of some of these degraded clergymen, called couple-beggars, who earned a miserable living by marrying without question any pair who came before them and were willing to pay the small fee of half-a-crown. Their registers have been carefully preserved, for the marriages were legal, and the heir to more than one great estate derives his title therefrom. However, they had an anxious time with their disreputable clients. Some tendered bad money, others behaved so unsuitably that they had to be dismissed. Once a whole party of soldiers and women came in drunk, demanding to be married but the minister had to decline." The existence of these couple-beggars was due to the fact that, because of the chaotic church organisation obtaining during the penal period, the decree of the Council of Trent on clandestine marriages had not yet been enforced in Ireland.

### **PASTIMES**

Through all the travail of the Penal Laws the natural resilience of the Irish people asserted itself and as early as the beginning of the 18th Century Dolphin's Barn, part of the parish of St. James until 1902, was renowned as a centre for hurling matches. The common lands of Kilmainham and Crumlin were noted for race meetings, the gatherings unfortunately degenerating into faction fights and disorders. An attempt was made to suppress the races in Kilmainham in 1747, and troops being called out several people were shot.

### **RICHARD POEKRICH**

A brewery was owned at Islandbridge in 1704 by one Richard Poekrich, as egregious an eccentric as Ireland has ever produced. Influenced no doubt by



St Patrick's (Swift's) Hospital

some of the extraordinary projects of the famous South Sea Company in England he inaugurated a number of equally chimerical schemes here, dissipating a considerable fortune in the process.

He proposed to turn our bogs into vineyards by a process known only to himself. His scheme was a ludicrous failure. Ireland at the time exported a considerable quantity of goose quills to England and Poekrich embarked on a large scale system of goose-farming in an attempt to corner the market. He was eminently unsuccessful.

His next venture was the invention of an unsinkable metal boat. It sank ignominiously in the Liffey amid the derisive cheers and hoots of a mob assembled on the banks, maliciously jubilant at the discomfiture of that self-assured gentleman. He was equally sanguine about a flying contrivance he designed, and equally unsuccessful.

Unabashed by his many failures, he proclaimed his greatest discovery of all, a system for indefinitely prolonging life by transfusing blood from a young person to an old. He even anticipated the legal complications which might arise through expiration of tenancies and leases, and through disappointed heirs, by proposing that Parliament would enact that anyone reaching the age of 999 would be deemed legally dead.

Ultimately he did attain a measure of genuine fame by his invention of musical glasses, or "the Angelic Organ" as he termed it, a number of wine glasses tuned by putting a different quantity of water in each, on which he played the popular songs of the day, "The Black Rogue" and "Eileen a Run". This invention became a fashionable vogue and while on a highly successful tour of England Poekrich lost his life in a fire in London in 1759.

## ST. PATRICK'S MENTAL HOSPITAL

In the early part of the 18th Century Sir Richard Fownes, chief ranger of the Phoenix Park and M.P. for Dingle resided at Islandbridge, then in common with Kilmainham, a popular suburban resort. It was he who suggested to Dean Swift the foundation of St. Patrick's Hospital. As early as 1731 Swift had agreed to the scheme as he writes in his own satirical epitaph, "On the Death of Dr. Swift:

*He gave the little wealth he had  
To build a house for fools and mad;  
And showed by one satiric touch  
No nation wanted it so much.*

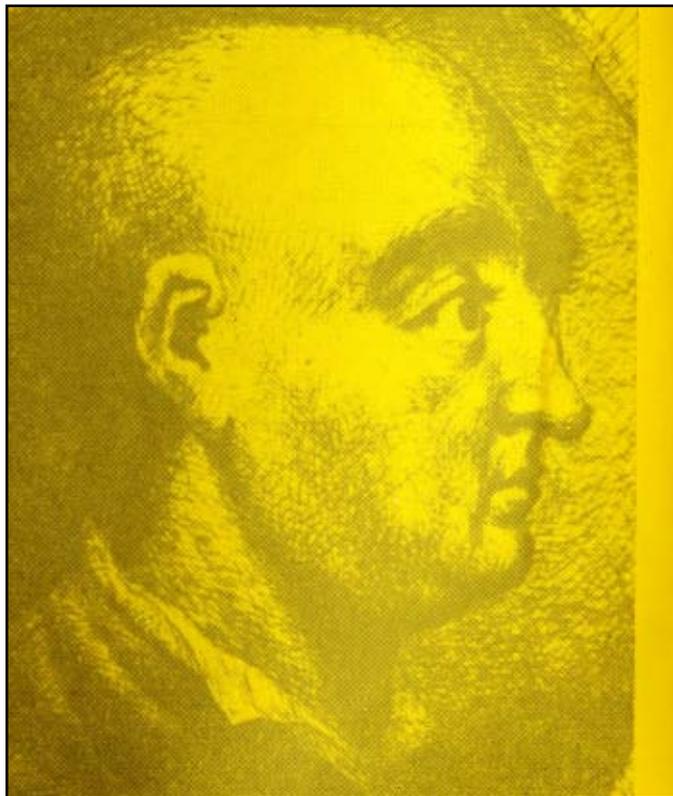
Swift petitioned the Mayor and Corporation of Dublin for a site for the hospital in 1735 intimating that he had provided funds for its erection after his death. The "Gentleman's Monthly Intelligencer" commented: "The Dean must die our idiots to maintain. Perish ye idiots! And long life the Dean!"

Swift, himself mentally afflicted for some years previous to his death in 1745, bequeathed over £10,000 to the hospital, which was completed in 1756. The first governor was John Whiteway, a cousin of Swift's, appointed at a salary of £10 per annum and £10 in lieu of meals. Robert Emmet's father, Dr. Robert Emmet, was governor and physician from 1770 to 1802, discharging his duties with such singular zeal and skill that the Board time and again reiterated their appreciation of his services. He died in 1803, the same year as his son Robert was hanged outside St. Catherine's Church in Thomas Street.

## THE ANNESLEY CASE

Inchicore figured prominently in the cause célèbre of the 18th Century—the Annesley Case. Lord Altham, grandson of the Earl of Anglesey, had considerable estates in Ireland and a residence in the townland of Butcher's Arms, Inchicore, the residence being frequently referred to during the lawsuit. Butcher's Arms derives its name from a tavern which bore that name and stood where the present splendid modern school of the De La Salle Brothers stands in the parish of Ballyfermot.

Lord Altham appears to have been as thorough a reprobate as any writer of melodrama could conceive, unequalled in villainy except perhaps by his brother Richard. In an effort to secure a reversionary interest in the Earl of Anglesey's estates for himself he had his own son James, to whom the



Dean Swift

reversion would accrue, spirited away.

James escaped from the house he was confined in and wandered through the city, a famished ragged waif, sleeping in ditches and doorways. Various citizens of Dublin knowing his pitiful story befriended him. On the death of Lord Altham in 1725, Richard, his brother, assumed the title and took possession of the estates.

He made several attempts to kidnap James and finally ran him down in the Ormonde Market. To give his procedure an appearance of legality he had the boy arrested by two pliant constables on the bogus charge of stealing a silver spoon. He held the struggling lad in a carriage until they reached George's Quay. From thence he took a boat down the river to Ringsend with his hand clapped over the child's mouth to stifle his screams. A vessel bound for America was lying in Ringsend and in this the boy was consigned and sold into slavery in Philadelphia.

Thirteen years later, James escaped to Jamaica where he enlisted as a sailor and eventually made his way back to Dublin, to the consternation of that arch villain, Uncle Richard, wickedly enjoying the fruits of his wickedness. James confronted his uncle and claimed his inheritance, but the wily old rascal, an adept at every form of dissimulation and chicanery, put him off with specious promises.

James travelled to England to recruit assistance, legal and financial. While there he was unfortunate enough to shoot a man accidentally and Richard seized this as a last desperate chance. He hastened to the trial, declaring that he would cheerfully give £10,000 to see James hanged, and did everything possible to bring about that glad event, but happily his efforts were fruitless.

In 1743, James brought an action against him for possession of the estates. The trial lasted 15 days and the defence indulged in such an unprecedented volume of perjury that even the hardened lawyers of 18th Century Dublin quailed before it. The verdict went to James but even now the redoubtable Richard availed of every shift and legal artifice to postpone the surrender of the estates and his nephew predeceased him in 1760 without ever regaining his patrimony.

### **THE CATHOLIC REVIVAL**

The early 19th Century saw a great upsurge of Catholic activity inspired to a great extent by the immense energy and genius of Daniel O'Connell. An outstanding member of the Catholic Association, founded by O'Connell in 1823, was James Bernard Clinch, a native of James's Street. Like O'Connell he was educated on the Continent and on returning to Dublin qualified as a Barrister. A man of profound learning and culture he employed his talents in the struggle for Catholic Emancipation, which was achieved in 1829.

### **GOLDENBRIDGE CEMETERY**

In 1829 the Catholics of Dublin secured a burying ground of their own at Goldenbridge. A good deal of distress had been occasioned by an order of the Protestant Archbishop Magee forbidding Catholic prayers in the churchyards held by the Protestants and this interdict constrained the Catholics to procure a burial place where their graveside prayers would be uninterrupted. Body snatching was still rife and as a precaution against this depredation quarters were erected for night watchmen who were provided with bloodhounds.

The ground was blessed by Fr. Canavan, C.C., on 15th October, 1829, and the first burial was that of Fr. Whelan who in Penal days had the pastoral charge of Dolphin's Barn. His remains had been interred beneath the earthen floor of that chapel and their exhumation awakened memories of the past.

### **THE CHURCH OF ST. JAMES**

Fr Canavan was appointed P.P. in 1842 and at once directed his energies to the building of a new church. He made such rapid progress that the foundation stone was laid on the 4th April, 1844 by Daniel O'Connell. Fr. Canavan and O'Connell are commemorated in the church by two corbel stones sculptured in their likeness over the main door. The horrors of the famine and its attendant cholera epidemic intervened however, and the church was not completed until 1852. On August 23rd, 1852 it was solemnly dedicated by Archbishop Cullen assisted by the Bishops of Kilmore, Hyderabad and Bombay, and the sermon following Solemn Pontifical Mass was preached by Fr. Henry Edward Manning, the famous convert, destined later to be a Prince of the Church.

### **THE OBLATE FATHERS**

In 1856 the Oblate Fathers in search of a suitable locality for a house of Retreat found it in Inchicore. Their start was modest, but as the grain of mustard seed became a great tree, so too did this humble beginning burgeon and flourish, permeating in its influence not only the surrounding locality, but extending through the missionary labours of its priests to the untraversed places of the world, to the African jungle and the frozen tundra.

### **DEAN KENNEDY**

The pastorship of Dean Kennedy (1857-1896) was particularly noteworthy. The sinister forces of proselytism were active amongst a people not yet recovered from the ravages of the famine and its attendant pestilence. He recruited the religious orders to combat perversion. In 1884 the Little Sisters of the Poor built their home for the aged poor at Kilmainham. Schools were built by the Christian Brothers at Canal Harbour (1869) and Goldenbridge (1885) and by the Sisters of Charity at Basin Lane (1897) and the Sisters of Mercy at Goldenbridge (1855). The school at Dolphin's Barn also was built under his aegis. At Dolphin's Barn too in 1890 he laid the foundation stone of the present magnificent church opened in 1893. His successor Canon Carberry resided at Dolphin's Barn as he was particularly interested in having the church interior completed, and on his death in 1902 Dolphin's Barn was constituted a separate parish under Canon Cornelius Ryan.

## KILMAINHAM JAIL

against the wall. In this manner he passed into the ranks of Ireland's roll of honoured martyrs.

.... Describing the scene to me afterwards he said : 'The blood spurted in the form of a fountain from the body, several streams shooting high into the air'. The possible explanation of this may have been the tightening of the straps about the body.'

In 1917 when Britain attempted to impose conscription in Ireland Canon William McGill P.P. was chairman of St. James' Anti-Conscription Committee which included William Cosgrave, Joseph McGrath and Dr. Richard Hayes.

In 1926 the garrison church of Richmond Barracks became a place of public worship dedicated to St. Michael. The very centres of a domination inveterately opposed to Catholicism were reverting to the ancient faith. On the death of Canon McGill in February, 1933, the new parish of St. Michael, Inchicore, came into being with Fr. James Doyle as Parish Priest, succeeded by our present pastor, the Rev. Fr. Thomas Meleady, in 1955.

That eminent Dublinman, George Bernard Shaw, in a characteristic epigram, declares that the only thing we learn from history is that we learn nothing from history. With every deference to the opinion of that great man we humbly submit that from the chronicles of this our parish, and from the chronicles of every parish in the land, whose aggregate comprises the history of Ireland, two facts are manifest, facts which are not without relevance and significance in the world of today. Through centuries of crushing tyranny our aspirations for liberty and self-determination remained undiminished. Through centuries of proscription and suppression the Church of God emerges, militant and immutable.

### 1916

At Kilmainham Jail many of the 1916 leaders made the ultimate sacrifice. It fell to Fr. Eugene MacCarthy to attend at each execution and to anoint each fallen body. He too had the sad duty of marrying Joseph Plunkett and Grace Gifford in the prison cell before the patriot went to his death.

In the centenary record of St. James' Church, Hubert O'Keefe gives a moving account of James Connolly's execution:

"In giving a description of Connolly's execution Fr. McCarthy told me that the prisoner, who was in a bad condition, elected to stand like the rest, but failed. He was then tied to a chair but slumped so much that he overbalanced. Finally he was strapped to a stretcher and placed in a reclining position

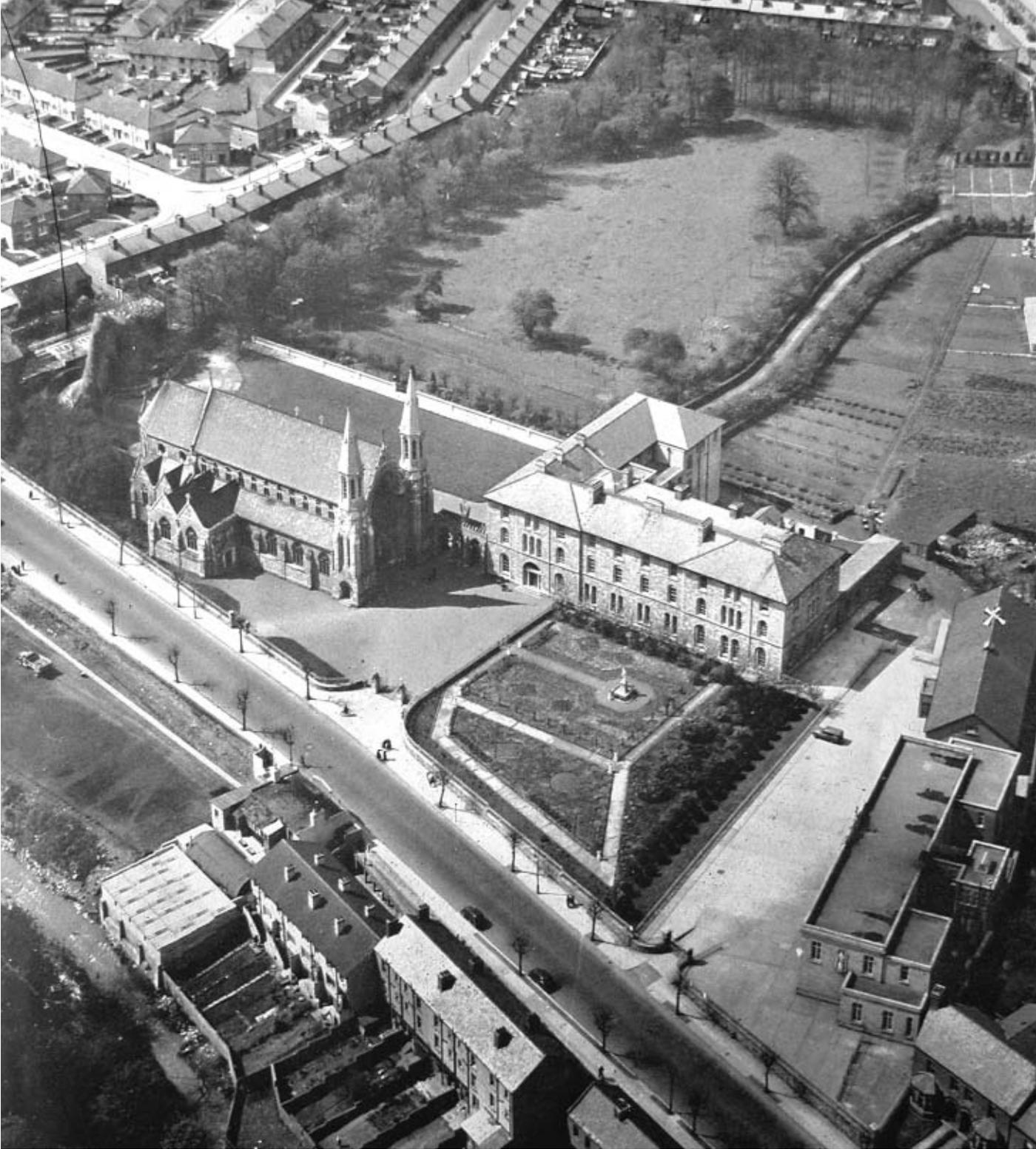


Photo courtesy of "Irish Independent"

Aerial photo showing Oblate Fathers' property at Inchicore. House of Retreat and Church of Mary Immaculate are in the centre foreground. The Grotto is on the left behind the Church. Schools and Assembly Hall are in right foreground. The Assembly Hall (X) stands on the site of the original Wooden Church.

## OBLÁTAIGH MHUIRE GAN SMÁL

*do scríobh*

*PADRAIG MAC CARTHAIG, O.M.I.*



Scéal abhfad siar 'seadh Athrú Mór na Fraince, acht ar a shon san tá a fhios ag gach scoláire conus a thuit sé amach, agus conas mar a tháinig sé mar phleascán ar Roinn na h-Eorpa. Tar éis an chinn a bhaint de'n ri, Lughaidh XVI, do lucht an Athruithe, dheineadar na h-uaisle go léir do dhíbirt thar lear. Acht níor leor san, mar do cheapadar an fán do chur ar gach duine rialta agus ar gach sagart sa bhFrainnc nó iad a thúirt chun na croiche. Do chuireadar an run i ngníomh chomh beacht san ná raibh sagart ná bráthair le feicsint sa bhFrainnc bliain 'na dhiaidh sin. Bhí ar aigne ag lucht an Athruithe Creideamh Chríost do dhísciú agus solus an Chreidimh sin do mhúchadh i mbeatha na ndaoine, agus donas an scéil ar fad, bhí ag eirí leo san obair sin ; bhí an Creideamh ag meathadh. Bhí druim láimhe tugtha le Dia ag a lán daoine agus bhíodar ar sodar i laithigh an díchreidimh agus ag rith le fánaidh go mear ar a n-aimhleas. Ba thiubaisteach an deire a bhí i ndán dóibh da leanadaís an tslí sin. Níor bhfoláir do dhuine croí leomhain a bheith aige chun aon iarracht a dhéanamh ar chosg a chur leo agus ar iad d'íompáil ar shlí a leasa.

Do thóg Dia suas sagart naofa chun na h-oibre seo do dhéanamh. An t-Athair de Masenod ab ainm dó. Do rugadh i ndeisceart na Fraince é sa bhliain

1782. Bhí sé 'na bhuachail nuair a thuit an t-Athrú Mór amach. Do chonaic sé an léirscrios go léir 'gá dhéanamh 'n-a thir dhúchais, agus anois agus é in a shagart d'fhéach sé ar na scáilbh ag dorchú thar thalamh na Fraince. Acht buíochas mór le Dia, dá fhaid í an oiche, tagann an lá.

Do chuir an radharc seo trua ina chroí, agus do cheap an t-Athair de Masenod ina aigne feabhas do chur ar an scéal le na shaothar féin. Ach do sprioch Dia e chun cuallachta do chur ar bun a chabhróhadh leis san obair mhóir a bhí curtha roimis aige. D'fhéach sé 'n-a thimpal ar lorg sagart eile a bheadh toilteanach páirt a ghabháil leis san obair ; fuair sé ceathrar agus thánadar le chéile an 25ú lá de mhí Eanáir sa bhliain 1816. Ar an lá san do chuir an t-Athair de Masenod ar bun cuallacht rialta nua, a leathanódh, ní h-amháin ar fud na Fraince, ach ar fud an domhain go léir.

Thugadar aghaidh gan mhoill ar an obair a bhí rómpa, agus ba chruaidh an obair í, mar bhí na daoine brúitte síos i lathaigh an pheaca. Bhí a gciall daonna múchta fé dhoilbhcheo agus ní raibh d'achfuinn ionta beart do dheanamh do réir a dtuisceana.

Chromadar laithreachli bonn ar iarracht a dhéanamh chun na ndaoine a thógáil suas as an lathaigh sin. Ghluaisedar mórthímpeal na tíre go

léir ag seanmóireacht agus ag craobhscaoileadh Briathair Dé. Thugadar misiúin ins na cathracha agus ins na bailte móra. Bhí lámh Dé leo san obair agus d'éirigh leo go h-iontach. Fé mar do chuir Ar dTiarna smacht ar an ngaoith, agus ar an bhfairge san am fadó, do cuireadh srian le h-ainmhiantaibh na ndaoine. Níorbh fhada gur iompaíodar ar a leas, agus thánadar thar n-ais isteach i gCró Chríost. Bhí muinntir na Fraince sabháilte ag na h-Oblátaigh.

Acht fé'n am seo bhí na h-Oblátaigh ag dul i líonmhaireacht go tapaidh. Ansan iseadh do chum an t-Athair de Masenod a nail bheannaithe. Chuir sé an riail seo fé bhrághaid an Phápa agus cúpla mí 'n-a dhiaidh sin thug an Pápa Leon XII árd-mholadh agus aithint sholúnta do'n riail bheannaithe agus do Chuallacht Oblátach Mhuire gan Smál. As san amach, bhíodar ar aon dul le cuallachtaí rialta eile na h-Eaglaise.

Bhí an-theist ar na h-Oblátaigh mar mhisnéiri ar fud na Fraince cheana féin, ach ba ghearr go leathnófaí a gclú go h-imeall an domhain ar fad. Do chuir an t-Athair de Masenod a shagairt uaidh chun an tSoiscéil a chraobhscaoileadh do bhochtaibh an domhain. Na daoine ná raiblí strus an tsaol seo aca, na daoine a bhí suite i ndorchadas an pheaca, ar a lorg san a chuaig na h-Oblátaigh. Níorbh fhada go raibh na h-Oblátaigh le fáil ins gach áit, nach mór, fé luí na gréine. D'imíodar amach go dtí an t-Oileán Úr, go dtí an Áis, go dtí an Aifric Theas agus go dtí an Austráil. Ins na réigiúin reoite agus ins na tíortha geala, grianmhara ba dhíograiseach iad ag cnuasadh an fhómhair isteach i n-íothlainn Dé. Céad bliain glan ó shin do chuireadar fútha annso i n-Éirinn, agus d'éirigh leo tharna beartaibh 'n-a gcuid oibre annso díreach mar d'éirigh leo ins gach aon bhall eile i gcéin agus i gcómhgar. Táid anois ar na cuallachtaí is láidre agus is líonmhaire dá bhfuil i n-Eaglais Dé.

Go gcabhrúghidh Dia leo san obair naofa pé ait sa domhan 'n-a bhfuilid le fáil.



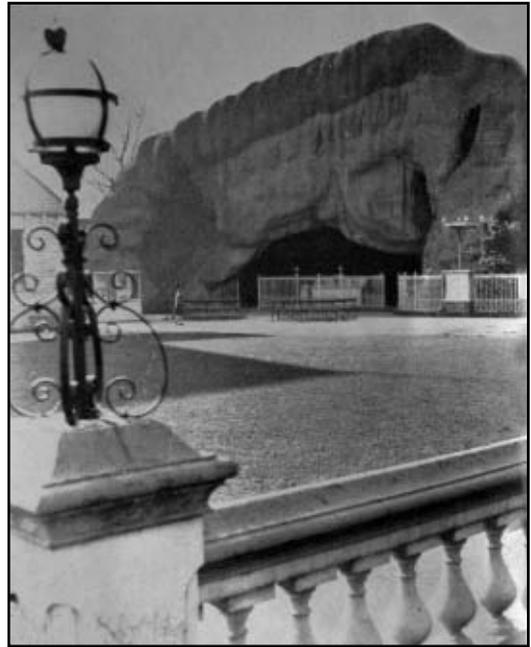
An sean-chlochar Carmel ag Aix, mar ar bunaíodh Órd na n-Oblátach sa bhlian 1816.



# shrine of *MARY*

by  
A. B. ERCORNE

Paradoxical but true, “Ireland’s First Lourdes”—as the Grotto at Inchicore came to be called—was not Inchicore’s first. A stroll along the path which leads one past the Oblate Cemetery will help to verify the fact. There was an earlier Grotto, the “little” Grotto, built by Father Ring and Brother Malone to serve as focus and inspiration for devotion to the Immaculate, whose cult, ever strong in Inchicore hearts since the coming of the Oblates, had received fresh impetus when news of the extraordinary happenings at Lourdes became widespread. The “little” Grotto is still worth a visit. It stands in reposeful solitude at the further end of the grounds—a ruin, forgotten and neglected perhaps, but still bearing mute witness to a long and faithful tradition of devotion to the Immaculate Virgin. Erected after the first-ever Irish Pilgrimage to Lourdes, led by Father Ring in 1883, each year on the 11th of February the “little” Grotto was the scene of enthusiastic demonstrations of love and loyalty to Our Lady. The members of the faithful anxious to take part increased with every year that passed, as many as seven and eight thousand joining in the Torch-light Processions on those great days. Those days apart, however, visitors were few, daily visitors fewer still. Its distance from the Church militated against its becoming a really popular shrine and, for most



**“ FAITH HAS PLANTED A MOUNTAIN  
HERE AT INCHICORE.”**

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of the year, its only regular clients were the members of the Oblate Community resident nearby.

Something nearer, something more striking, something on a grander scale was required if the devotion of the people was to find adequate outlet. The story of the present, nationally-renowned replica of Lourdes at Inchicore is of more than passing interest, if only for the obvious, though veiled, part which the Mother of God herself took in its beginnings.

In 1924, Father Michael Sweeney—for Inchicore people the Grotto will always evoke that name!—found himself in Lourdes for the first time. The occasion was historic for him, personally—how historic he could scarcely have realised at the time. It was nationally memorable, too. That year, Most Rev. Dr. McHugh, Bishop of Derry, accompanied by practically all the Bishops of Ireland, with hundreds of their clergy, led a pilgrimage of many thousands of Irish people to the shrine of Our Lady at Lourdes. There was a complement of fully eight hundred invalids.

In times of pilgrimages generally, the opportunity of offering the Holy Sacrifice at the altar of the Grotto is, needless to say, an enviable privilege reserved for the few. That a mere priest should be accorded that signal honour was outside serious consideration during the Irish National Pilgrimage of 1924. Nevertheless, to Father Sweeney that much longed-for happiness was given. Mary Immaculate saw to it that her devoted Oblate son should be the chosen one — and for Rosary Sunday, of all days!

Surely this was the time for a special Mass intention! And Father Sweeney had one, a very special one. During those days of first impressions of the Shrine, one thing had impressed him more than all the rest. It was the extraordinary fervour of the Irish Pilgrims, manifested not only in the official exercises, but also and perhaps even more so, in their private visits. He well knew that the Irish Catholics who journeyed to Lourdes would, in the nature of things, always be a small minority. What of the rest? Should Our Lady of Lourdes not be allowed to reach those who could not reach her? Should not he, Father Sweeney, specially pledged as an Oblate to spread devotion to her Immaculate Conception, try to do something for Our Lady and her Irish clients? And so he offered Holy Mass at the Grotto, on Rosary Sunday, 1924, that God's blessing might be with his resolve to give to Ireland a full-scale replica of the Grotto in the Pyrenees. Looking back over the past twenty-five years and all that the Inchicore Grotto has meant during that time to the people, it is unnecessary to say how pleased God was with Father Sweeney's prayer.

Four years later, the work was begun. In the interval, Bro. Patrick McIntyre, O.M.I., the obvious choice for architect and engineer of the New Shrine, had been sent to Lourdes by his Provincial to study the formation and contours of the Massabielle Rock. The success which crowned the devoted Brother's labour of love can be adequately gauged only by those who have had the opportunity of comparing the copy with the original.

Devotees of Our Lady everywhere in Ireland followed the project with interest, prayer and practical support. To the men of Inchicore and the surrounding districts was reserved the honour of contributing physical toil. How well they appreciated the honour, with what loyal generosity they rallied to Brother McIntyre's side, only he can tell —and Father Sweeney, of course, who was scarcely ever

absent while the work was in progress. "The loyalty of the men of Inchicore," he has often said, "I will never forget."

The choice of site was an important factor. A grove of large trees stood near the Church and there it was decided to erect the Grotto. For weeks, hundreds of willing hands were engaged in clearing the site. Then began the work of digging for the foundations—a huge undertaking in itself, since, to support the vast structure intended, the foundations had to be eleven feet deep. In August, 1928, in the presence of a great gathering, Very Rev. Fr. Joseph Scannell, Oblate Provincial at that time, assisted by Father Sweeney who was then Superior at Inchicore, blessed the foundations, the work and the workers.

For two years the work went on—one could almost say, day and night. For, when the evenings grew short and darkness fell, the men of Inchicore toiled on by the light from electric light-standards they had set up all around. The going was heavy, but good will and good humour made the hours fly. Father Sweeney never failed to find inspiration and encouragement in the sight of these voluntary workers giving of their best. It was no uncommon thing to see hundreds of the local Railway employees working well into the night, joined at intervals by engine-drivers and firemen who had come straight from the footplate to put in a few hours' effort before setting off home for a well-earned rest.

Father Sweeney may have had his worries as he watched the vast foundations swallowing thousands of tons of cement and stone and his resources at the same time, but the lovers of Mary Immaculate, not only in Inchicore but in every part of Ireland, saw to it that the work went ahead without pause and were determined that it would never be hampered through lack of funds.

Eventually, in 1930, the Grotto was completed and the time of its solemn opening to the faithful public was at hand. Sunday, 11th of May, was the day chosen. What a proud and memorable day for the Oblates and people of Inchicore! One hundred thousand people gathered for the event, the largest crowd, by far, ever assembled there. His Grace, Most Rev. Dr. Byrne, Archbishop of Dublin, presided at Solemn High Mass.

Most Rev. Dr. McNealy, Bishop of Raphoe, was special preacher for the occasion. Later, at the Grotto, Most Rev. Dr. Collier, Bishop of Ossory, preached for the blessing and unveiling of the

Lourdes Statue. The largest candle ever lit in Ireland, a gift from the people, was carried high on the shoulders of four men and placed in position on ground-level just below the Statue of the Virgin. The Archbishop of Dublin, who performed the blessing ceremony, turning to light the candle said: "I light this candle in the name of the bishops, priests and people of Dublin!" As the flame of the massive taper flickered into life, a choir of more than a thousand children gave expression to the congregation's gladness in a full-throated rendering of the "Credo". It was a wonderful occasion. The great replica of Lourdes thenceforth belonged to the people and they made it their very own.

"How shall I find words," wrote Aodh de Blacam when he visited the Grotto shortly before the great day, "how shall I find words wherewith to describe my impressions of the Inchicore Shrine? Last week, I had the privilege of viewing this vast structure which now is nearing completion. It stands beside the main road at Inchicore, behind the Oblate Church. A glimpse can be caught of it from passing vehicles...We alighted at the Church and entered in order to admire the fine new transepts... We then went to the House of the Oblate Fathers, where the Superior, Father Michael Sweeney, graciously joined us. He led us along the flank of the Church, where a wide concrete approach was being laid, and there before us, like a great lead-coloured cloud in the sky, we saw what seemed to be the very Grotto of Lourdes itself.

"Yes, Faith has planted a mountain here at Inchicore! There it stands, curving against the sky, hollowed into a cavern and rent by fissures—exactly like the famous rock and cave where the little maid saw Our Lady. In a cleft to the right, higher than one would care to climb, a veiled figure stood. Below, the railings cut off the inner part of the cave, where (as at the real Lourdes) the Altar will stand.

"The whole is a marvellous piece of engineering and art. It is built, of course, in concrete, although coloured to resemble black limestone...We admired and felt like applauding, when we saw Brother McIntyre, the engineer of the undertaking, going about his work. For two years he has toiled incessantly and the devout workmen of the neighbourhood have assisted, working freely by day and night, through frost and hail.

"We were told that the material put into the hill and cave alone cost £9,000, yet there is not a penny

of debt upon it. The priest who conceived the idea, when he was on the National Pilgrimage at Lourdes, asked Our Lady as he said Mass in her Grotto for the means, and the means came...

"Meanwhile, a workman had ascended, and now, for our benefit, the statue was unveiled. The picture was complete. There stood Our Lady, a figure in snowy Carrara marble with blue cincture, hands clasped in adoration as she looks upward, and above her head the words that her little worshipper heard: 'Je suis L'Immaculée Conception'. The statue is by Lorenzi and is considered one of the finest of its theme.

"What a triumph is this great Grotto for the faith and devotion of the priests and people of Inchicore!"

Only a few more words need be added and, materially speaking at any rate, the story of Inchicore's widely famed Shrine is complete. Rosary Square, the bright green sward to the right of the concrete approach, was part of the plan from the first. At a later date, Brother McIntyre erected the impressive black-and-white ballustrade which now divides Rosary Square from the grounds beyond. Finally, to provide a worthy entrance to the Grotto, a splendid archway was built to span the space between the Church and the Fathers' residence. A point of interest concerning the arches and not generally known is that they incorporate a stone from every Irish Monastery dedicated to the Mother of God. High above, the Virgin Crowned looks with maternal love upon the busy flow of Dublin's life and beckons her children to come and visit her peaceful Shrine.

*Key to Photos on opposite page, reading left to right.*

1. Original Grotto at Inchicore with Fr. Ring, O.M.I., and Brother Malone, O.M.I., in fore ground.
2. Group of Inchicore men working on foundation of present Grotto, c. 1928.
3. Archbishop Byrne lights the giant candle on opening day of new Grotto, May 11th, 1930.
4. Archbishop Byrne on his way to opening ceremony of Grotto.
5. Dr. Collier, Bishop of Ossory, preaching at the Grotto on the opening day.
6. Father Michael Sweeney, O.M.I., who conceived and carried out the Grotto project.



# *Charity is patient, Charity is kind...*

by  
VINCENTIAN

The 19th Century saw the birth of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate. It also saw the birth of another society that has since spread to almost every country in the world—just as the Oblates of Mary Immaculate have done. It is the Society of St. Vincent de Paul.

Frederic Ozanam was but three years old when Bishop de Mazenod brought together the first members of his community at Aix, and it was on a sunny May evening, just 17 years later, when he himself and six other young men met at the office of the Tribune Catholique, 18 Rue de Petit-Bourbon, St. Sulpice, in Paris, and formed what was to be the first Conference of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. The year was 1833.

There is no record to show whether these two remarkable men had any contact with one another during their life-time. In fact, it can almost be assumed that they never did meet, but yet, on reading either of their biographies, one cannot fail to notice a certain similarity of interior character. In the book “Sketches of the Life of Mgr. de Mazenod” by V. Rev. Fr. Cooke, O.M.I., we find the following passage describing Eugene de Mazenod prior to his entering the seminary of St. Sulpice: “... he laboured with all his might to render aid to the suffering poor of his native city. His deepest compassion was excited by the wretched conditions of the unhappy prisoners...Eugene took a leading part in a society formed for their relief... Several times every week he visited these poor

captives in their cells, distributing with his own hands portions of bread and meat to each... But his enlightened charity aimed more at benefiting their souls than their bodies...”

Ozanam founded his society “for the relief of the spiritual and temporal miseries of those in want”. The similarity is obvious. Again, Ozanam told his Brothers that at their weekly meetings they should edify one another and be edified by each other, and in Fr. Cooke’s book we read that Mgr. de Mazenod, writing to Fr. Tempier, his first Oblate, says: “... we will draw together, when we meet, our regulations and take mutual counsel with one another regarding all that God may inspire us to do, for our own sanctification, and the good of our neighbour”.

These two examples are sufficient to show that the souls of both were filled with a great sameness of spirit—the spirit of Charity. That of de Mazenod to imbue, with a love of souls, the Congregation which today encircles the globe from the very Arctic to the Tropics, and that of Ozanam to reach down to the young men of the present and fill them with a desire to seek Christ in the homes of the poor that they visit. And it was this same spirit which, in the passage of time, led Frederic’s society to find amongst the disciples of Bishop de Mazenod, men who would be anxious to devote time and energy in its many interests. One of such, was the first Oblate Provincial in Inchicore—Fr. Robert Cooke.

We read, in the early records of the House of Retreat, that on 6th March, 1859, Rev. Fr. Fox, OMI

preached a charity sermon in Phibsboro in favour of the orphanage erected in Glasnevin and an entry, dated February 19th, 1860 reads: "Today, Sunday, a charity sermon in aid of the St. Vincent de Paul Male Orphanage, Mount Brown, was preached in the Church of St. Francis Xavier, Upper Gardiner Street, by the Rev. Fr. Cooke. This Orphanage, although not under the care of any of the Fathers, yet is connected with the House at Inchicore, in as much as the orphans come regularly here every week to receive religious instruction in the chapel. These orphans are now 30 in number and occupy rented premises at Mount Brown. The present house being inadequate to accommodate the numerous applicants, a new house was commenced at Glasnevin, which, when finished, is intended to accommodate several hundred boys. It is to raise up funds for the completion of this new house that the Rev. Fr. Cooke made a warm appeal to the charity of the good citizens of Dublin."



REV. W. M. DEVINE, O.M.I.

These items have added interest when it is realized that the object of these sermons—St. Vincent's Orphanage—is also celebrating its Centenary this year, and faded though the written page may be, they show that the Oblates were but three years in Ireland when they were associated with Ozanam's society. Unfortunately, the actual date of the foundation of the Conference of Mary Immaculate, attached to their Church at Inchicore, is rather obscure. There is some evidence available however, to the effect that it was in existence prior to 1883. About its activities in the district, we can write nothing until 1890, when we find that illustrious Oblate, Fr. William Ring taking a great interest in the Conference. It then numbered five members.

It was in 1894, during his term as Spiritual Director, that he established a night school for men and boys. At that time, there was no law governing the school leaving age, and it was not unusual to find boys leaving school and taking up employment at the very early age of ten or eleven years. This, as

can be imagined, led to a very high incidence of illiteracy, and it was to combat this that Fr. Ring established these night classes, at which two Brothers of the Conference were always in attendance. An old reference to the school says: "there were fine masters and much good was accomplished."

By 1898 membership had risen to nine members and, in 1899, Fr. Ring was asked to preside at the Quarterly Festival Meeting held on April 16th of that year. That he was so honoured, was due, no doubt, not only to his fame as a preacher, but also in appreciation of his interest in the society.

As the years advanced, the suburb of Inchicore extended greatly and in effect the work of the Conference increased. In 1913, the then Spiritual Director, Fr. McSherry, O.M.I., seeing the need for more members, commenced a recruiting drive and some of those whom he introduced to the society at that time as young men, are still spared to give the Conference the benefit of their wisdom and experience. From then onwards the work so dear to Ozanam was carried on under the spiritual guidance of successive Oblates. The present Director, Rev. Fr. Devine, O.M.I., is a worthy successor to those who have preceded him, and his appointment in 1941 marked the beginning of a new and fruitful era for the Conference of Mary Immaculate.

Youth welfare had, at that time, become an urgent and pressing problem, aggravated by conditions prevailing after World War 2, together with the ever increasing influence of the cinema and the danger of imported literature. Grave concern had been expressed by the clergy on the question, and the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, whose Rule states: "no work of charity is foreign to the society", was taking an active interest in the matter, by the promotion of Boys' Clubs. The Conference of Mary Immaculate was well aware of the pressing need for such a club in their district, and in 1944, with the approval and encouragement of Fr. Devine, who had always taken a special interest in

youth, a premises was secured for this purpose. Situated in Ring Street, it was opened and blessed by the late V. Rev. Canon Doyle, P.P., on April 25th, 1944, in the presence of its first members, Fathers from the House of Retreat and the Brothers of the Conference.

From its commencement, St. Joseph's Boys' Club was favoured with great success, due, primarily, to the zeal and energy of its Spiritual Director. A large number of boys came under its patronage and the only requirement for membership was that each boy was enrolled in the Boys' Branch of the Church Sodality. Boys from homes visited by the Conference were, and still are, given priority.

The members were divided into age groups, each of which attended the Club on specific nights, where they enjoyed the facilities of such indoor recreations as table tennis, boxing, chess and billiards. Football was the main outdoor activity and the Club's all-round record in sport is such that, on two occasions since its inception, it has won every trophy open to competition amongst the Boys' Clubs of the City. The Oblate Cup is, perhaps, the most cherished and coveted

trophy. Donated by Rev. Fr. Sweeney, O.M.I., it is presented to the best all-round boy in the Club each year.

The Spiritual Director attends the Club every night and delivers a lecture to each section once a week. These discourses, from one who has made a study of youth, cannot but have a special effect on those who are privileged to hear them. In addition to these lectures, he also is at hand to discuss with individual members any problems they may have, and to advise them on employment difficulties.

The work of the Club proved so successful and the requests for membership became so numerous that in 1946 the Conference was obliged to seek larger premises in which to extend their activities. A fine basement, situated opposite the Oblate Church, was placed at their disposal and through the labours of the Brothers, many of whom are skilled tradesmen, the Club today can boast of amenities which are second to none in any other such Club in the city. The fruits of their endeavours are evidenced in the two spacious halls, showers and kitchen, and at present, they are preparing facilities for outdoor games in a space adjoining the premises.

**Photo taken on the occasion of the opening of St. Joseph's Boys' Club on April 25th, 1944.**

**The late Canon Doyle, P.P., St. Michael's, is seen speaking.**

**Others in the photo are (L. to R.): Fr M. Sweeney, O.M.I., Dr. M. J. Dillon, W. Comerford, G. Cleary and W. J. Lacey.**



A special feature of the Club's activities is its magnificent choir. Formed in 1950 under the direction of yet another Oblate, Rev. Fr. Haslam, it has gained a well-earned reputation in the district for its renderings at the many Church ceremonies, and around it is built the annual entertainment which takes place in Árus Mhuire.

Irrespective of all the manual work which they do, the Brothers of the Conference are present at every activity of the Club, and at no time are the boys without their supervision. To those who attend Mass in the Oblate Church on Sundays, it is a familiar sight to see the various football teams setting out for their engagements with the ever-present Brother in charge. But it is perhaps in the organising of the annual holiday that the charity and self-sacrifice of these men can be best appreciated, for this necessitates the sacrifice of a week of their own vacation to ensure that the boys of St. Joseph's Boys' Club will have everything they require for an enjoyable holiday.

Notwithstanding the tremendous energy required to carry out this special work, the primary work of the society—that of visiting the poor in their homes—goes on quietly and unobtrusively every week of the year in the large area entrusted to the care of the Conference. To these less fortunate ones, the Brothers bring what little help they can, that the wounds of poverty might be salved and the spiritual and temporal miseries of those in want might be relieved.

For the means to carry on this great work of charity, the Conference has always depended on the people of the district and the response to the annual collection is ample proof that their faith has not been misplaced. The Oblate Fathers have played no small part in this respect, for it is with their kind permission and approval that this collection is taken up in their Church. Their generosity over the past century is also reflected in the fact that from its inception, until the opening of the present Club premises, the Conference always found a welcome home for its meetings in the House of Retreat.

In the course of these brief reflections on the relationship which has existed between the



Oblates of Mary Immaculate and the Society of St. Vincent de Paul in Inchicore, one cannot but be convinced of the same spirit of charity which imbued the souls of both de Mazenod and Ozanam, and in the final analysis, it must only be acknowledged that whilst the charity of Ozanam still manifests itself in the weekly visitation of Christ's poor, who live in the shadow of the Church of Mary Immaculate, so does that of de Mazenod manifest itself in the presence of the Oblate Father at the weekly Conference meeting.

FATHER  
**W. M. J. RING**  
O.M.I.

*Móna Ní Thuairisg*



On the 16th of January, 1834, there was great rejoicing in the Protestant household of Doctor Ring at Portstewart in the county of “Londonderry” for a son had been born. True to tradition, he was named after William of Orange. But, Our Lady had plans for this boy, and the workings of Divine Providence early manifested themselves when, on his death-bed, Doctor Ring was received into the Catholic Church. The conversion of the entire family followed, and so we find William Ring embracing the Catholic Faith at the age of 15.

With the floodgates of Divine Grace opened for him, his way to Mary was swift and sure. He entered the Oblate Juniorate at Sicklinghall, Yorkshire, where he donned the habit of the Order in 1854. On the 9th of August, 1857, he had the great privilege of receiving the order of sub-deacon at the hands of the Servant of God and Founder of the Oblates, Bishop de Mazenod. The final preparations for his sacerdotal office were made at the French Scholasticate at Montolivet. Part of his duties here was to teach English to his French colleagues for their future work amongst the people of the Anglo-Irish Province, and his superiors have left written tributes to his success at this work.

William Ring was ordained priest by Bishop de Mazenod on the 23rd June, 1859, and immediately

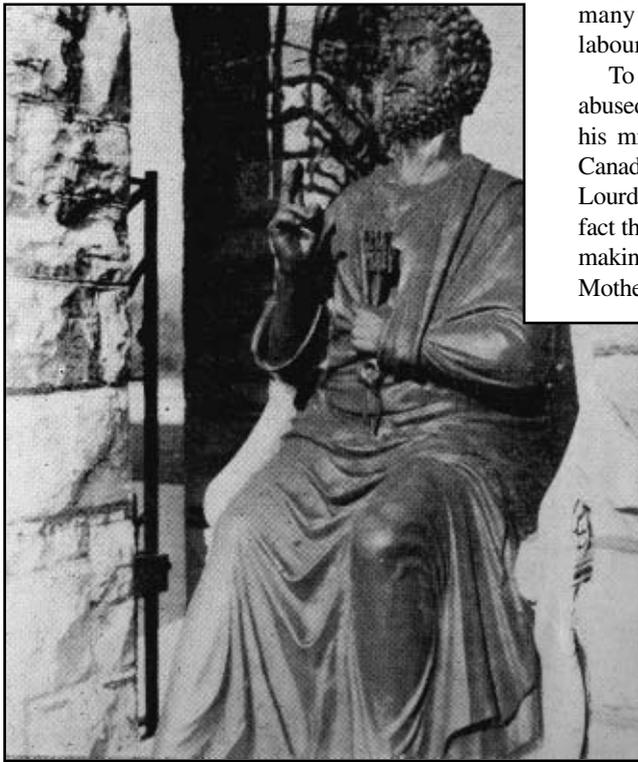
took up duty at the Oblate house in Leith. Shortly afterwards he came to Ireland where he joined the Mission Staff at Inchicore. His first public appearance was something in the nature of a sensation! Cardinal Cullen was performing the ceremony of laying the foundation stone of the Catholic University, and the Oblates were asked to send a group of men for the occasion. The men of Inchicore marched, as only they can, but the man who won all hearts was Father Ring—heading the procession on a white horse. The newspapers of the day were filled with descriptions of the smiling priest, who looked even taller than he actually was, heading the military-like procession on his prancing white steed. That he was a born leader, as well as a good priest, must have been evident to his superiors for we next see him at the age of 33 being appointed Rector of Tower Hill in London. This parish, situated in the region of London docks and the sinister slums of Whitechapel (of Jack the Ripper fame) had a Catholic population of 7,000, of whom a large proportion were Irish. The squalor and degradation of the area was unbelievable, and the new Rector very soon found himself with an outbreak of the dread disease, cholera, ravaging the district. Relief committees were at once set up, but Father Ring soon perceived that the “Papists” were

being quietly cold-shouldered out of any help whatsoever, and his cool Northern blood boiled up! In a scathing letter to the Lord Mayor of London he accused him, amongst other things, of deliberate partiality in the dispensing of public funds to help his people in their dreadful need. By return post he was instructed to set up a committee for the Tower Hill area and received £50 to start the Relief Fund. It was not much for the relief of so many, but at least it was a start and Father Ring continued the fight for more money. When the Protestant Pastor in the area saw the help being given to the Catholics he thought he would write in also, but he was referred to the official Committee for the area—Father Ring's. Nothing like this had been seen in England for over 300 years! It was hard to believe that a Protestant Pastor should be obliged to approach a Catholic Committee, officially recognised by the Civil Authority, and holding its meetings in a religious house. However, the Lord Mayor could see from the results that the best man for the job was already there and working wonders at that. There was no "soup-kitchen" prosletysing in the manner in which Father Ring gave relief to his Protestant neighbours. His strict impartiality completely won the respect of all, and when the outbreak was eventually quelled, he not only received public recognition for his work, but the Reverend Pastor insisted on the entire community at Tower Hill having dinner with him and his ministers. This

was not only accepted, but the compliment was duly reciprocated a short time afterwards! During his sojourn at Tower Hill, Father Ring was pained to see that the only legal occupation open to the young girls of the parish was street-hawking. This he resolved to change, and with the help of his newly-found Protestant friends, he collected £3,000 to build a school in which the girls could receive training to fit them for work at sewing, cookery, embroidery and other useful arts. In 1870, the Princess Marguerite of Orleans laid the foundation stone of the school as a lasting monument to his energy and zeal.

While on a journey to Ireland this same year, Father Ring had a miraculous escape from death when the Irish Mail, on which he and Father Healy were travelling, was involved in a collision near Tamworth. Father Healy was killed instantly, but his Heavenly Mother had more work for Father Ring and he escaped without a scratch. This was not the only instance of what must have been Divine Providence watching over this son of Mary. On another occasion he was preaching in the Church of Saint Mary, Edinburgh to the men of the parish, and, having delivered his sermon, left the pulpit. Seconds later the walls of a large theatre, which overshadowed the tiny church, collapsed and buried the congregation, many of whom were killed. In his own unassuming words, Father Ring attributed these miraculous escapes to the power of prayer—the prayers of his fellow Oblates and those of his many friends in the parishes wherein he had laboured for their spiritual good.

To tell the story of his life would—in that much-abused expression—fill a book, so we must pass over his missionary work in England, Ireland, Scotland, Canada and the U.S.A., but the Oblate Pilgrimages to Lourdes are so famous that it is impossible to omit the fact that Father Ring was the originator of the idea of making pilgrimages to the Shrine of his beloved Mother, Mary Immaculate. In 1883 he had the great joy of taking the first pilgrimage from the United Kingdom to Lourdes.



**Bronze statue of St. Peter, an exact replica of that in St. Peter's, Rome, erected at Inchicore to commemorate the first pilgrimage to Rome in 1893 for the Jubilee of Pope Leo XIII.**

On the eve of the departure of the pilgrimage in 1883—for he had envisaged one every year—he learned that he had been nominated Provincial of the Anglo-Irish Province. Father Charles Tatin, Superior of the Scholasticate of Autun, who was at this time at Inchicore, and a refugee from the French decrees of 1880, wrote of this appointment: "...and if one can judge by what one hears, and sees, there is general satisfaction in the Province. It would be difficult to find a Father more filled with the Spirit of God and the Congregation than Father Ring." His abilities and organisational powers were widely known, so that we are not surprised to find his Grace, the Primate of All Ireland, Archbishop Logue, writing to him in 1892 for his help in organising a National Pilgrimage to Rome on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of Pope Leo XIII's consecration as Bishop. Part of the letter reads, "...From the first I thought of you as being the person most likely to organise a successful pilgrimage, by reason of your experience in such work. and your powers of organisation. I feel the burden imposed on you is not too great for your charity and for your zeal for faith and fatherland..." The extent of his charity and zeal was amply demonstrated when, on the 7th of February, 1893, three hundred and fifty pilgrims set out for the Eternal City while 750,000 Associates were pledged to pray for His Holiness during the month of February. The correspondent sent by *The Freeman's Journal* to cover the pilgrimage was loud in his praise of the martial bearing of the pilgrims as, led by Father Ring, they proudly carried the Irish Address and twelve Albums containing their names and those of the Associates, to lay them at the feet of the Holy Father. In later years, Archbishop—by then Cardinal—Logue asked Father Ring to organise a National Pilgrimage to the Holy Land, but the outbreak of World War 1 led to its cancellation.

This tremendous capacity for work could not be contained in the confines of the Anglo-Irish Province and we find him in September, 1893, setting out for the United States where for some years he sounded the praises of Mary in this Protestant land. While there, he celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood, and the *Southern Messenger* of San Antonio gave over the most part of its edition on July 1st, 1909, to a detailed description of the celebrations held in Saint Mary's Parish for this happy occasion. The

Holy Father sent a cablegram conveying His Apostolic Blessing to the "Irish Apostle". Advanced in age as he was, Father Ring made this impressive gathering roar as he humourously invited them all to his Diamond Jubilee twenty-five years hence. But his great body was tiring, and he was called back home to the peace of Belcamp Hall. Even here he could not restrain his mental activity for he completely rewrote the "Life of Bishop de Mazenod", which had been first written by Father Robert Cooke. In his saintly humility, he refused point-blank to put his name to the new edition. Some inner voice must have called him, for in 1918 he led what was to be his last pilgrimage to his beloved Lourdes. On his return, he insisted on preaching the Novena to our Lady of Graces, and soon afterwards he was stricken by the great influenza epidemic which many older readers remember as "the Black Flu". This forced him to retire to Kilburn, but he rose from his sick-bed to preach a sermon during the Lourdes Novena in February, 1919. It was the swan song of this venerable old man, for he returned to bed and from then until April he suffered the most grievous agony. All during these last few weeks the praises of Mary never ceased to pour from his tortured body. On Tuesday, April 29th, 1919, She came and led her favoured child to his Eternal reward. His body was brought to Inchicore for burial by Father Wilkinson, O.M.I., where the Requiem Mass was celebrated by Father Tom Dawson, assisted by Fathers J. Daly and W. Doyle. He had borne the burden of the day and heat, labouring in many lands, but in the end he returned to his beloved people of Inchicore. Amongst the great concourse at the graveside were his friends from the district and the Railway, and many a tear was unashamedly shed for this great Oblate. They were, as he described them to the gathering in San Antonio, "...the most devoted friends that heart of man could desire; they gathered around me in the early years of my priesthood and sacrificed time, health and comfort for the advancement of the various projects that Providence entrusted to me." Now, the ranks were thinned, but those remaining mourned the passing of their own Father Ring.

To write of Father Ring calls for a width of spirit which I have not got. None else but Christ Our Lord could write adequately of him—and He wrote but once, and that in the dust.



by W. J. HEANEY

It is one hundred and forty years since Father (later Bishop) Charles Eugene de Mazenod, at Aix in Provence, France, founded the Congregation of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate; and it is exactly one hundred of those years since the Oblate Fathers — as we have come to know them—by the grace of God and the mistake of a Dublin jarvey, were invited to establish themselves in Ireland.

The first centenary of the foundation of the Congregation's Irish House would probably have been celebrated fourteen years ago had the visit of Fr. Casimir Aubert, O.M.I., to this country in 1842 achieved its primary purpose. Obviously it did not—though Fr. Aubert and his mission made a great impression on the Archbishop of Dublin, Most Rev. Dr. Murray, and its then Lord Mayor, Daniel O'Connell, whom Fr. Aubert enrolled as a lay associate of Mary Immaculate.

But if Fr. Aubert's mission failed in its principal object, it was doubly successful in another and quite unexpected way, for during his stay he met the young man who, fourteen years later, and by then an Oblate priest himself, would introduce the Congregation into Ireland.

Robert Francis Cooke, the Catholic grandson of

a Co. Tipperary Protestant landlord, was born in Dungarvan, Co. Waterford, in 1821. His call to the sanctuary did not come early, but when it came he threw himself into his vocation with a zeal that was well nigh Pentecostal. He imbibed the spirit of the young Congregation—it was then but 25 years of age — during his priestly studies under the eye and care of the venerated Founder himself at Marseilles. Ordained by Msgr. de Mazenod in June, 1846, Father Cooke was sent immediately to join the small band of Oblate Missionaries labouring with conspicuous success in the English Midlands. In a short time, he himself became the most brilliant, devoted and successful member of that dedicated group of preachers.

In his newly created capacity of vice-Provincial, he came to Ireland at the end of the year 1855 seeking to establish a house of the Oblate Fathers there. Providence and chance combined to bring about this much-desired objective in the acquiring of a foundation at Inchicore, Dublin in June of 1856.

The story of Oblate beginnings at Inchicore is told elsewhere in the present booklet. Suffice to say here that the events of those first days deserve to be recorded for all time. The occasion was something

more than a bookmark between the pages of the spiritual story of Ireland's capital city or the history of the Oblate Fathers.

There has been many a change round the Oblate Fathers' first Irish foundation and the streets of Inchicore since those splendid days, one hundred years ago. Father Cooke and his confrères have all gone to their rewards, and so have the men and boys whose willing hands built their original Irish church. But the new flame of faith which the coming of the Oblates set alight in the neighbourhood still burns the brighter for all that—like a torch that is fanned by the proud winds of memory.

The Oblates of Mary Immaculate, however, had not come to Ireland merely to find themselves a house or to minister and preach to the people of Inchicore only. In obedience to the motto of their holy Founder, they had come—as they had gone to the most distant harvest fields of the earth—to preach the Gospel to the poor. They had come to give parochial missions throughout the country.

And in Ireland of that time they could hardly have been more badly wanted, nor outside it found a more impoverished field of the apostolate.

Who has not heard of the downtrodden, miserable condition which both Ireland and the Irish were in up to one hundred years ago? Who does not know that for many centuries prior to that time our country and our forebears were the victims of a sadistic regime that had but one design; to stamp out, purge and exterminate everything that was Irish and Catholic and replace it with everything that was English and Protestant? Oh! Where are the words to describe what the British did to our country and our people?

They succeeded, but only to a point. They starved and murdered and banished to such an extent that they could gloatingly say: "The so and so Irish are nearly gone!" Our forebears were, and literally, thinned to a skeleton population, all right, but they could not be broken, and neither would they renounce their Catholic faith.

It is not surprising that they could not be conquered, for the indomitable spirit of the genuine Irish is an eternal quality. But the miracle is that they didn't apostatise—even if the faith had run in their bloodstreams since the days of St. Patrick. A mug of hot soup must seem like a new lease of life to a starving man, woman or child; and this is what the British offered our forebears in return for a denial of their faith. But, thank God, our people

choose to die of hunger and torture rather than deny Christ.

And that is only a glimpse at the picture which the Oblates of Mary Immaculate saw when they first came to Ireland in 1856. The faith was still strong—as the Dublin railwaymen proved!—but it was the faith of a people who for several centuries had been hounded and brutalised as pitilessly as the earliest Christians and by a regime which conceded nothing—not even the right to live—to the Catholic Irish, but employed every vicious means it could devise to keep them enslaved, inferior, ignorant and impoverished.

Our people's faith was still secure, all right, but homelessness and hunger, hopelessness and common humanity were too great odds for their morals to have a chance of remaining loyal to it. The task, therefore, that faced the Irish Church at the time was indeed a formidable one: to re-organise the Catholic life of the country, re-establish normal parochial activity, churches and schools, and build up a staunch Catholic community and feeling that would counter the methods of the despots who for so long had held the reins of power.

The policy of the Hierarchy was to insist on the freedom of the Church, particularly in the field of education; to mould the faithful into a vigorous, self-respecting and influential body that would be ready to defend the faith and demand justice for the Church; and to overcome the apathy, ignorance and sense of inferiority complex which were the fruits of a tyranny that might have been the model of the Godless emperors of old Rome.

And this was the apostolate in which the first Oblate Fathers to minister in Ireland set to work. The task that faced them was not an easy one, but the railwaymen of Kilmainham had set a headline for the nation, and the missions given at the Augustinian church and the new foundation at Inchicore set the drive underway with a flying start.

The Oblates of Mary Immaculate, it may be said with no little truth, were the pioneers of the parish mission in Ireland, for—need it be said?—almost right up to that time every Irish priest carried a price on his head, and the Mass was a furtive ceremony, celebrated in cellars, caves and on hilltops.

Fr. Cooke and his confrères approached their new apostolate by first studying the people, their needs, limitations, and their wretched social environment. It was on the finding of this inventory that they based their technique, and the record shows

how intimately—and successfully—they came to know and understand the Irish people. Today, the pattern of the Irish Oblates' mission is a greatly modified copy of the original, but in those days of much less than a hundred years ago, an Oblate Fathers' mission must have been a spectacular and tremendously inspiring affair.

The mission usually lasted a whole month. The solemn opening took place after the twelve o'clock Mass on Sunday, when the P.P., in the presence of the people, met the missionaries at the door of the church and handed over its keys to their superior as a symbolic gesture which indicated that for the duration of the mission the *cura animarum* was in the hands of the missionaries. The rest of the opening ceremonies followed the traditional Oblate pattern—the handing over of the Cross, the procession, the chanting of the *Miserere*, and the address by the Superior of the missionaries.

At the morning Masses, which were celebrated much earlier than nowadays, two, and sometimes three, instructions were given; confessions were heard before and during the Masses, throughout the greater part of each day, and from after the evening exercises until midnight. On one evening of each week a penitential procession was held and offered in atonement for the parish's besetting sin. Friday of each week was made a day of special devotion to our Blessed Lady, and on the final Sunday, besides the general Holy Communion and traditional closing evening ceremonies, clergy, missionaries and parishioners went in procession to some conspicuous spot in the church grounds where a large mission cross was erected and a special address was given by one of the Fathers.

During the mission, too, the sick of the parish were visited by the missionaries in their homes; the inevitable "hard cases" were tracked to their lairs and there pampered prejudices, real or imaginary, against the Church were redressed and overcome; confraternities and sodalities were established, and there was a nine o'clock Mass every morning for the children.

From Dublin to Cork, Tipperary to Donegal, Waterford to Belfast and Armagh—the record of the little band of Oblate Fathers' subsequent missions tells a graphic story that is too imposing for inclusion here. Certainly, however, under the impetus of the early Oblates, Catholic Ireland regained much of her traditional spiritual fire, which had been trampled to smouldering ashes by the cloven

hoofs of her devilish oppressors.

Of the closing of the mission at Thurles cathedral (1859) we read: "...Never since O'Connell had his monster meeting at Knockmore ... was there so large an assemblage here as on this occasion. From six o'clock in the morning, the people poured in ... until twelve, when the streets became impassable... As one-fourth of the people could not gain admission to the church, one of the Fathers performed the (closing) ceremony in the grounds."



And so the record of the Oblates' missions goes on. "The amount of good effected would be deemed incredible", says a newspaper report of the Cappoquin mission of 1860. "The apathetic and the infidel, the drunkard and the libertine have been reclaimed." In Cork city cathedral (1863) 45,000 people received Holy Communion; 1,400 adults were confirmed, and twenty-five non-Catholics were received into the Church. In St. Finbarr's

Church, during the same mission, 30,000 Holy Communion were distributed and one thousand members of a secret society were reconciled with the Church.

In Termon, Co. Donegal, in 1862, a young man walked twenty miles a day for three weeks in order to attend the mission. The Waterford Corporation, in 1872, presented the Fathers with an address of thanks for the great good that their mission had accomplished there. In Belfast, in 1877, seventeen Fathers conducted a simultaneous four-weeks' mission in six city churches. Twelve hundred women and nine hundred men at the close of a mission in Dundalk, in 1881, joined the Confraternity there, and the Golden Jubilee Record of the Confraternity has this to say of the missionaries: "The half-century which has passed has not

been long enough to dull the verdant memories of Frs. Kirby, Ring, Brady and O'Dwyer".

And that must suffice.

Fr. Cooke and his little band of confrères have long since gone to their rewards. Catholic Ireland has come out of the catacombs and buried her oppressors. The parish mission and retreat has become as much a part of our Irish way of life as our Catholicism itself. There is one thing that has not changed, however. The Oblates of Mary Immaculate are still with us. What can we say to them on this, the occasion of their first centenary amongst us? What better can we say than: Thank you. We are very glad to have you amongst us. If you stay as long as we hope you will, your second hundred years will in comparison seem a very short length of time.

**Photo below shows the men of C.I.E. Works marching to Solemn Mass at the Oblate Church, Inchicore, on November 1st, 1950, on the occasion of the Proclamation of the Dogma of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, by Pope Pius XII.**

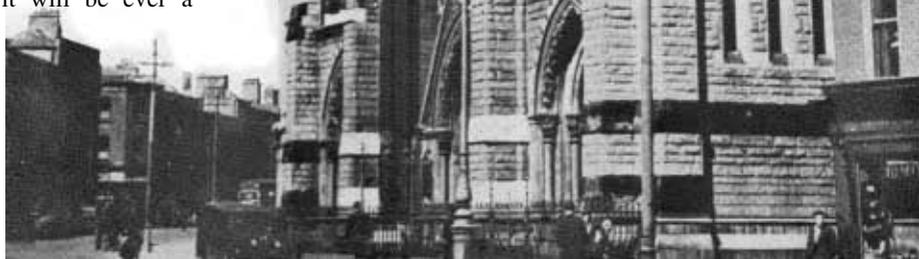


# *I Was a Stranger...*

There are few miseries as wretched as being a stranger in a strange land and fewer worse than a stranger in one's own land. Such was Father Cooke on a bleak December morning over 100 years ago in the city of Dublin. In this plight, he knocked on the door of the Priory of the Augustinian Fathers in John's Lane. Within, he was offered the hand of welcome and the warming stimulant of hospitality. And to overflow the cup, he was invited to return there when the hospitality of not only the Priory, but of the Church and pulpit of the Friars, was given him wherefrom he was enabled to further pursue and achieve his objective of establishing in Ireland his Congregation of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate.

The Church wherein Father Cooke and three companions preached a mission in May, 1856, was a foundation steeped in history, valour and sanctity. Its roots went back to the year 1259 when the Austin Friars first established a priory in Dublin in the neighbourhood of the present day Crow Street. From here they were driven by the Suppression of Henry VIII; but the Order lived on somehow. In the time of James II, they had a chapel near the present Arran Quay — demolished and suppressed with James himself. At the beginning of the 18th century they established a chapel in a derelict stable in John's Lane. In 1740, a pretty chapel was built on this site, which, 40 years later, was doubled in size, and a gallery and aisle added. This was the church (on the ground of the present 'old priory' in John's Lane), where the Oblate Fathers preached in Ireland for the first time in May, 1856.

The splendid Church of St. John Baptist now in Thomas Street (pictured here), once described by no less a critic than Ruskin as "a poem in stone", was begun in 1862 after the designs of Pugin and Ashlin. Completed in 1893, the exquisite proportions and stately outline, with its central tower rising to a height of over 200 feet in majestic grandeur, commands the admiration of every lover of art. It is a monument worthy of the purpose it serves and of the heroic sons of St. Augustine, who, by centuries of sacrifice, made it possible. For the Oblates of Mary Immaculate it will be ever a reminder to whisper *Gratias*.





By A. P. BELMONTE

In the lengthening spring evenings of 1856, a very young curate attached to St. Audeon's parish, Father D. P. Mulcahy, was in the habit of walking from High Street, through James Street and Kilmainham to Inchicore whilst he recited his Breviary. There were then no trams, and Inchicore was a small village separated from the city by a stretch of country road. Ten years previously it had scarcely been noticeable, but in July of 1846 the first train had bravely steamed its way out of Kingsbridge station and, passing through Inchicore, rattled and puffed over the 164 miles of the very new iron road to Cork. In the intervening years, Inchicore found itself becoming a centre of importance and industry with the establishment of the Great Southern and Western Railway Company's Workshop and Foundry in its midst. Workshops needed tradesmen, tradesmen needed homes, and so Inchicore grew and expanded. Homes were built by the Railway Company for the workers; shops and places of business sprang up year by year; a large school—one of the "Model Schools" then being built throughout the country—opened its doors in 1853. But there remained a big want for the new community. There was no Church nor even a promise of one nearer than the parish church of St. James.

Many an evening, during his strolls to

Inchicore, Fr. Mulcahy, when he paused to chat, was asked by the locals when they were going to have a church or priest in the district. He told them to hope and to pray. The problem began to worry him more and more. It haunted his prayers, but he could see no solution that a very young curate could offer or devise.

Devotion to the new cult of the Miraculous Medal (Our Lady had appeared to St. Catherine Laboured at Paris 25 years before) was just then making big headlines in the world of Catholic devotions. Fr. Mulcahy had read and heard of many extraordinary favours granted through the Medal. One evening in the month of May, he placed a medal in his pocket as he left for Inchicore. Arrived there, he selected, beside the main road to Naas, a field he thought suitable as a site for a church and buried the medal under a sod with a prayer to Mary Immaculate. A few days later he fell very ill and was bad for several weeks. Towards the end of June, when he was well on the mend, one of the nurses in the hospital came to tell him of a new church that had just been built at Inchicore in very unusual circumstances. Impossible, he said, in such a short time. But it was a fact. Several other visitors spoke of the same happening to him and told him that the church was under the care of a new Order—the Order of Mary Immaculate.

As soon as Fr. Mulcahy was fit, he set out to walk again to Inchicore and arrived there, found a large wooden church, capable of accommodating six to seven hundred people, fully built and functioning right beside the spot where he had buried the Miraculous Medal!

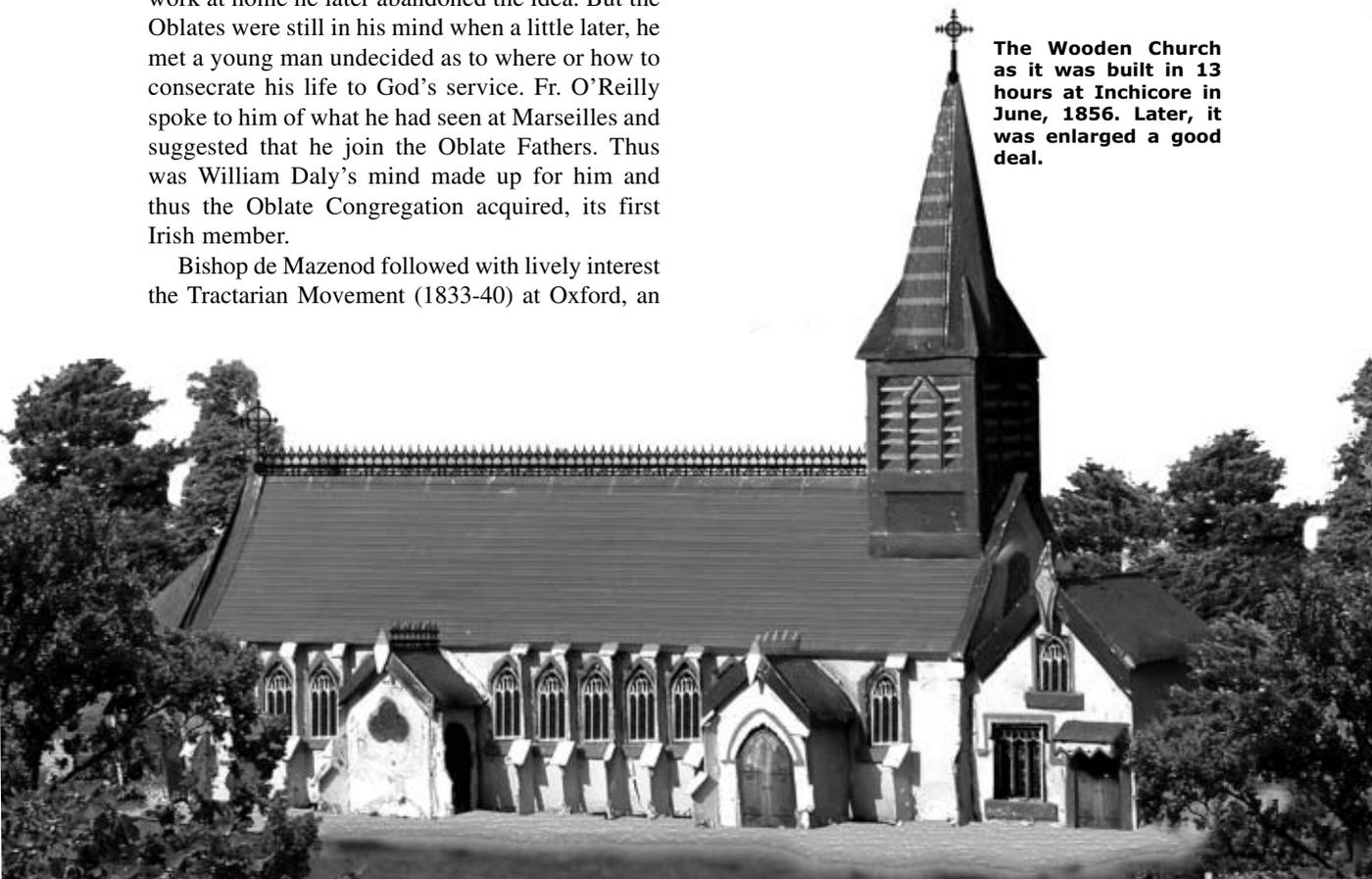
The new Order, or to be more exact, Religious Congregation, at Inchicore in June, 1856, was known as the Oblates of Mary Immaculate. It had been founded forty years before, at Aix in the South of France by a Father (later Bishop) de Mazenod for the purpose of preaching parochial missions in the country districts of Revolution-ravaged France. Approved and Canonically erected within the remarkably short space of ten years (February 1326) by Pope Leo XII, who also gave the name "Oblates of Mary Immaculate", the infant Congregation made rapid strides in personnel and diversity of labours. In 1832, Fr. de Mazenod was selected by Pope Gregory XVI to be Coadjutor Bishop of Marseilles, the oldest See of France. It was here that a Father O'Reilly, on his way home to Ireland from Rome, came in contact with Bishop de Mazenod and the world of the Oblate Fathers. Much impressed, he thought of joining the Congregation but caught up in the press of work at home he later abandoned the idea. But the Oblates were still in his mind when a little later, he met a young man undecided as to where or how to consecrate his life to God's service. Fr. O'Reilly spoke to him of what he had seen at Marseilles and suggested that he join the Oblate Fathers. Thus was William Daly's mind made up for him and thus the Oblate Congregation acquired, its first Irish member.

Bishop de Mazenod followed with lively interest the Tractarian Movement (1833-40) at Oxford, an

interest that went as far as his introducing special prayers for the conversion of England into his diocese and into the community prayers of his Oblates. This interest in his case was not merely academic or in the realm of wishful thinking. In 1840 he had obeyed a direct call from the Holy See, and from his slender resources of men, had sent a party of his Oblates to begin the saga of glorious missionary achievement in Canada that became and is today the glory of the Congregation and the pride of the Church. The next year (1841) his great missionary heart turned to the needs of England and soon after he had placed the oil of ordination on the hands of Father Daly he sent him across the Channel to explore the possibilities of Oblate endeavour in England. The young envoy was well received in London and midland ecclesiastical circles. There was more than ample opportunity for zealous priestly work. Thereupon, Fr. Daly crossed to Ireland with a view to seeking further vocations to the ranks of the Oblates for the work so dear to their Founder's heart.

In Dublin, Fr. Daly met Archbishop Murray and was introduced by him to the Irish Bishops at their meeting in Maynooth. Two recruits, Samuel Walsh and John Noble, joined Fr. Daly on his return to

**The Wooden Church as it was built in 13 hours at Inchicore in June, 1856. Later, it was enlarged a good deal.**



France. This initial success prompted Bishop de Mazenod to send to Ireland the next year (July 1842) one of his most valued and trusted lieutenants, Fr. Casimir Aubert, with the objective of trying to secure the establishment of an Ecclesiastical Seminary in this country. Though well received in Dublin, Fr. Aubert thought there was little or no hope there for the seminary project. He journeyed to Cork, where for a while prospects were very bright only to collapse when final arrangements came to be drawn up. An effort in Limerick also ended in failure, as did negotiations at Tullow (Co. Carlow) with the Patrician Brothers, who had expressed willingness to be amalgamated with the Oblate Fathers.

Judged by its primary objective, Fr. Aubert's mission seemed to be a failure. It was far from such. He himself was a man of deep and obvious sanctity and wherever he went he left a lasting impression and sowed goodwill for the Oblate Congregation. The Rector of the Catholic University, the President of Maynooth College and the Rector of St. Mary's College, Youghal, all promised to remember his mission and to direct young men towards the Oblate Fathers. Fr. Aubert left Ireland on St. Patrick's Day, 1843, taking with him four young men who afterwards became Fathers Cooke, Bradshaw, Grey and Keating. To the first named it was granted, perhaps, to labour more than the rest, and certainly to see the harvest of which the pioneers had only sown the seed or partly prepared the ground.

Robert Francis Cooke was born on February 14th, 1821, in Dungarvan, Co. Waterford. Descended from Protestant landlord ancestry, Robert Cooke received his early education locally and later in Dublin studied law and medicine. Subsequently, he became assistant to a Doctor in Cashel and it was while here that he had a dream wherein his pious and heroic grandmother seemed to lead him to the throne of a great Lady who whispered to him to join the religious Society dedicated to the Immaculate Conception. Such a Society was then unknown to Robert Cooke, but very shortly afterwards he heard of it and of Fr. Aubert's mission in Ireland. Immediately, he determined to offer himself to Fr. Aubert and so, as mentioned, he was one of the four young recruits who left Ireland to commence their novitiate with the Oblates of Mary Immaculate. Professed the next year, Father Cooke was ordained (though his theological course was

not complete) by Bishop de Mazenod at Marseilles in June of 1846.

For the next ten years, Fr. Cooke threw himself heart and soul into the new Oblate apostolate in England begun at Penzance in 1843. Fr. Cooke's first assignment was to Grace Dieu in Yorkshire where he began to undertake the work begun in the area by the famous Father Gentili, of open-air preaching. Fr. Cooke was an instant success. As well as Grace Dieu, Fr. Cooke worked at Whitwick, Osgathorpe, Coalville and many other villages roundabout. In the course of this ministry, the atmosphere of the marvellous and the supernatural was never far away. There were, to say the least of them, extraordinary manifestations of the workings of the Grace of God. Many reliable witnesses of the time speak of even the gift of prophecy being with Fr. Cooke in those days. His own personal life was one of unusual asceticism and deep spirituality.

In a short time the little band of Oblate Missionaries became well known in Yorkshire and later over most of Catholic Britain. In 1851, Fr. Cooke was invited to establish a mission in the city of Leeds and in May of that year he celebrated Mass for the first time in a little cottage in the district that today comprises the parish of Mount St. Mary's. Already Everingham had been established in 1847, Alderham in 1848, Market Weighton in 1848, Maryvale in 1849, Manchester (Olderham Road) in 1849 and Liverpool (Holy Cross) in 1850. Sicklinghall (Yorks) in 1852 followed Leeds and in November of that year Father Cooke crossed the border into Scotland to establish the first Religious foundation since the "Reformation" at Galashiels.

It was noble, inspiring and consoling work, but it was proving a far too heavy drain on the resources of personnel at Fr. Cooke's disposal. He was named Vice-Provincial in 1853. More than ever thoughts turned to Ireland as the land of vocations and possible recruits to the solely overworked band of pioneers. It was over a dozen years since Fr. Aubert had made his exploration in 1842, and not even a Mission had as yet been preached in the country.

Acting on the direct instruction of the Founder of the Oblates, Bishop de Mazenod, Fr. Cooke set out for Ireland in December of 1855. The story of Fr. Cooke's arrival in Dublin and the subsequent events that led to the first Oblate foundation at Inchicore has been told many times. It reads like

something taken from a fairytale complete with happy ending. The unprejudiced reader cannot help feeling that it was the Queen of Heaven, rather than a fairy queen or any such genie, who directed the series of events to place Her Oblate sons at Inchicore.

Once again, God, who had chosen Fr. Cooke as His own in a very special way, was nearby to give him a hand in the execution of His mighty purposes. Arriving in Dublin from Liverpool on a bleak December day, he engaged a cabby at the boat and told the driver to take him to a certain hotel on the north side of the city, but the jarvey, unconsciously playing his honoured role in Providence, misunderstood his instructions, and presently Fr. Cooke found himself listening with astonishment as the cabby respectfully touched the crop of his whip against the rim of his bowler hat and said: "We're here, yer, Rev'rence!" Outside a hotel on the south side of the city!

No doubt Fr. Cooke enjoyed the cabby's consternation, but he was too tired to face the long jaunt across the city. He spent the night at the hotel and next morning said Mass at the nearby Augustinian church—where the finger of God showed up in the

jarvey's mistake. Having offered the Holy Sacrifice, he introduced himself to the Prior (Dr. Crane, later Bishop of Sandhurst, Australia). Dr. Crane became very interested in the account given him by Fr. Cooke of the Mission work being done by the Oblate Fathers and at the conclusion of the interview invited Fr. Cooke to come with three companions, to John's Lane Church in the following month of May to preach a Mission there. Fr. Cooke accepted the Mission.

On the 1st of May, 1856. Fathers Cooke, Arnoux, Fox and Gubbins opened the Mission in the Augustinian Church. A parish Mission in Ireland one hundred years ago was something unique. Fr. Cooke and his companions, if not the first, were certainly amongst the first to establish the parish mission tradition in this country. That there was a crying need for this type of work is without doubt and if proof of the need were wanting, this first Oblate Mission in Ireland supplied abundant proof. The Fathers began the day with Mass for the workers followed by an instruction. There followed Mass and instruction for those with more time on their hands. Then there were catechism and instruction classes for, literally, thou-

Facade of Church of Mary Immaculate, Inchicore



sands of children through a great part of the day. For the evening sermons the crowds overflowed on to the streets about the Church. All day long, from 5 a.m. to 11.30 p.m., confessions went on. The four Missionary Fathers in this work had to be helped by the Augustinian Fathers, and a number of local secular clergy added their labour. And this schedule went on for 31 days! It is no exaggeration to say that this Mission was one of the outstanding religious events in Dublin in that decade. Thousands of sinners returned to penance and the sacraments of the Church. No less than 80 marriages were re-validated and the numbers approaching Holy Communion were reckoned in tens of thousands.

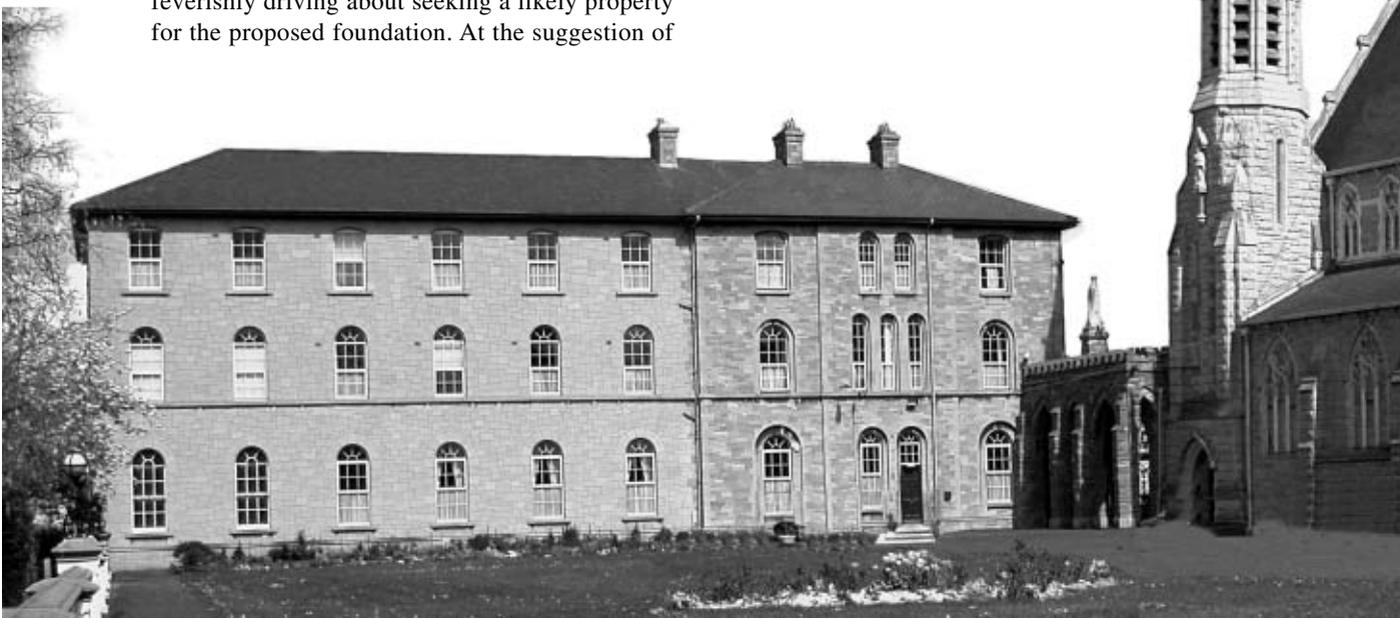
At the close of the Mission, Fathers Arnoux, Fox and Gubbins returned to Lys Marie (Yorkshire) but so exhausted was Fr. Cooke (he was never robust in health) that he remained in Dublin for a few days rest. Before his departure he sought and obtained an interview with Dr. Cullen, the Archbishop of Dublin. Fr. Cooke broached the subject of establishing a foundation of the Oblates in Dublin mentioning that he was not necessarily seeking a place within the city, but would be quite content with a foundation in the country or the suburbs. His Grace took Fr. Cooke right off his feet when he asked, "In what suburb of Dublin do you wish to establish yourselves?" As he had to answer there and then, Fr. Cooke found the word "Kilmainham" came to his lips. The Archbishop answered that it was the only suburb not already occupied by a religious body and that they could take a house there.

Delighted beyond measure, Fr. Cooke hurried back to his good friends the Augustinian Fathers with the news. The next few days were spent in feverishly driving about seeking a likely property for the proposed foundation. At the suggestion of

Dr. Yore, V.G. and P.P. of St. Paul's, Fr. Cooke, accompanied by one of the John's Lane Community, sought an interview with a Mr. Joseph Meadows who was the tenant of a 25 acre property with a big house and useful out-offices about a mile beyond Kilmainham and adjacent to the newly erected workshops of the Great Southern and Western Railways. Mr. Meadows, a convert from Protestantism, was quite willing to forego his interest in the property and agreed to negotiate its purchase from the Jewish owner, Mr. John Rosenthal. The purchase price was £2,150. Fr. Cooke obtained the necessary permission of his Religious Superiors right away and with the help of an anonymous friend who loaned £500 as a gift from St. Joseph the purchase of the property was effected on the 18th of June.

On the Feast of St. Aloysius Gonzaga, June 21st, Fr. Cooke took formal possession of the new house and on the following day, it being a Sunday, with the permission of Dr. Yore, V.G., said Mass in the parlour and preached to the large gathering of people who had come to attend. It was obvious to Fr. Cooke that the existing accommodation would be totally inadequate for the following Sunday once the word got all round the district of the presence of the Fathers. He therefore took counsel with a group of the people after Mass as to the best means of dealing with the sit-

**Photo shows the Church, House of Retreat and the Arch of the Virgin Crowned connecting the two.**



uation. All were enthusiastic at the presence of the Fathers in their midst and various solutions were proposed. A young carpenter in the group spoke up:

“I’ll undertake to have a wooden chapel to hold a thousand people built within the week!”

There were tolerant smiles of derision from the rest of the group. It was good enough of God to send sorely needed priests into the district, but to talk of miracles from Him at the same time was asking too much.

“Make it two thousand people whilst you are at it!”

The young fellow flushed.

“All right. Just leave it to me and you’ll see.”

Fr. Cooke intervened to ask how he proposed to do this seemingly impossible task.

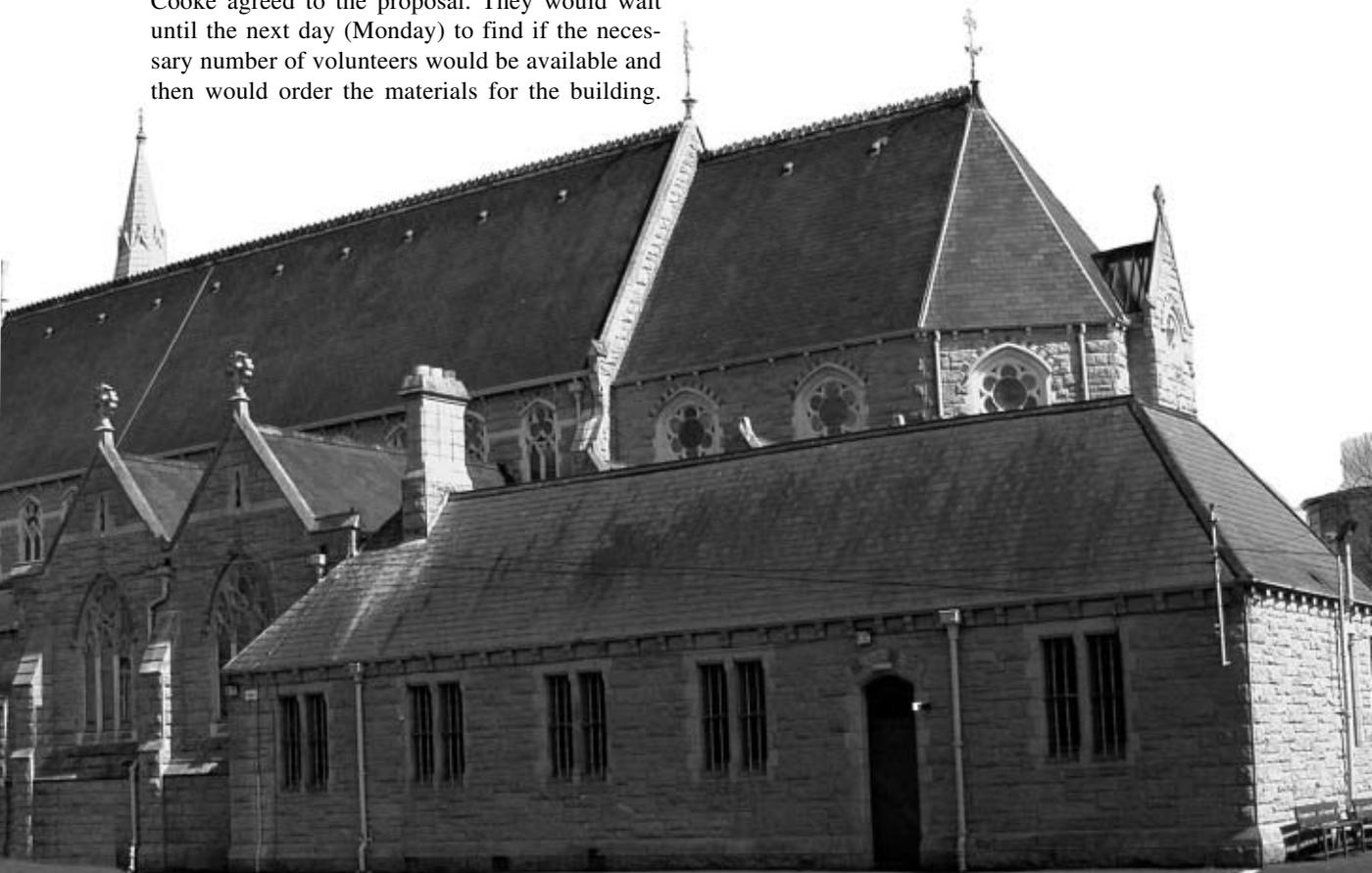
“Quite easy”, the young carpenter answered. “You get the wood and materials and I’ll enlist every tradesman in the Works (the G.S. & W.R. Workshops) to come along here at six o’clock each evening and we’ll have the job done for next Sunday.”

It was an audacious proposal and worthy of the apostolic spirit of Fr. Cooke and his companions and of the people they had come amongst. Fr. Cooke agreed to the proposal. They would wait until the next day (Monday) to find if the necessary number of volunteers would be available and then would order the materials for the building.

Monday brought the assurance that hundreds of men had volunteered for the work of building the proposed chapel. The building materials were straightway ordered from the city and delivered to the site on Tuesday afternoon, June 24th, Feast of St. John Baptist.

At six o’clock that Tuesday evening an estimated 700 men arrived at the site equipped with all their tools of trade. Father Cooke accompanied by Msgr. O’Connor, O.S.A., Bishop of Saldes, (from the John’s Lane Community) met the floodtide of voluntary labour. No formal plans or specifications had been drawn. The whole plan was in the heads of a few of the men themselves. The tradesmen were organised into groups in modern assembly-line fashion. Hastily, a shallow foundation was dug and at one corner a stone was inserted. Bishop O’Connor had on his person a relic of St. John Baptist and this was placed on the stone, the foundations and the cornerstone were blessed and then the work began.

In one hour all the available timber was used up. Further quantities were measured and further needed materials assessed for ordering early the next



day. Six o'clock Wednesday saw the avalanche of willing labour descend again on the work. Thursday, Friday and Saturday evenings witnessed the same extraordinary manifestation of labour, skill and goodwill. Ten o'clock on Saturday night saw the last touches being put to the altar so as to have it ready for Holy Mass the next morning.

In thirteen hours of work the men of Inchicore built a chapel, seventy feet long by 30 feet wide, capable of accommodating seven hundred people. When we say built, we do not mean a mere shell. It was a complete chapel with all adequate furnishings from front door to sacristy and including an artistic bell-tower to surmount the whole building. One can well imagine the feelings in the heart of Father Laurence Fox, O.M.I., (he had arrived to join the new mission on Wednesday 25th) when, substituting for Fr. Cooke who had become very ill, he turned to address an overflowing congregation during the Solemn Mass of inauguration and thanksgiving on the Sunday morning (June 29th—Feast of Saints. Peter and Paul).

There was very much to be grateful for. A worthy temple had been erected to the honour of God and His Immaculate Mother and on the spot chosen by Herself as Fr. Mulcahy would verify a few weeks later. A hidden reservoir of faith, love and loyalty to the Church of God had been tapped and had overflowed in an exhilarating gush of goodwill. There was an astounding wakening of dormant faith and practical religion in the hearts of many. Many were the causes of surprise to one another during the previous week as they took their places for the first time in the ranks of the new-church builders. "What, are you a Catholic? I never dreamt you were till this evening", was a frequent remark passed from a worker to one beside him. "What did you think of the new church? Were you surprised?" asked a good woman of her husband who had been away from Inchicore during the building miracle. "Yes, I was", he answered, "but what surprised me far more was the sight of X inside saying his prayers!" X was one whom his workmates had hitherto regarded as a complete pagan and who had found himself caught up in the wave of practical charity and goodwill, a wave that washed the dross of years from his neglected, starving soul. X was but one of scores of companions at that time thrown together in the industrial melting pot of the Railway Company's Works. A large percentage of these men

had been recruited for the Works in the previous ten or fifteen years from foundries and railway works in England. Some of them had gone thither willingly others had been forced to go by the famine of the Black 'Forties. All of them, or nearly all, had been tarnished by the big city industrial machine of England where the survival of the fittest was the law of existence. They had been plunged into a way of life for which they had had absolutely no training or background and in the struggle to keep body together, soul had too often been forgotten. On their return to Inchicore, they found there little or no religious facilities to help or tempt them back to the practice of the Faith of their baptism. The week just past, Fr. Fox could rightly say, had been a unique experience in church building but it was unique, too, in the re-building of many a lost faith.

"Unless the Lord buildeth the house, he laboureth in vain who builds it." The hand of God was obviously in the work of these first memorable days of the Oblate Fathers' foundation at Inchicore. The wooden church of the pioneers no longer stands over the spot where the simple faith of a good priest had buried a medal of Mary Immaculate (it had to be demolished 20 years since owing to the ravages of age making it unsafe) but the spirit of these pioneers has lived and thrived in the intervening century.

With the building of the Wooden Church, the Oblate Fathers had secured a bridgehead in Ireland. From this foundation the missionary Fathers right from the beginning set out to the four corners of the land to preach the Missions and Retreats that made their name and their labours well nigh legendary in the ecclesiastical and social history of these decades in Ireland. The story, or at least a little of it, is recounted elsewhere in this publication. How so few men accomplished all that the records of these early years show is something to marvel about. Never more than a half-dozen at the best muster, they nevertheless managed to almost multiply themselves in diversity of places and diversity of undertakings. The Community diary speaks of Father Cooke arriving this morning from Leeds and departing the same evening for Thurles or Cork or Co. Donegal to begin a month's mission. Back from some such place, he goes to preach a Novena or Special Feast in Clarendon Street Church or John's Lane.

(Father Cooke preached Lent and Advent Conferences in the Carmelite Church, Clarendon

Street, for six years running in those early years.) We mention Father Cooke's name as a sample of what all his preaching confrères were equally doing. Fathers Fox, Gubbins, Ryan, Nolan and, at intervals, others, shared in the same labours with Father Cooke. They made the Oblate Cross they carried on their breast familiar to thousands of the faithful in city, town and countryside. Their burning, tireless zeal accomplished true marvels in pulpit, in confessional and at the bedside. They attracted to their side many young, generous men who would carry the Oblate Cross after them, not merely through the length and breadth of Ireland but to the four corners of the world.

## **ORGANIZATIONAL BEGINNINGS**

Though their labours took them far afield for the greater part of the year, the newcomers to Inchicore in 1856 did not neglect affairs at the home base. The first Superior appointed to Inchicore was Father Gustave Richard, O.M.I., who took up office in the month of August. Plagued from the first day with the T.B. that was to take him to heaven a bare nine months later, yet Father Richard threw himself wholeheartedly into the difficult organisational work that is inseparable from every new foundation. The first essential undertaking was to make available a Catholic school for the children of the neighbourhood. To this end work was begun on reconditioning a spacious and well-preserved coach-house attached to the Meadows farmhouse. By the month of December the temporary school was ready and it opened its doors on January 13th in the New Year (1857). On the first day no less than 140 pupils were enrolled by Bro. Laurence Biggan, O.M.I., who had been specially brought to Inchicore for the work. His assistant was Bro. Joseph Kearney, O.M.I., who, some years later, was sent to the Oblate Arctic Missions where he laboured heroically until 1919. As well as day-school, the two Brothers conducted night classes for adults, having over forty men and grown boys attending.

Church organisation began with the establishment of the Sodality of the Immaculate Conception on December 7th, 1856, when members were enrolled, officers elected and insignia distributed. Three months later the men of the Sodality presented the Church with a new organ at a cost of £55. This acquisition was evidently in preparation for the first Mission, which began in the month of April

with full solemnity. Father Richard, the Superior, who had been getting progressively worse during the preceding months, died during the Mission on April 20th. Fr. Cooke therefore took over the office of Superior as well as Provincial until the appointment of Fr. Arnoux to this post the next year (1858). In June, the first "Forty-Hours" was held in the Church and in the month of July there was much excitement and ceremony due to a formal visit from no less a person than the Bishop of Marseilles, Msgr de Mazenod, the Founder of the Oblates.

## **VISIT OF BISHOP DE MAZENOD**

Bishop de Mazenod, then an old man of 75 years, had come on a Visitation of his Oblates in England and Ireland and arrived in Dublin on July 20th. According to the wording of the Community Diary, he was very pleased with the new foundation. During his week's stay he received many visitors and himself made calls on Archbishop Cullen and on many of the Religious Communities in Dublin. Dr. Cullen had Bishop De Mazenod to dinner and on the occasion offered to the Oblates a parish at Inchicore to be cut off from the existing parish of St. James. The offer was accepted by the Founder of the Oblates, but for some unexplained reason the project later fell through. On the fifth day of his visit Bishop de Mazenod toured the Works of the G.S. and W. Railways and met the men in their different shops. The good Bishop's greatest joy was on the Sunday of his visit when he celebrated a public Mass and gave Holy Communion to hundreds of men and women. So great was his joy at the evident faith and piety of the people that tears streamed down his face as he distributed the Sacred Species. The visit ended on July 27th after a most impressive gathering of the people had proffered their good wishes to himself and loyalty to his Oblates.

## **THE HOUSE OF RETREAT**

A robbery of the Church caused quite a sensation shortly after the departure of Bishop de Mazenod. Even the tabernacle was wrenched open on the occasion. In October of this year Father Cooke announced his cherished plan of building a House where men might come to make a Retreat in complete silence for a number of days. He visualized a building that would accommodate up to 200 Retreatants. The idea was revolutionary in Ireland then and caused a good deal of favourable com-

ment. Plans to collect funds for the building were set afoot and on December 8th of the following year (1858) the foundation stone was laid with solemn ceremony by the great friend of the Community, Dr. O'Connor, O.S.A., Bishop of Saldes. Pugin himself drew the plans of the House of Retreat—as it was henceforth known. The actual building of the House was a slow business, hampered principally by lack of funds and it was not until two years later (January 1861) that it was wholly ready for occupation. The first occupants of the house were young students aspiring to join the Oblate Congregation, Novices and professed students. It is of interest to note that money raising raffles certainly go back one hundred years as there is mention round this time of a Drawing of Prizes in aid of the House with no less than 1,500 Prizes. The Drawing took three days to do and a large marquee was erected in the grounds for the purpose. In October, 1863, the first big Retreat for laymen was held in the House and attracted the attendance of “a large number of men”. By the end of the year no less than 124 men had made the enclosed Retreat at Inchicore.

As soon as the House was completed attention was turned to the pressing need of a proper school building to replace the over-crowded coach-house classroom. In 1862 a flourishing College had been opened by the Oblates at the request of the Archbishop in a premises in Mount Street to help in the effort to provide senior education for Catholic boys. At this time there were only three Catholic Colleges in Dublin, most of the Catholic boys were attending Protestant schools for higher education. In the month of June, 1864, steps were initiated to provide a proper boys' school at Inchicore and later in the year the foundation stone was laid of the building to be known as the “Chapel School” for over 70 years.

## **CHURCH OF MARY IMMACULATE**

The Wooden Church of 1856 was never considered as more than a temporary place of worship. In the early seventies, it began to be plain that the weather was not dealing kindly with the structure. Serious consideration had, perforce, to be given to the question of building a worthy and permanent Church. A report from one of the daily papers in 1873 informs us that “a crowded and highly influential meeting was held yesterday in the Chapel of the Immaculate Conception, Inchicore to provide funds for the erection of a new church. The chair was occupied by

Alderman Redmond...” Collections for the proposed new Church went forward steadily over the next three years under the guidance of the Superior, Fr. Tim Ryan, O.M.I., whilst plans for the building were being drawn up by Mr. G. C. Ashlin. On July 9th, 1876, came the glad day when the foundation stone of the new Church of Mary Immaculate was laid by Cardinal Cullen. Bishop Leahy, O.P., of Dromore preached the sermon for the occasion to the large gathering of clergy and people present.

A sum of eight thousand pounds had been laboriously collected for the new Church by individuals and by varied functions like bazaars, raffles and so on. One top prize of 3 Tram-way Shares or £30 offered for a raffle at the time sounds rather naive today. As the work of building the Church proceeded, the collection of funds to further the work became increasingly difficult. The succession of bad harvests and the spectre of famine in the country, the increasing ferocity of evictions through the no-rent campaign, the political turmoil of the two decades, all conspired to almost cripple the fund-raising efforts for the new Church.

The builder and the architect went as far as funds allowed and completed the Nave and Aisles. Mr. Ashlin's plan envisaged a thirteenth century Gothic style nave, aisles, chancel and two side-chapels with a total length of 130 feet. The nave is divided from the aisles by five pointed arches resting on red polished granite columns and lighted by twenty-four traceried windows in the clerestory. The aisles are lighted by three light windows of varied design. The ceilings of the nave are arched and panelled. Externally the principal front is to the north and is flanked by two turrets containing staircases and rising to a height of 100 feet. The main entrance is through an arched and canopied doorway in the north gable, having a white marble statue of the Immaculate Conception in the tympanum. The doorway is surmounted by an eight-light traceried window, the whole being enclosed by a deeply recessed arch rising from ground to a height of 55 feet. The effect of the whole is particularly fine and a much admired architectural ornament to the district and the city. As there was no immediate prospect of building the chancel and side chapels or completing the turrets, the south end of the nave was boarded up and Fr. Shinnors, the then Superior, decided to use the Church as it was.

The solemn ceremony of blessing the new House of God took place on December 8th, 1878. Three

bishops were present on the occasion. Dr. Moran of Ossory—soon to be Cardinal Archbishop of Sydney—sang Pontifical Mass at which Bishop Dorrian of Down and Connor preached. After Benediction in the evening, the sermon was preached by the famous Dominican, Father Tom Burke.

The hopes for an early completion of the unfinished Church were delayed by several factors, amongst them the duty of hospitality by the Oblate Community at Inchicore to their exiled brethren from France expelled by the anti-Religious Law of March, 1880. The “exiles” remained at Inchicore for four years until more suitable accommodation was found for them at Belcamp Hall, Raheny in County Dublin. During their sojourn at Inchicore the French-speaking Fathers were often employed to fill Chaplain duties with the Sisters of Mercy at Goldenbridge, a duty that had been the responsibility of the House of Retreat almost from the beginning. Their grasp of English never seems to have improved and as a result relations between the two Communities became, to put it mildly, a little strained when Mother Magdalen and her Sisters and the Orphans at Goldenbridge were subjected to daily doses of French in the prayers after Mass!

A further discouraging factor against the completion of the Church was the commencement of the building of the present Church of Our Lady of Dolours at Dolphins Barn. The want of a Church in this section of St. James’ parish had become acute in the early eighties and the Archbishop, Dr. Walsh, asked the Oblate Fathers to forego immediate plans until the work at Dolphins Barn was completed. He had, about the same time, addressed a similar request to the Augustinian Fathers at John’s Lane, who were then trying to build their present splendid Church.

For almost fifteen years the Church lay in its unfinished state with the Chancel arch boarded up until, on the Superiorship of Father W. M. Ring, the happy day dawned on May 29th, 1892 when Archbishop Walsh came to lay the foundation stone of the proposed new Chancel. When the shell of the new Sanctuary was completed, Father Ring set about beautifying the interior as it is today. The walls are encased in marble, set into the walls in the form of tablets of neat and handsome design. The High Altar (the work of the father of Padraig Pearse) is a remarkably fine specimen of the sculptor’s art and with its leading component parts of Carrara, Sicilian and Irish marbles and its decora-

tions, may be justly regarded as one of the finest of its type. Over the High Altar, in the centre of the apse stands a statue of Our Lady of Lourdes in a tasteful niche lighted from overhead by daylight and at night by artificial lighting. The completed Chancel was formally opened on December 8th, 1899. Later the present altars of the Sacred Heart and St. Joseph were added (July, 1901). On December 13th, 1903, the Church was consecrated by Dr. Walsh, Archbishop of Dublin, assisted by several members of the Hierarchy, a great number of priests and an overflowing congregation.

At this stage, though a great deal had been done (at a total cost of £15,000), the Church looked very incomplete externally since the twin turrets had never progressed beyond the halfway stage. It fell to Father Michael Sweeney, when he assumed the Superiorship of the Community in 1925, to tackle the problem. In the nine years of his tenure of office, Fr. Sweeney completed the twin towers, added the two spacious transepts with their altarshrines of St. Therese and Our Lady of Perpetual Succour, benched the aisles and transepts, doubled and furnished the existing sacristy and added an altar-boys’ sacristy, installed the fourteen-bell chime and three mass-bells in the towers, embossed the confessionals, installed the electric lighting and public address system and levelled and macadamised the Church grounds.

In 1950, Father Butler put in the present fine organ and to Father Moran, the present Superior, goes the credit of the mosaic work in the two transepts and the Marian Year (1954) commemorative Mosaic behind the High Altar.

This, in brief, is the story of beginnings, development and completion of the Church of Mary Immaculate at Inchicore. It stands today a worthy monument to Catholic life, to zeal, to self-sacrificing generosity, to the bond of loyalty between the Oblate Community and the people of Inchicore. Within its walls, God is honoured, God’s Immaculate Mother is worthily venerated and God’s people are sanctified.

## **THE COMPLETED PICTURE**

In our chronicle of the Oblate Fathers at Inchicore, we have taken the story of the church right down to the time of writing. En route, we have passed several milestones that have marked the hundred-year span of development of the Community labours and achievements. Some of these are recorded on other

pages of the present publication, such as the story of the Inchicore Crib, the building of the Grotto Shrine of Our Lady of Lourdes and the growth of the Oblate Schools from the original stable to the present impressive Scoil Mhuire gan Smál with its ancillary Assembly Hall, the Árus Mhuire. But there are some other odds and ends that have become part and parcel of the Oblate ménage at Inchicore and should be mentioned in a record such as the present.

The Consecration of the Church in 1903 was made possible by the paying off of the mortgage that had lain on the property for years. The payment was effected through the sale to the Dublin Corporation, in 1902, of the larger portion of the original farm purchased in 1856. The Corporation paid £4,000 to the Community for the land on which now stand Ring Street, Nash Street, New Road, Partridge and Railway Terraces. A more substantial price was offered at the time by another interested party, but Father Nicholl, the Superior, preferred to give the land for the purpose of building workers' houses as planned by the Corporation. The grounds attached to the Church had, from the start, been always used for the purposes of the May and Corpus Christi Processions and similar functions. At different times there were outdoor altars and a Calvary Group round the grounds. For many years there was an ornamental lake or, rather, pond in the large field of the grounds wherein was sited a statue of Our Lady. The present Community Cemetery was laid out by Brother Malone in 1891. Previously the Cemetery had been located beside where the Árus Mhuire now stands. Father Sweeney was responsible, ten years ago, for the laying out of the much admired rose garden in front of the House of Retreat and for the planting of the ornamental shrubbery and trees around the grounds. The statue of Our Lady in the rose garden was erected in 1924, in the Superiorship of Fr. Matt O'Reilly. The triple archway connecting the House and the Church was begun by Father Sweeney in 1940 and completed in February, 1946, when he solemnly unveiled the crowned statue of Our Lady of Lourdes surmounting the archway. The disastrous Crib fire of Christmas Day, 1948, destroyed the single storey annexe to the House of Retreat known as St. Leo's Hall, but the Superior of the time, Father Michael Butler, courageously tackled the task of restoring the loss and from the ashes there has since arisen the fine three-storey, lime-

stone-faced wing now forming the south side of the House of Retreat.

Many a visitor has remarked on the fine group of buildings and the spacious, pleasant grounds that today comprise the property of the Oblate Community at Inchicore. They are worthy monuments to a hundred years of progress. They are symbols of the unity between the Oblate Fathers and the people of Inchicore, who welcomed poor and unknown strangers to their hearts and homes a century since. These buildings and these lands have been consecrated for religious purposes, and have been provided by the multiplied and continuous sacrifices of people not always overburdened with the goods of this world. They are the visible proof of an enduring Catholic spirit that is, today, as strong in grandchildren and great grand children as it was in the pioneers of 1856. They supply the explanation of the splendid things that have been and are being done in Inchicore for God, for religion and for the interests of the Church.

In all that has been done, there is recognizable one influence, one attraction, one power; there is honoured and blessed one name—Mary Immaculate. They who in the past gathered around the Oblates, and served them and laboured for them, and sacrificed for them time and money and rest and health, desired thereby to honour the Blessed Virgin. For Her sake they built the church and house and schools; for Her sake they adorned the sanctuary and provided rich vestments and vessels of gold and silver for public worship; for love of Her they have worn and do wear the insignia of Her Sodality and assemble in thousands month by month to honour Her and through Her, Her Son, Jesus Christ; for love of Her they raised with their own hands a Shrine that is known and honoured through the whole land; for love of Her they have given their sons and daughters to the services of the Sanctuary in the four corners of the world. She reigns as Queen in their hearts and in their homes, guarding the Kingdom of Her Son.

A century is past—gathered into God's barns. A second century is dawning—hidden yet in God's pocket. We do not, we cannot know what that century holds, but we can pray that the same loyalty, co-operation and good-will between the people of Inchicore and the Oblates of Mary Immaculate may be as strong and as wholesome and as profitable unto eternity as it has been across the century that is past

# THE INCHICORE Crib

Brian McNamee, O.M.I.

Since the awed eyes of man first gazed on the Incarnate form of his God, there is one representation, more than any other, that has won all men of whatsoever age, race or colour—the Christmas Crib. Whether it be executed with the skill or genius or arranged by inartistic loving hands it delights the hearts of the refined and the homely, the aesthete and the Philistine. Before it the haughty aristocrat kneels in the company of the beggar, the sinner beside the saint for before it all men are equal and by it all men are drawn to God.

Popular tradition names the gentle St. Francis of Assisi as the originator of the cult of the Crib; but in point of fact the cult is much older than that. It is as old as Christianity itself. This devotion in the early Christian times centred on the little village of Bethlehem. Origen in the 3rd century tells us he made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land “to see the cave and in it the manger where He was swaddled”. St. Helena, as a proof of her love for the Infant Jesus converted the cave into a chapel and adorned it with costly marble and other precious ornaments. In 326 A.D. her son, the Emperor Constantine, built a magnificent basilica over the crypt. Eusebius relates, “The Emperor himself, eclipsing even the magnificence of his mother’s design, adorned the same place in a truly royal style.”

In the 7th century Pope Theodore, a native of Palestine, well aware of the destructive ways of the Mussulan (Turks) who were overrunning the Holy



Land, caused the precious relics of the original Crib to be transferred to Rome where he built the beautiful basilica of St. Mary Major to provide a fitting shrine for them. Here in the centuries that have since passed they have been the continuous object of devotion for pilgrims from all over the world. These relics consist of five pieces of board which were found to have been taken from the sycamore tree of which there are many varieties in the Holy Land. From them some idea can be got of the original shape and construction of the Crib. Two of the pieces stood upright in the form of an X. On this the other three pieces rested, supported at the other end by another X, which at present is missing. These pieces of wood were, property speaking, mere supports for the manger itself which was made from the soft limestone of which the cave itself was formed. The idea of making a representation of the actual scene of Our Saviour's birth seems to have arisen from the old Nativity plays. These plays were enacted by deacons before the altar in lieu of the Introit at Midnight Mass. Gradually, however, their location was shifted to the back of the Church and by degrees this living dramatic portrayal of the Nativity developed into its representation by statues.

In its process of evolution, the Crib came up against the rigid formalism of Byzantine art, which hindered and restricted its development. As well, it was to be found only in the great cathedrals out of reach of poor country folk. An inspiration was needed to free it from its restrictions and bring it down to the level of the common folk. This inspiration was found in the fiery heart of the poet-saint, Francis of Assisi, who breathed into the cold uninspiring tableau the warmth of life and love. When Francis was preaching at the Papal Court in the Advent of 1223 A.D. he confided to Pope Honorius 3rd his plan of bringing the mystery of the Nativity more realistically home to the minds of the uneducated. The Pope gave the project his blessing and full support. So, when Francis arrived home at Greccio, he set to work at once making a crib. Round the Bambino, laid in a manger of straw, he grouped statues of the Blessed Virgin, St. Joseph and the Shepherds, and a real live ass and ox. Legend relates that while meditating on the Mystery of the Incarnation on Christmas Eve the Child Jesus appeared in his arms to reward him for the honour and veneration he had given to the sublime mystery of His birth.

Since then, ably propagated by the Sons of St. Francis, devotion to the crib has spread through the Christian world. Yearly, from Christmas Eve until February 2nd, a representation of the Cave of Bethlehem is set up in almost every church in Christendom, and mindful of the angel's words, crowds flock in to adore the Christ Saviour.

### **INCHICORE CRIB**

The humble beginning of the Inchicore Crib in no way presaged the fame and popularity it was later to enjoy. In 1856, Fr. Fox, who had seen the widespread custom in France, obtained some statuettes from London and with loving care and artistic taste arranged them in a corner of the Wooden Chapel. Some idea of the size of the figures may be had from the fact that they were often knocked over by mice. But small and humble though it was the Crib was an almost unique thing in the Dublin of the time and it immediately attracted much attention.

People flocked to it not only from Dublin City but also from the surrounding country districts. In those days the only public conveyance leaving the city was a horse-drawn bus and it is said that during the Christmas season it was engaged exclusively in carrying passengers to and from Inchicore. In a report written in 1864 to the Superior General of the Oblate Congregation, Fr. Cooke, who was then Provincial, comments: "during the Christmas season numbers of the faithful have visited each day the Inchicore Crib. Many visitors to Dublin would never have forgiven themselves for leaving the city without going to Inchicore to admire the Crib."

Although the people who flocked in such numbers to pay their respects to the Baby Jesus were, in the main, very poor, such was their love for the Divine Child that it was seldom they departed without leaving some tiny pittance. With the aid of these offerings, the Fathers were enabled to buy bigger and better figures and each year the Crib grew in size and in loveliness.

It was not surprising that such a centre of religious fervour should bring forth much fruit. Many non-Catholics who came out of curiosity or to deride the simple for their "idolatry" fell on their knees with a "Credo" before the inspiring sight. Father Cooke, in the above mentioned report has recorded one such conversion, which took place, probably, in the year 1863.

He writes : " A Protestant lady arrived one day at Inchicore accompanied by her young daughter

and a governess. The governess, a Catholic, went on her knees before the Crib and remained kneeling with head bent in prayer. Whilst kneeling she still held the hand of the young girl, her pupil, who had knelt at her side. The mother, who had not as yet come near the manger, seeing her daughter kneeling beside the governess, became indignant. She hastened towards the pair and dragged her daughter from her knees and loudly abused the kneeling governess.

“What is this?” she exclaimed. “Not only are you guilty of idolatry, but you want to make my daughter like yourself.”

After this outburst, she calmed down and even went forward to examine one by one the figures within the Crib. Suddenly she stared in front of her, tears welling up in her eyes and she fell to her knees. Fervent prayers came from her lips, from her, who but a few moments before had spoken so savagely against Catholic practices. The governess watched with growing astonishment this

sudden change of front, unable to understand the cause. In a little while her mistress turned to her and in a voice choked with emotion asked to be taken to see a priest.

At the nearby House of Retreat, she was introduced to Fr. Fox, O.M.I. (who was himself a convert from Quakerism) and to him she confessed that but a short fifteen minutes previously she had been a bigoted Protestant, but now she believed with all her heart in the Catholic Church. She asked Fr. Fox to put her in touch with a priest of her own neighbourhood by whom she might be instructed. Fr. Fox gave her the name of a priest whom he knew to be near her home and a few weeks later he learned that the erstwhile Protestant had been received into the Church along with her whole large family.”

In the month of June, 1875, the building of the “Church of the National Vow”, the Basilica of the Sacred Heart at Montmartre, Paris, began under the aegis of the Oblate Fathers who had been appointed to the work by Cardinal Guibert, Archbishop of



Paris. By April, 1881, the present splendid Crypt was completed and work had begun on the main building. Parallel with the building of the Crypt, there had been envisaged, amongst the features of its decorations, the provision of an outstanding Crib. To this end a certain M. Pesche had been commissioned to go to the Holy Land and prepare a series of figures in wax modelled on people living in the land of Our Saviour Himself. M. Pesche spent four years at the task. He designed and modelled no less than 27 figures. As well, he fixed on a layout for the Crib that would reproduce as near as possible the actual scenes of Bethlehem. Returning to Paris, M. Pesche set about constructing his perfect Crib within the Crypt at Montmartre. Alas, when the whole ensemble was complete, it was perfect and splendid, but altogether out of proportion in the space allotted to it on the architect's plan. The figures were packed away in a store and the Crib scheme abandoned.

In November of 1880, the Oblate Community of Autun, in common with many other religious communities in France, was harried into exile and found sanctuary at Inchicore. Seeing the Crib in the old Wooden Chapel at Inchicore, one of the "exiles" suggested the idea of trying to acquire the abandoned Crib figures from Montmartre. So it was done. The precious figures were carefully packed and brought to Ireland together with M. Pesche's plan for their assembly. Under the loving and artistic care of Brother Patrick Malone, O.M.I., the Montmartre Crib began to take shape in the old Wooden Chapel and the visitors who came to see the Inchicore Crib over Christmas of 1885 were truly astonished at the transformation that had been wrought. If the former Crib had been renowned in Dublin and district, the new Crib immediately won national acclaim. An edition of *The Freeman's Journal* of the period noted:

"The Inchicore Crib was opened on Christmas Day to the thousands of pious visitors who annually go there to see what is, undoubtedly, the largest and best representation of events connected with the Nativity to be seen in Ireland. Every year that passes brings with it some fresh addition to the Crib, perfect though it has always been regarded. This year, many new features have been added and the representation of the Sacred Events recorded in the Gospel is now almost complete and accurate in all its details."

The Wooden Chapel was the home of the Crib

for sixty years. In 1937, the march of "progress", in the shape of the present school Assembly Hall, was responsible for the demolition of the old chapel and for the removal of the Crib to a new location. Under the gifted guidance and in the capable hands of Mr. Enoch Dalton, the Crib was re-designed and set up in an annexe to the House of Retreat, known as the Leo Hall. Here again it is a pleasant duty to record and recall that this rebuilding of the Crib was accomplished through the co-operation of the workers of Inchicore with the same spirit and generosity that has characterised the relations between the Oblate Fathers and the people since 1856. There were many who maintained that the Crib in the Leo Hall failed to reach the standard and artistry of what it had been in the old location. Perhaps they were right, but whether or not, it was a praiseworthy effort to continue a grand tradition. It was the same Christian lesson that the old and the new Crib sought to impart—the lesson of God seeking man in spite of man.

The lesson began on (entering the Crib) with a tableau of the Bethlehem innkeeper, standing at the entrance to his khan, refusing a night's shelter to the



two wayfarers from Galilee. Rejected in the town, the visitor to the Crib then followed the steps of Mary and Joseph towards the cave, passing on the way various figures of townspeople, the Wise Kings and shepherds, till, after traversing some forty yards, one was brought to the entrance of the Manger itself. The central tableau there was always striking and very moving. The ox, the ass and the sheep seemed as real as when they had walked the fields. The quiet, sober dignity of the figure of St. Joseph was set off against the seated figure of Our Lady slightly bending over the swaddled baby figure of the Infant lying in the straw. The kneeling shepherds, carrying their lambs, were positioned a little way off whilst, through an opening at the rear, the ghostly outline of Bethlehem slept under the moonlight. The fresh straw in the manger, the green dewy moss and clumps of heather freshly imported from the Dublin mountains, the green boughs and branches and the subdued lighting—all these combined to help the unusual feeling of reality that was peculiar to the Inchicore Crib. Bethlehem was very near in heart if not in time.

Thus did the Inchicore Crib progress down the years, advancing in artistry and realism and growing more and more into the hearts of succeeding generations of Dubliners. So it seemed that it would progress for many years to come.

At ten minutes to noon on Christmas Day, 1948, the Crib was almost deserted. Two or three adults (one of whom was an attendant) and a few children still remained in adoration. Suddenly the main fuse blew and the whole crib was plunged into darkness. After a few minutes of groping around in the dark, one of the children struck a match to try to light the way out. The attendant, knowing how dangerous the naked flame could be in the midst of much inflammable material, immediately ordered the match to be extinguished. The child guiltily threw away the match. Within a couple of minutes a flame flickered in the straw of the manger and in a moment the whole place was a flaming inferno. The attendant ushered the adults and children to safety and raised the alarm.

White-faced, horrified people poured into the grounds of the House of Retreat ready to do their utmost to save the priceless Crib. Firemen arrived on the scene with a promptitude that was nothing short of miraculous, but every effort was in vain. The life-like wax figures were destroyed, but

through the brave effort of one of the firemen the precious relic of the True Crib was saved. The Fathers and a large crowd of people stood sadly, helplessly by while the fire went about its foul work. One of the witnesses described it:

“It wasn’t a dramatic or spectacular fire. There were no thrills or heroics associated with its blazing progress. It was just a hungry, devouring monster, ashamed to show its fierce fangs openly, that relentlessly and remorselessly ate up its prey amidst the covering pall of billowing, choking smoke. In an hour the flaming ritual was virtually over. Cowed at first and then calmed by the avalanche of driving water from the hoses of the more than prompt firemen, the roaring inferno slowly muted its strings to a whimpering sigh, and eventually allowed its voice to be over-ridden by the embrace of its elemental enemy—water.”

But in spite of its eventual defeat the fire had conquered. The sight of the desolation and havoc it left in its train was heart-rending. What had but an hour before contained a tableau that for artistry and beauty could not be surpassed in Ireland, was now but a blackened shell. But that was not, all. With the Crib a whole tradition that had been formed over a period of ninety years was destroyed. Another Crib might yet arise, but could it ever recapture the atmosphere of the one that had perished; another set of figures might be procured but they could never impart the delicacy and authenticity of expression with which the French genius had enlivened his. Such were the thoughts of the bereaved Fathers and people as they gazed on the smoking ruin; such were the thoughts of people all over Ireland when they heard the sad news.

Hundreds of letters of condolence reached the Fathers, letters in which the sympathisers themselves expressed their feelings of bereavement. “A national loss”, said one, and there were many of similar content.

Eight years have passed since that tragic day.

A new Inchicore Crib has not yet arisen—the wound has not yet healed, but it is the fondest hope and prayer of many people that, like the Phoenix, it one day will arise victorious and triumphant from the smoking ashes of its funeral pyre, and wed itself once more into the pattern of the true Dublin Christmas, and mould itself into the hearts of new generations of Dubliners as it had the hearts of their fathers and grandfathers.

# “You are my Friends”

## A REVIEW OF THE MISSIONARY ASSOCIATION OF MARY IMMACULATE

by E. J. Doherty. O.M.I.

### “YOU ARE MY FRIENDS”

(St. John. c.15. v.14)

The choice of title for this short sketch of the origin, the progress and development of an organisation of auxiliary apostles of the Oblate Mission fields is by no means as presumptuous as it may seem. They are taken from St. John’s account of the Saviour’s last discourse to His apostles before His Passion and Death. “You are my friends”, He said, “if you do the things that I command you.” His last command was with reference to the missionary apostolate. It was given to his disciples on the day of His Ascension into heaven: “And He said to them: “Go ye into the whole world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.” (Mark, c. 16. v. 16.) This is truly the greatest and most important of the Saviour’s commands, as it was His last. It is in fulfilment of that last testament that the Oblate Fathers have carried their missionary apostolate even to the ends of the earth and it is to co-operate in that apostolate that the members of the missionary association of Mary Immaculate offer their spiritual and material help. The love and affection which prompts that co-operation merits in itself the title of friendship, even looked at from the merely human angle. But, more cogent still is the Saviour’s own promise that His friends are those who carry out His commands and further that what is done for the least of His brethren—every created soul—is done for Him. Without doubt this league of missionary auxiliaries can justly claim to be a group of His friends.

The aid given to apostolic workers is of the tradition of the Church. Time and time again the great Apostle of the Gentiles, St. Paul, refers to the assis-

tance he received from “the brethren”. For example in his Epistle to the Corinthians he writes: “And I rejoice In the presence of Stephenas, and Fortunatus, and Achaicus, because that which was wanting on your part they have supplied.” (I Cor. c. 16. v. 17). The ample evidence, which the Church’s history gives us, of the help so willingly offered to her missionaries is a glorious record of the generous contribution which lay-folk have made to the spread of Christ’s Gospel. In his Encyclical Letter on the Missions, the present Holy Father has made abundantly clear that missionary endeavour from the earliest times depended, under God, for its success on such help. In past ages, this co-operation was to a great extent due to the charitable initiative of individual Christians. There were, of course, widespread appeals on occasion, when the Vicar of Christ or a Bishop called for the assistance of the faithful in times of urgent need. But it has been only within the past one hundred and thirty years or thereabouts that a systematized form of missionary co-operation took shape. To a young French girl goes the credit of laying the foundation of an organisation of mission aid, which set a headline for many lesser groups to follow. She was Mademoiselle Pauline Jaricot of Lyons. Her group became the Society for the Propagation of the Faith. On the hundredth anniversary of its foundation in 1922, the then reigning Pontiff, Pope Pius XI of happy memory, created it the official missionary aid society of the Church with the title of the Pontifical Work for the Propagation of the Faith.

While this organisation was still in its infancy, a new missionary surge began to arise within the Church. New Religious Congregations and Societies were founded, either to revive the religious spirit, which had become dormant at home—

due to the ravages of many years of soul-destroying wars—or to carry the torch of Faith to pagan lands which were crying out for the Messengers of Truth. These new priestly regiments as well as the older Orders, once again enthused with apostolic ideal, needed assistance both to prepare suitable candidates to fill their ranks and to support their missionaries on the battlefield of the Faith. Among these new institutions whose founders' eyes were on the ends of the earth was the Missionary Congregation of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate. Its missionary zeal, apart from its wonderful work among its homeland people in the South of France, sought fulfilment in far-off Ceylon and in the far north of the New World, in Canada. We feel proud here in Ireland that among the first Missionaries who accepted the call of obedience to these distant mission fields were Irish Oblate Fathers; Father O'Keeffe to Ceylon and Father Murphy to Canada.

To supply the crying need for priests in these new mission regions, it became necessary to look for young recruits with ambition to give up all worldly ideals to devote themselves in the poverty of Christ to the harvest field of souls. Fervent prayer brought the answer. Many young men knocked at the door of the Oblate Novitiate; but many more were needed. A decision was taken to open a school for boys who ardently desired to become missionary Oblates and thus not only to prepare them for the hardships of missionary life, but also to enable the superiors to choose the best suited for the zealous heroism which the sacrifice of home and country demanded. Under God's wise designs, one can say that this step ensured the achievement of that astounding success which has marked the missionary work of the Oblate Fathers in both Ceylon and Canada, and later in the many other mission fields allotted to this young missionary Institute.

It was, indeed, a young Institute when this new development became effective: it had hardly reached its twenty-fifth birthday. Its material resources were slight to carry the burden of such a foundation. Some of the boys selected came from families who could afford to pay for their schooling, but there were many suitable candidates whose parents, even though of excellent stock, could contribute very little to the upkeep of their chosen sons. A source of support had to be sought, so the Oblates turned to their friends. It was about the year 1841 when the first small circle of co-

operators in the work of fostering vocations was formed. The organisation grew. By a coincidence, the year 1856, which we are joyfully commemorating here in Inchicore, saw the approval granted for the spread of this good work by the venerated Founder of the Oblates and its Superior General, Bishop de Mazenod.

In Ireland, the good work took root. It was fitting that the first organised group of helpers should have been members of the pilgrimages to Lourdes directed and led during the Eighties of the last century by that well-known Oblate, Father William J. Ring. The first evidence of their generous assistance was the erection of the exquisite chapel in honour of Our Lady of Lourdes at Belmont House, at that time the Novitiate of the Irish Province of the Oblates. A lady who was present on the occasion of the chapel's solemn dedication wrote tenderly and touchingly of its beauties in the "Ave Maria" (the monthly magazine of the University of Notre Dame, U.S.A.) I venture to quote these few words: "A lovely chapel it is ... a very gem of gold and colours." The Most Rev. Dr. Donnelly, Titular Bishop of Canea and Auxiliary to the Archbishop of Dublin performed this solemn ceremony on Tuesday, 20th December, 1887. During the ceremony Father Ring expressed the gratitude of the Oblate Fathers to "the friends who have planned and built and adorned these walls and have set up this fair altar." He explained that an appeal had



**Miss Delia Delaney was enrolled in the "Apostolic Circle," 63 years ago by Fr. Ring, O.M.I., and has been an active promoter for Oblate missions, both home and foreign, to this day.**

been made about five years before for the Novitiate and for the Junior College connected with it. He continued: "We dedicate this shrine to Our Lady of Lourdes as a sign to Her and to the world that in our many great and pressing wants we rely with utter confidence on Her prompt and generous help. And here I wish to speak, not of those material and comparatively vulgar needs which may be met or provided against by the collection of a few pounds or shillings—though it would be foolish on our part to pretend as regards such necessities we are in any sense independent. But now I speak of the want that is the most urgent of all our wants. ...I mean the want of missionary priests. ...From each of the missions whose names are written on these holy walls comes one incessant cry, the heart-rending appeal: 'Send us help, send us help! Send us priests to work for the salvation of innumerable souls'." In his peroration, the eloquent preacher spoke these concluding words: "The reward of our zeal and charity, if we undertake to do this work according to the measure of our opportunities, will be the increased glorification of the name of God, and a fresh extension of His Kingdom, by the salvation of many and many a soul which, but for us, would have been lost for ever."

I have quoted at some length from Father Ring's address, as it is the first recorded reference to the work of the Association of Mary Immaculate in Ireland. It emphasised the main object of the organisation: to provide priests for the mission fields of the world. Referring to the work at Belmont House and in particular to the Chapel, Katherine Tynan (later Mrs. O'Mahony) wrote at the time in a delightful little poem:

*From this shall many a one go forth  
Evangels on his lips of flame,  
To East and West and South and North  
To preach the Lord Christ's name;  
To gather in His lambs that stray,  
His dear ones lost in death and night.  
His Mother's Heart is glad today  
In His abode of light.*

The good work, of which the Chapel of Our Lady of Lourdes was the symbol, was firmly planted. Under the direction, both enthusiastic and energetic, of Father Matthew Gaughran O.M.I, (later Bishop of Kimberley, South Africa), the Association was established in various Houses of the Anglo-Irish Province of which he was then Provincial Superior. It was called "The Apostolic

Circle" and had for its stated object to give "aid to the Novitiate and Mission College".

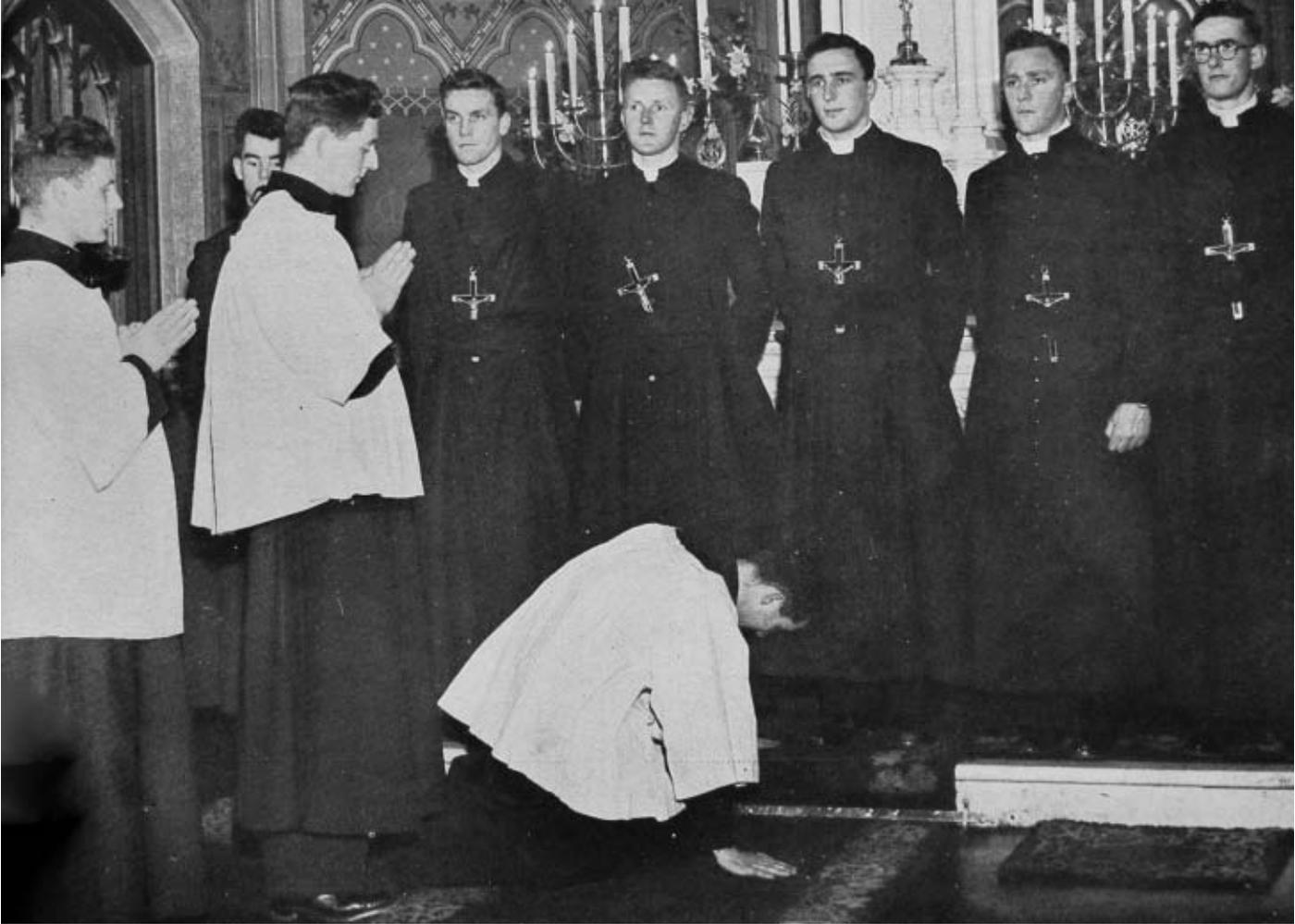
At Inchicore, there was an active group enrolled in the local "Apostolic Circle". With joy, we put on record that a promoter of that original Circle is still with us and is still actively interested in our work for the Missions. She is Miss Delia Delaney of Robinhood Road. Ad multos annos!

With passing years, need for a new type of organisation arose. It will not be invidious to mention that the credit for this resurgence should go to an Oblate Father who is still happily with us, Father William F. O'Connor. It was on the occasion of the Silver Jubilee of Belcamp College, of which he was then Superior, that Father O'Connor launched the newly formed Association of Mary Immaculate, with the special object of increasing the number of students in Belcamp, the Junior Oblate Seminary, and of helping to provide for their needs, both spiritually and materially. He had the cordial approval of his Provincial, Father Leahy, and the benefit of the experienced advice of Father Ring who was then resident in Belcamp. (Father Ring was called to his eternal reward a few months later.) This new beginning was small, but it was a sound foundation. Since then, the work has been consolidated and now, nearly forty years later, can claim a membership in every county in Ireland, in every Oblate parish in Great Britain and in the Channel Islands. Thank God and His Immaculate Mother!

The general organisation of the Association of Mary Immaculate has been a subject of concern to the Superior Generals of the Oblates and to the General Chapters of the Congregation. The General Chapter of 1926 went into detail in this matter. Later, the then Superior General, Most Reverend Archbishop Dontenwill, O.M.I., issued a Circular Letter in which he gave a history of the Association and laid down the norms of organisation. Referring to a Rescript of the Sacred Roman Congregation of the Penitentiary, he pointed out that the object of the Association was twofold:

1. To provide spiritual help for the Missions of the Oblates by prayer to God, particularly through the intercession of Mary Immaculate,
2. To promote and assist vocations so as to increase the number of Oblate Priests.

He urged that the Fathers who should be appointed to this work should with tact and prudence spare no effort to further an undertaking, which was so valuable to us, Oblates. He empha-



**"How beautiful are the feet of those that preach the Gospel." The ceremony of kissing the feet of departing young missionaries.**

sised that such work would not and should not in any way endanger the Pontifical Work for the Propagation of the Faith, which has done so much for our Oblate Missions and deserves so well our support. In a quotation from a message issued by the General Council of the Pontifical Work, His Grace made clear that the Directors of the Association were quite free to seek the help of the friends and benefactors of the Oblate Mission field to provide those resources which were so essential to our Houses of Formation and to our Missions and which, the Council General admitted, the Pontifical Work could not supply.

The guiding principles enunciated by Archbishop Dontenwill set a new standard for the inner working of the Association and set a new tempo for its development. These principles were re-affirmed by our present Father General, the Most Rev. Leo Dechatelets, O.M.I., who takes a paternal

and profound interest in the Organisation. In a comparatively recent Circular Letter, Father Deschatelets has emphasised the kinship the members of the Association have with the Oblate Fathers. He wishes that they be considered not merely as co-operators in the Oblate Apostolate, but as our brothers and sisters, members of the same great family, each contributing appropriate service to the accomplishment of a glorious objective, the salvation of souls. To that end, Father General has instructed that the title of the organisation be the Missionary Association of Mary Immaculate. He has given new ordinances with the object of promoting more efficiently the work in which the organisation actively participates. He has encouraged the enrolment of young people and of families, thus, under God, fostering vocations from among its members towards the Oblate Priesthood and Brotherhood. At the present moment, his zeal-

ous interest has prescribed the creation of a new Constitution for the organisation in order to systematise its working, to invigorate its life and to foster still further its effectiveness.

The Holy See has commended the Missionary Association of Mary Immaculate and has granted it many spiritual favours. It is not, however, in the strict sense either a Third Order or a Confraternity or a Sodality or a Pious Union. It is a Lay Association having for its primary aims the promotion of vocations to the Missionary Congregation of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate and the provision of assistance for the labourers in the Oblate Mission fields, especially by prayer and alms. As an Association, it is not subject to the jurisdiction of local Ecclesiastical Authority, but in accordance with the instruction of the Sacred Congregation of the Council, it acknowledges with reverence the prerogatives of the Sovereign Pontiff and of the Bishops. In matters of faith, morals and the laws of justice it avows its humble submission to the direction and rulings of the Holy See.

This slight survey of the background, the origin and development of the Missionary Association of Mary Immaculate may, perhaps, awaken an interest in a more detailed account of its objects and its methods which are treated exhaustively in a little folder entitled "Helping Mary Queen of the Missions to extend the Kingdom of Her Divine Son", to be obtained free from the Oblate Fathers at Inchicore. For those who are already members, whose love for Mary Immaculate and her Oblates has enlisted their generous help, it will bring, it is hoped, a renewal of fervour and the consolation of knowing that they are those of whom the Saviour has said, "You are my friends".

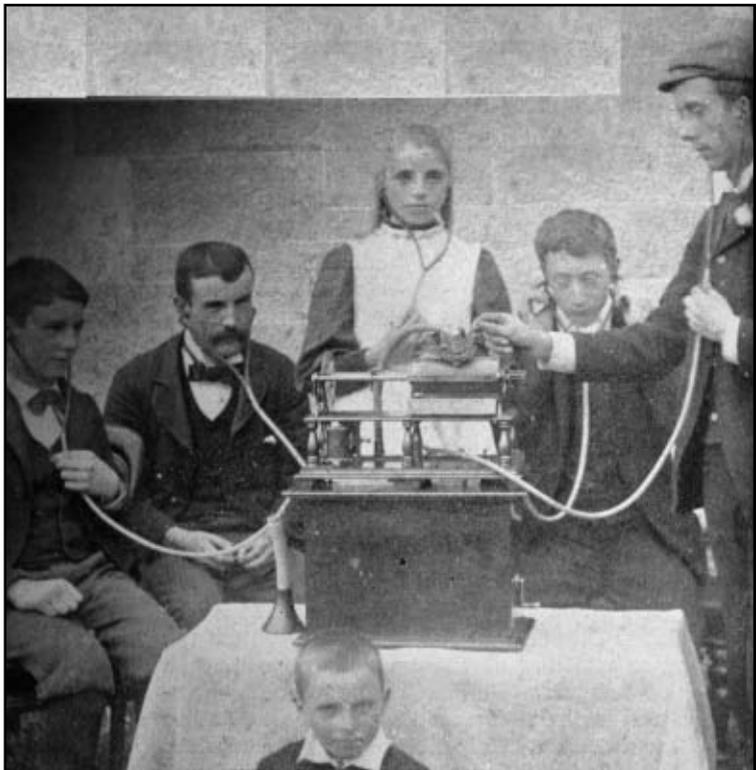
Finally, this synopsis of apostolic effort enables us Oblates to express our heartfelt gratitude to all our Irish Associates and particularly to those of Inchicore who are rejoicing with us in this celebration of the hundredth anniversary of our establishment in their midst. In all truth, we can say, "you, indeed, are OUR FRIENDS".

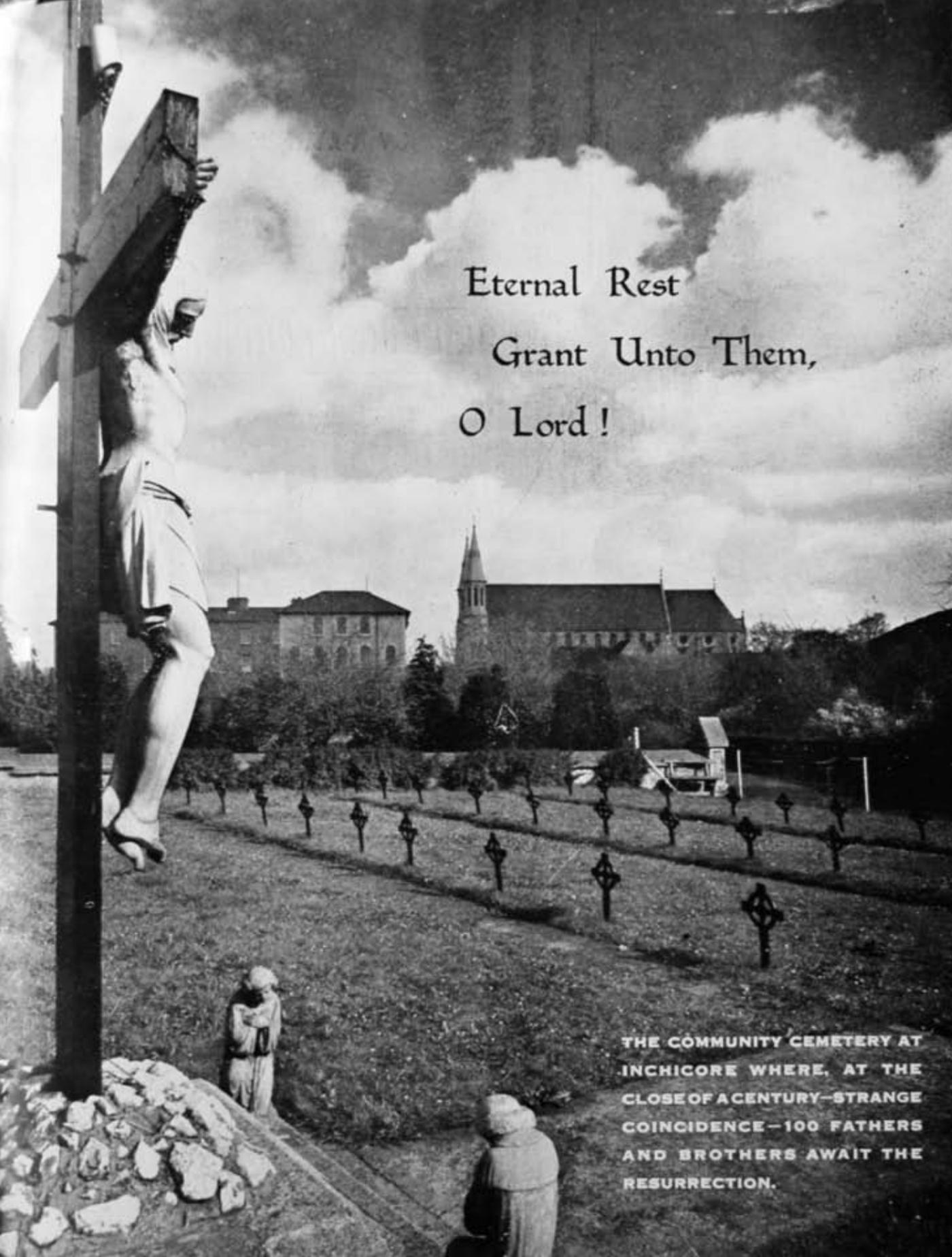
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## *A Voice from the Past*

Our photo, culled from an old album, shows a 'talking machine' invented and built more than 60 years ago by an Inchicore man. Denis (Dinny) McNamara, a brass-finisher in the G.S. & W.R. Works, had an astounding fertility of invention, having several original inventions in phonographs, photography and wireless around the turn of the century. The 'talking machine' of our photograph was presented as a raffle prize at a Bazaar in aid of the New Sanctuary of the Oblate Church in June, 1901. An enthusiast secretly crammed a supply of raffle tickets into the luggage of Fr. Pat Brady, O.M.I., as he was going to the U.S.A. In America, one of the tickets fell into the hands of the great Edison himself who promptly instituted legal proceedings to restrain the manufacture of the phonograph.

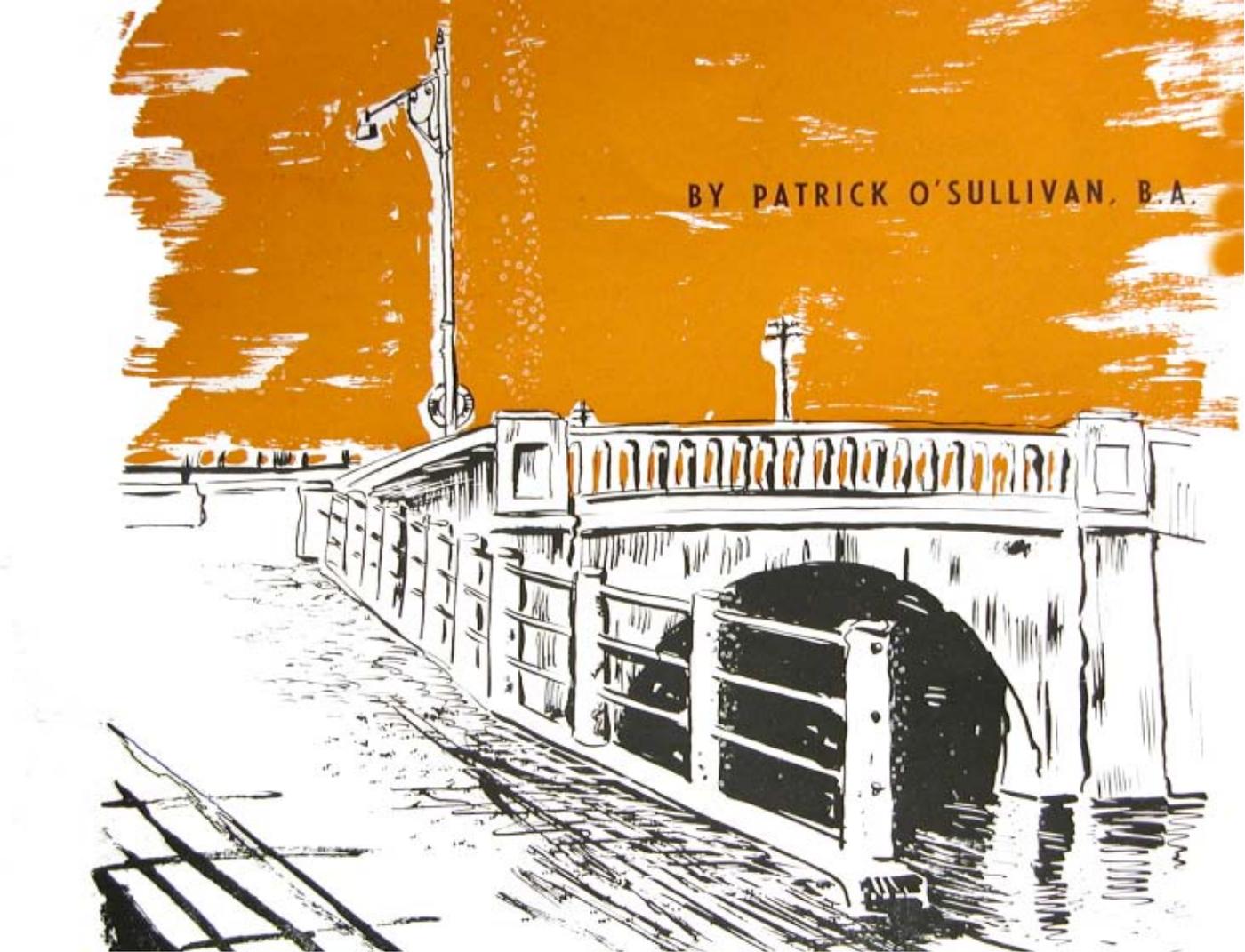
Dinny McNamara appealed against the Injunction. A technical expert from the Edison Company was sent to Europe to examine the controversial phonograph and found that it infringed in no way on the Edison patents. Mr. McNamara who, later, added several technical refinements to the invention, which were also bought up by the Edison Company, accepted an offer of £250 from Edison for his rights to the machine.





Eternal Rest  
Grant Unto Them,  
O Lord!

THE COMMUNITY CEMETERY AT  
INCHICORE WHERE, AT THE  
CLOSE OF A CENTURY—STRANGE  
COINCIDENCE—100 FATHERS  
AND BROTHERS AWAIT THE  
RESURRECTION.



BY PATRICK O'SULLIVAN, B.A.

# Inchicore and district

*through the 19th Century*

In the townland of Inchicore at the time of the Restoration of the Stuarts, 1660, there was only a single inhabitant whose house was rated as having one hearth. It is not stated whether the other inhabitants, if any, were vagrants or occupiers of mud cabins with earthen floors and holes in the centre of the roof for chimneys. After the passing of almost 300 years this one-hearth townland had become an integral, but well defined and thickly populated, unit of the city of Dublin. This growth was not altogether gradual. Two big strides were made with the

opening of the Grand Canal in 1755 and with the extension of the Great Southern and Western Railways after 1845.

## **Phoenix House**

During the period of the Restoration the Phoenix Park was laid out by the Duke of Ormond and originally included the lands of Inchicore, Islandbridge and Kilmainham, but about 20 years later it was reduced to its present limits. When Ormond walled in 2,000 acres of the lands of Kilmainham to form

a deer-park and a public pleasure ground, Barbara Villiers, the Duchess of Cleveland, took a fancy to it and sought it as a country estate for Charles II. When thwarted by Ormond she blithely told him that she hoped she might live to see him hanged, to which he as blithely rejoined that he hoped he might live to see her old.

The name Phoenix is thought to be a fanciful version of the Irish “Fionn Uisce”, clear water, and to have no connection with the bird of legend. In 1653, General Fleetwood, a Commissioner for the Government of Ireland, resided in Phoenix House, that name being then and previously given to the house from the spring, tobar fionn-uisce, near the present Zoological Gardens. This spring, like the spring at Goldenbridge, referred to further on, was said to have chalybeate properties, and was widely known. At a later date Lord Chesterfield erected the elegant Phoenix monument and the confused nomenclature has been perpetuated.

## THE ISLAND OF THE CHOIR

The Ordnance Survey Report and the topographical dictionaries of the last century note the townland of Inchicore as situate in the parish of St. James, baronies of Uppercross and Castleknock, county of Dublin. The Catholic parish of St. James was virtually coterminous with the Protestant parish of the same name and included nine townlands: Butchersarms, Inchicore North and South, Longmeadows, Kilmainham, Goldenbridge North and South, Dolphin’s Barn North and South, totalling 1,952 acres.

In 1669, James, Duke of York, had a grant of 150 acres in “Inchigore”. This spelling is one of the many variants of the Inchicore now in common use, variants that complicate efforts to trace the name to its correct source. As early as 1641 the “Book of Survey and Distribution of Estates Forfeited” gives the name Inschycore. The Applotments Book refers to it as Inchycore. John O’Donovan uses Inchicore, but elsewhere in the Ordnance Survey are found Inshcore, Inchegowre, Inchigory, Inchegore.

Francis Eirington Ball in his History of County Dublin states that the name derives from the Irish Inse Caor—the island of berries. In the Name Books of the Ordnance Survey the Irish versions with explanations are given: Inis Ui Ghuaire, O’Gorey’s Island; Inis Ui Chuair—O’Core’s Island.

The Reverend Nathaniel Burton, described as

assistant reader to the Royal Hospital, Kilmainham, claimed in his history of the Royal Hospital, written in 1843, to have met local people who “were conversant with the boreens of Inchicore and Ballyfermot”. He has the provocative explanation, “Inish na Coire, now Inchicore, the island of the choir, because belonging to the Knights Templars and Hospitallers who formed a choir; there was anciently a wood here which supplied the hospital with fuel.”

One might be tempted to suggest that Inish na Cora, the island of the weir, has possibilities, and that Inse, as well as meaning island could also mean “low-lying land beside a river”. The local post-office uses Inse Chaoir which is probably from the genitive singular of caor, a berry. The library uses Inse Giura. The latter version is given in Log-Aimneacha without comment; the word “giura” is not listed in Fr. Dineen’s Dictionary.

From this welter of conflicting opinion on spelling and derivation readers may be left to make their own choice.

## CAMMACK HALFPENCE

The Camac river flows through the townland of Inchicore and in the 1800’s supplied water to a number of mills along its course before it joined the Liffey at Kingsbridge. The Camac is, in fact, an artificial tributary of the Liffey. It rises in the mountain of Seechon above Bohernabreena, not far from Saggart, and as a small stream flows through Ballynasorney, by Penny Bog to Aughafarrell where it meets another stream from Butler Mountain. The united streams flow on as the Brittas River and form for a part of their course the boundary between Wicklow and Kildare. But at Aughafarrell a dam built across the river turned portion of its waters into an artificial channel, diverted it through Brittas into the Commons of Saggart where it became known as the Slade More. From this on it took the names of the different townlands through which it passed.

The name of Camac or Cammock does not seem to have been generally known until 1836. In that year a lawsuit was brought by mill owners on the Commock against a Mr. Bennett of Aughafarrell who attempted to prevent the diversion of the water to the artificial Cammock unless compensation was forthcoming. On the law-notices served on the parties to the suit appeared for the first time the name Cammack.

It is thought that the stream, got its name from the fact that the men who first dug the artificial channel were paid their wages in Cammack halfpence. At what period these halfpence were in circulation even John O'Donovan was unable to ascertain. Lewis's Topographical Dictionary, published in 1846, refers to the river as the Cammock or Brittas river.

The census of population for Ireland—1851 gives the following figures for Inchicore and the neighbouring townlands:

Townland.	No. of Houses.	Population
Long-meadows	47	307
Butchersarms	6	33
Goldenbridge Nth. and Goldenbridge Sth.	35	140
Goldenbridge Town	241	1,167
Kilmainham Town	94	473
Islandbridge	46	617

(houses in Bar. of Upper Cross; others in the City.)

The total population for the parish of St. James for 1851 was 16,963.

Lewis' Topographical Dictionary gives a detailed account of some of the townlands near Inchicore. Kilmainham had houses one, two, and three storeys high, some in good repair, others miserable cabins. The occupiers were tanners, petty shopkeepers, working men employed in the lan-yards and in the thriving woollen factory beyond the Sessions House. This woollen factory was owned by Messrs. Willars, and, between it and their ancillary establishment at Rathmines, 300 persons were employed.

### ISLANDBRIDGE

Islandbridge, in the centre of the Parish of St. James consisted of a row of houses on the South Circular Road between Kilmainham and the Liffey. They were one, two and three storeys high, generally in bad repair. The owners were mostly shopkeepers who were supported principally by the garrison of the Artillery Barracks (now Clancy Barracks) and by working people employed in the flourmills of a Mr. Manders. Beyond the flourmills was a calico and muslin-printing factory, which employed an average of about 600 persons of both sexes and all ages. The mill and the factory were the property of the Dublin Corporation.

### GOLDENBRIDGE: WATERLOO SPA

Goldenbridge is described as a village in the Parish of St. James, two miles west from Dublin City on

the road to Naas. The village then had flour, paper, and pearl-barley mills.

Here, on an elevated position was situated Richmond Infantry Barracks (now Kehoe Square), forming two fronts opening north and south. The frontages were connected on either side by a row of houses 300 yards long. The buildings occupied 14 acres and had accommodation for 76 officers and 1,600 other ranks.

A minor natural curiosity of the period was the chalybeate spring in the village of Goldenbridge. Popularly known as Waterloo Spa, the waters were described as "sulphurated hydrogen gas united with carbonic acid and magnesia beneficial in bilious and liver complaints and several other diseases."

Here too was the Roman Catholic cemetery, two acres in extent, with an Ionic temple, which served as a mortuary chapel. It was purchased by the Catholic Association, blessed in 1829, and opened for interments. Being the first result of Emancipation, and the only Catholic cemetery available, the demands on it were heavy, and in two years about 12,000 persons were interred there.

### BALLYFERMOT PARISH

West of the parish of St. James and bordering the townland of Inchicore lies the parish of Ballyfermot. Until 1856 it had neither church nor school for its Catholic population and was to benefit greatly by the arrival of the Oblate Fathers in the district in the summer of that year. It is bounded on the north by Palmerstown parish, on the east by St. James' parish, on the south by Drimnagh and Clondalkin and on the west by Coldcut, in Esker parish. Ballyfermot consists of four townlands : Upper Ballyfermot, Lower Ballyfermot, Blackditch and Gallanstown, totalling 1,183 acres. Its extreme breadth from east to west is two miles and from north to south 1.5 miles.

At the time of the 1837 Survey the land was the property of Sir Compton Domville and was let in several holdings, leases being for three lives. The land is described as being of good quality, principally under meadow and pasture, a good number of milch cows being fed there to supply the city dairies.

The Grand Canal runs east and west through the southern end of the parish for a mile and has three locks in that section. On the south side of the canal was a small glue factory owned by a Mr. Verschoyle.

In the centre of the parish was a fine old castle,

linking the history of the powerful Barnewell family of Drimnagh with that of De Clahulls of Ballyfermot. The Barnewell family adhered to the Catholic faith and in the Insurrection of 1641 they threw in their lot with Colonel Preston and the Loyalists on the side of Charles I. In the Cromwellian confiscations that followed they were deprived of their lands in Ballyfermot and elsewhere. In 1840 the castle was still in good repair and occupied by a Captain Lamphier. Near the castle, between the railway and the canal stood an old house known as Ballyfermot Lodge. This house was dark from heavy overgrowths of ivy. It is probable from its position and from the appearance it must have presented, that it was the weird “tiled house” referred to by Sheridan Le Fanu in his story, *The House by the Churchyard*. Incidentally, the Le Fanu family lived in nearby Chapelizod.

Gallanstown derived from a family name. In the southeast corner of the townland was Killeen paper mills. They were the property of a Mr. MacDonnell and had both steam and waterpower. They were in a flourishing state, employing 20 hands.

The population of the parish of Ballyfermot in 1851 was 340 occupying 69 houses. Of this population 34 families were engaged in agriculture.

## THE RESURRECTIONISTS

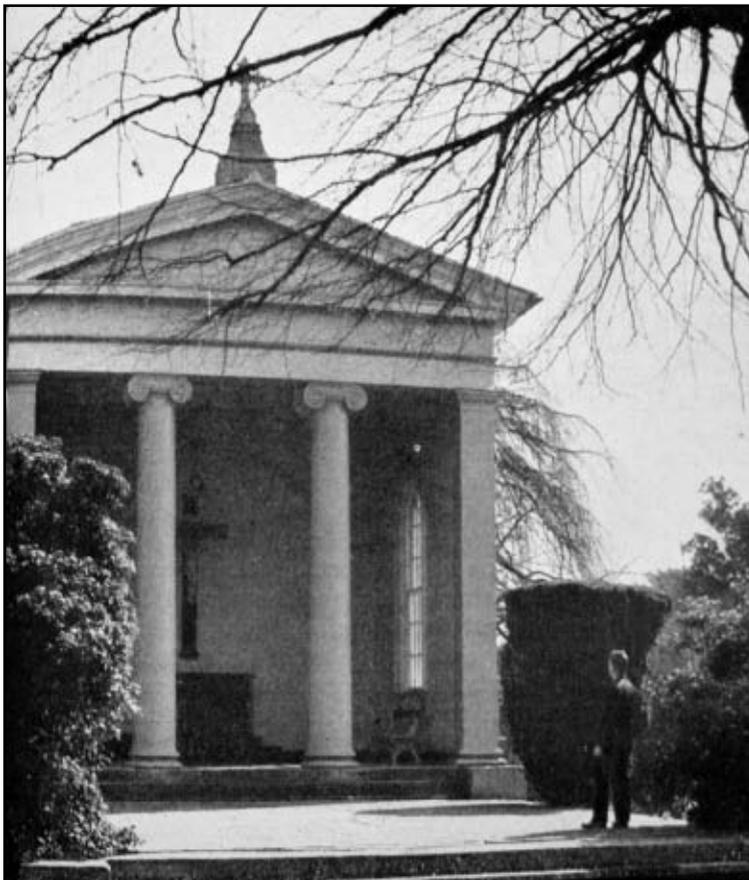
Near Ballyfermot Castle was an old graveyard in which were the ruins of a church dedicated to St. Laurence. The church had fallen into disuse after the Reformation and by 1608 was in ruins. It did not linger on through the centuries undisturbed, for the graveyard, and the one nearby in the “Dublin Hospitals’ Fields” at Kilmainham, more generally known as Bully’s Acre, were being constantly rifled by the Resurrection Men. There was a continual supply of cadavers from these graveyards to the schools of anatomy in Dublin, Liverpool, Edinburgh, when the trade was at its height—shipped as boxes of Irish Cheddar. Writers of the period have left macabre pictures of the re-opening of graves in Ballyfermot and Kilmainham to steal the corpses when the last mourner had gone home. It is necessary to digress somewhat to explain the necessity for this ghoulish trade.

Knowledge of surgery began to decline with the declining Roman Empire. With the death of Galen at the end of the 2nd century A.D., first-hand knowledge of anatomy ceased absolutely. It was kept alive, second-hand, and debased, by the Arabs in Spain who paid Jews and Syrians to translate the works of Galen and Hippocrates from

Greek into Arabic. In Western Europe no dissection was allowed until the 13th century. The Emperor Frederick II, passed an edict that each student should study anatomy for one year. The Universities of Bologna and Padua, both Papal Universities, had famous schools for anatomy by the 15th and 16th centuries.

In England and Ireland, as in most other European countries, except Italy, the teaching of anatomy was hampered by law and superstition. Henry VIII, enlightened in this respect, granted the bodies of four felons a year for dissection. George I, in 1726, granted the bodies of all executed criminals for dissection. Towards the close of the 1700’s, however, the requirements of the expanding medical

### **The Mortuary Chapel in Goldenbridge Cemetery**



schools was far in excess of the supply of criminals, and so the horrible trade began. It grew to such proportions that murder by suffocation was resorted to by the Resurrection Men. After the Burke and Hare case (1828) the authorities became alarmed. In 1829 an Anatomy Bill was introduced, but, curiously enough, it was opposed by the Anglican Bishop of Canterbury and defeated. In 1832 it was re-introduced and made law. Thus ended the activities of the Resurrection Men. In 1832 also, after the cholera epidemic, Bully's Acre was closed. 3,200 people who died of the epidemic had been buried there.

## THE GRAND CANAL

The great event in the neighbourhood of Inchicore in the latter part of the 18th Century was the cutting of the Grand Canal, to link the city with the Shannon and the Barrow, and give access to a large and fertile part of the central plain. High hopes were held that it would contribute to a considerable degree to the prosperity of both city and country. The construction of the canal did not call for any spectacular engineering feats as the nature of the terrain was well suited to such a project.

From Dublin to the summit level of the central plain is a gentle ascent of 200 to 300 feet and from thence an even more gradual descent to the navigable portions of the Shannon and Barrow.

As first designed the canal started from James' Street. From there it ascended 17 miles by four double and seventeen single locks to the summit level, 202 feet above the level of James' Street Harbour and 261 feet above sea-level. At a distance of 21 miles from Dublin the canal divides in two branches, one descending 103 feet in 22 miles to the Barrow, through two double and nine single locks; and the other descending 163 feet in 41 miles through one double and 17 single locks to the Shannon two miles north of Banagher—in all 102 miles of navigable waterway.

The summit level of the Grand Canal was amply supplied with water from the Milltown and Blackwood rivers, tributaries of the Barrow.

The channel which leads from the Liffey at a point near Ringsend and joins the original cutting at Suir Bridge was a subsequent addition. This three-mile stretch was crossed by twelve bridges of single arches, over which were the approaches to the city. Some of the bridges, were called after the engineers who designed or directed the work on them. The present day Mount Street Bridge was known as

Huband Bridge as was also the bridge far away inland at the junction of the Milltown Canal with the Barrow Line. This name has been given another lease of life in the comparatively new Huband Road in Bluebell.

Before the railways became widespread the Canal Company had as many as 400 boats fit for service, and their comings and goings must have been a pleasant diversion for the people of Inchicore and Ballyfermot. The boats were of two types: the trade-boats, which plied to and from James' Street Harbour and the more elegant passenger or flyboats, which went to Portobello Harbour. The freight at first charged was 1.5 d. per ton per mile inwards to Dublin and outward a .5 d. per ton per mile. Later, with increasing trade, freight was increased to 3d. per ton per mile inwards and 2d. per ton outwards.

## PASSENGER BOATS

There were three passenger boats daily from Dublin to Tullamore. Speed averaged 3 to 4 m.p.h.; first and second-class cabins were provided; meals were served on board. The maximum number of passengers was 45 first and 35 second-class. A dog was rated as a passenger. No smoking was permitted. Passengers who became refractory from excess refreshment, or other cause, were liable to be put ashore, marooned, so to speak, to await the arrival of the next boat.

To the sightseer the facilities for viewing the countryside at 3 m.p.h. were attractive indeed. A further refinement in canal travel came with the introduction of fly-boats. These boats were narrow in the beam and when drawn by three or four galloping horses could make a speed of 9 m.p.h. A fine three-storey hotel, now a nursing home, was opened at Portobello Harbour to cater for the increased traffic as well as for the taste of the passengers that the more luxurious fly-boats would attract.

In this age of speed the passenger boats on the Grand Canal seem to have belonged to an archaic world and their timetable with its rules and regulations makes humorous reading. An old salt who had sailed more treacherous waters would have looked on the injunction to passengers not to stand on deck in such a way as to obstruct the helmsman's view as being ironic and he would hardly have thought the trials and dangers implicit in being beached on the mudflats of Inchicore and Ballyfermot comparable to running aground on the Goodwin Sands. Since the

era of highwaymen had not yet drawn to its close, the officers in charge were issued with blunderbusses and pistols. There is no case on record, however, of passengers having been relieved of their valuables by "canal-pirates".

### **G.S. and W.R.**

The coming of the railways heralded the end of passenger carrying on inland waterways. The construction of the main line from Dublin through Portlaoise to the southwest brought an alternative and more lucrative interest to Inchicore, which was favourably situated astride this new line, and just outside Kingsbridge, which was to become the largest railways terminus in the country. A handsome and extensive locomotive depot or store for the carriages of the company was constructed; ovens for making coke were built with a large, octagonal chimney beside them rising conspicuously to 163 feet; a wide range of workshops spread out; neat rows of dwellings for the workmen sprang up. The workshops included every department—smith, carpenter, joiner, and metalworker—as almost every detail of the engines was executed on the spot. There was also a large turntable, 36 feet in diameter, made on what was then a new principle for turning an engine and tender.

The figures in the census returns for 1851 reflect the change, which had taken place. Inchicore South, in which was the railway works, had 96 houses with a population of 356.

The first railway was authorised for Ireland by an Act of 1831 and in 1834 the Dublin-Kingstown railway, six miles long, was opened for traffic. A Royal Commission on Irish Railways was appointed in 1836; it recommended the construction of a

few trunk lines but was not otherwise enthusiastic, as the Commission did not see a lucrative future for railways in Ireland. By 1845 only 70 miles of railway had been constructed—Dublin-Kingstown, Dublin-Drogheda, and a strip of Ulster railways. All three mentioned had different gauges, but as there was then no point of contact between them there was no inconvenience felt. The Gauge Act of 1846 fixed a standard Irish and English gauge. The Kingstown line was then changed at a cost of £38,000, to conform to the Irish standard width, 5ft. 3ins.

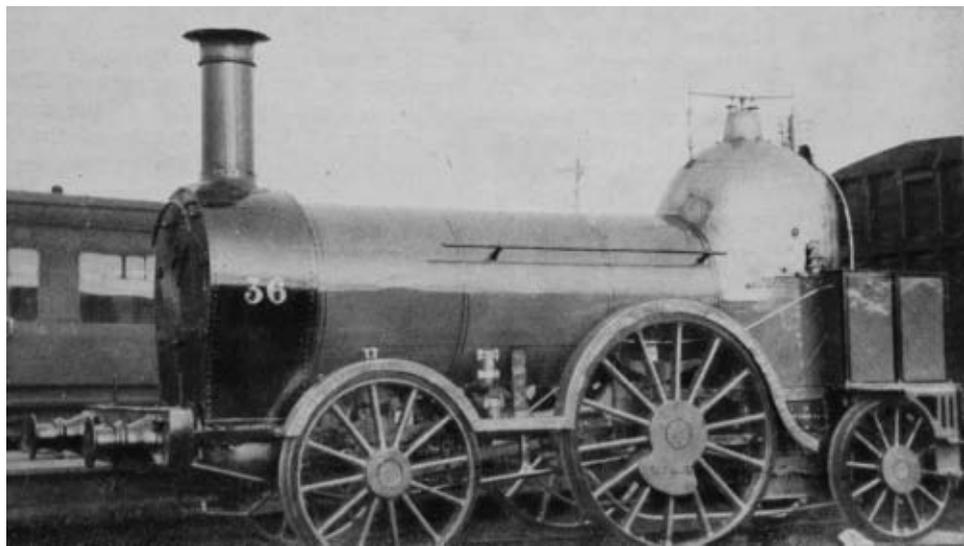
When famine and destitution spread through Ireland after 1847 a Labour Rate Act was passed and one million people were employed at a cost of £800,000 per month. Much of the money and labour was expended on futile and profitless tasks such as building piers in unfrequented harbours or building roads that led to purposeless places. At this juncture Lord George Bentinck thought it opportune to introduce a bill to advance £16,000,000, for the systematic extension of Irish railways. This bill was defeated but its introduction revived interest in the Irish railways; the Government eventually sanctioned expenditure on them and work in progress was speeded up and extended. By the end of 1850 there were 211 miles open for traffic.

### **SANCTON WOODS' JEWEL**

Meanwhile the first part of the mainline from Dublin to Monasterevan had been opened in July, 1846, with Kingsbridge as its city terminus. The site, between Steeven's Hospital and the Phoenix Iron Works, beside Papworth's George IV Bridge, was chosen to serve the cattle market, the hay, straw and corn markets, the vegetable and fruit markets, as well as to be near the quays to

### **LOCO No. 36**

Built by Bury, Curtis and Kennedy of Liverpool in 1848, Loco No. 36 (pictured herewith) was the type of engine employed by the G.S. and W. Railway one hundred years ago. Small in size and weight (23 tons) compared with more modern monsters, the old "36" was capable of pulling a full train at speeds up to 50 m.p.h. It is now an honoured museum piece.



facilitate the transfer of goods to and from ships.

The space covered by the Kingsbridge terminus exceeded that of any other in Great Britain at the time, the area under roof alone exceeding 2.5 acres. The roofing was supported on 72 cast iron columns and covered six lines of rails and four turntables each 22 feet in diameter. The platform was 612' x 18'. The terminus was designed by Sancton Wood. With its lovely granite frontage it is a jewel of its kind. Dalton in his "Memoir of the Great Southern Railway, 1846", commenting on the appearance of Kingsbridge at night wrote: "when 150 gas lamps illuminated those magnificent arcades the effect was magical." The trains on leaving Kingsbridge run over the "embouchure" of the Camac. To the left of the line near this point on rising ground overlooking the Liffey is the Royal Hospital, Kilmainham. Here Strongbow endowed the original house for the Templars. After the dissolution of the monasteries the Lord Deputy held his court there, and it was there he received the submission of Shane O'Neill, the Ulster Chief.

At the point where the railway passes under the roadway from Kilmainham to Islandbridge was situated St. John's Well. A pattern was held there every 24th June. To accommodate pilgrims and sightseers, tents and booths were erected giving the appearance of a fair. Because of its proximity to the city the pattern attracted the irreverent as well as the devout and a succession of drunken incidents caused the pattern to be discontinued by the ecclesiastical authorities. Some of the customs and observances lingered on, however, and down to 1835 there assembled in the fields a number of country carts fashioned into improvised booths and in the open, over turf and bramble fires, legs of mutton and pigs' feet were cooked for the pilgrims. Dalton describes one of the less edifying scenes thus "around the well collected the votaries with tumblers or horn goblets mixing whiskey with its saintly waters or sleeping off the effects of the irreverent mixture."

### **PROSLEYTISM RAMPANT**

While the population of St. James' parish had increased from 5,649 in 1814 to 16,963 in 1851, there had been no comparable growth in the provision of schools and churches for the Catholic population. This lack was gravely felt at a time when against Catholicism was combined militant Protestantism with its organised proselytism.

Of the mid-nineteenth century in Ireland it has been said that a clerical Napoleon was needed to organise and direct the people and to plan for the Church campaigns both defensive and progressive. In 1356, Cardinal Cullen issued a pastoral in which he listed institutions for proselytism—

The Irish Church Mission Society,  
Society for the Education of the Poor,  
Ragged Schools Society—

citing twenty-one such institutions in all.

The different societies may have held contradictory religious tenets but they were all united in a common hatred of Catholicism, which they attacked at its weakest points—the sick, the poor, the illiterate and especially the children. Where foundlings and destitute orphans were concerned the Attorney General had ruled that all children, the religion of whose parents was unknown, should be reared in the religion of the State. The Protestant Orphan Union interpreted this literally and included all children the religion of one of whose parents had been Protestant. Judgment in specific cases in the Law Courts was invariably given in favour of the non-Catholic litigant.

Conditions in the city in the eighteen-fifties were chaotic and, at times, areas of the city must have appeared not much different from a modern refugee camp. The poor crowded into the city driven there by famine and oppression. When a landlord cleared his estate the victims of the evictions usually went to the soup kitchens of the towns or cities, which were often proselytising units.

The rich and the wretched thronged the Georgian streets. The splendid houses of the Ascendancy were only a few yards distant from squalid slums swarming with ragged beggars. A wag of the period said that he never knew what the beggars of London did with their cast-off clothing until he saw the beggars of Dublin! The workhouses were full to the doors. A weekend report on the "state of the house" for the South Dublin Union reads—

Paupers in the house, 2,214. Admitted during week, 119. Born, 3. Died, 8. Outdoor relief, 288. Total relieved, 2,483.

Evidence sworn before a Poor Law Commission paints a grim picture of the inside of this institution. "Children are infected with the worst diseases and brought up in such a manner as to be unfit for any

situation in society. Corruption and profligacy have been prompted by the unrestrained mixture of degraded characters with the young and innocent. The ties of family are broken, ...religion and charity banished". The system appeared to be directed not only to the relief of poverty but to the destruction and the demoralisation of the poor.

If the Poor Law System operating in Ireland from 1840 onwards was degrading, the remains of the Penal Code were not only degrading but also harsh and brutalising. There were then neither First Offenders nor Probations Acts and savage sentences were inflicted for trivial crimes. Children of tender years were condemned to terms of punitive imprisonment. They were starved and whipped and driven to grinding labour. When their terms in prison had expired they were turned on to the streets again without guidance and often without hope of home or rehabilitation. The few industrial schools and reformatories of the time were generally too crowded to take them in.

### MISSIONARY TRADITION

Into this Dublin of social contrast and chaos the Oblate Fathers came in 1856. They brought with them a tradition of missionary work from the upheavals in France following 1796 and 1848—the “Year of the Revolution”, and the “Year of Revolutions”. They gave their first mission in the Augustinian Church, John’s Lane. *The Freeman’s Journal* of the 5th June, 1856, reported that at the closing of the mission when “the thronged congregation found that the good Missionary Fathers, Oblates of Mary Immaculate, were gone they filled “the church with reiterated prayers and tears,”

When engaged in giving the Mission the Oblate Fathers searched for a suitable locality for

a House of Retreat. They selected Inchicore for the first house of their Order in Ireland. It had a large population of the artisan class and the parish church in James’ Street was a long distance from them. In nearby Ballyfermot there was neither church nor school. The Census of 1851 shows this high rate of illiteracy:

Townland	Population	Over 5s who could not read/write
Upper Cross (rural)	1,303	130
Goldenbridge Town	1,167	231
Islandbridge Town	234	28
Kilmainham	489	74
Ballyfermot	340	53
St James’ (City portion)	12,442	2,050

Beginnings were of necessity humble and austere. The first community of Oblates had neither money nor assets. The people of Inchicore and portions of the surrounding parishes who made the nucleus of the congregation welcomed the Oblates and responded generously to appeals for help. A temporary, wooden church to hold 700 was erected in a matter of days. A stable beside the farmhouse where the fathers lived was converted into the first schoolroom. Successive congregations have likewise continued to give money and labour. A splendid House of Retreat has long since replaced the farmhouse. The stable has given place to the granite-fronted two-storied Scoil Mhuire gan Smál. The most striking achievement of community and congregation is, perhaps, Ashlin’s church with its twin turrets reaching to a height of a hundred feet, flanked by Rosary Square and the Grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes. Thus Inchicore, once described as an obscure townland scarcely distinguishable by a human habitation has become a nourishing suburb of the City of Dublin and a place of devotion and pilgrimage to the Immaculate Conception.



# ST. MICHAEL'S

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The Parish of St. Michael at Inchicore was erected in 1933. Cut off from the ancient Parish of St. James, it had Father (later Canon) James Doyle for its first Parish Priest. The present P.P. is V. Rev. Fr. Thomas Meleady who came to St. Michael's from another severed portion of St. James' Parish, viz., Dolphin's Barn.

St. Michael's Church was originally the Garrison Church of Richmond Barracks, the predecessor of present-day Kehoe Square. One of the ring of British military installations round Dublin, Richmond Barracks dates back to the end of the Eighteenth Century. It had accommodation for about 1,700 troops. After the 1916 Rising, it was the scene of the Military Trial of the Leaders; from there, Pearse, Connolly and all the others were transferred to Kilmainham Jail prior to their execution in that building. Richmond Barracks was re-named Kehoe Square by Dublin Corporation after their coming into possession of the premises. It was named after Colonel Tom Kehoe, a Wicklow man, who was a member of the Dublin Brigade—one of Collins' men—and who was tragically killed by a mine at Ballyvourney, Co. Cork, in 1923.



Very Rev. Thomas Meleady, P.P.  
St. Michael's, Inchicore





## THE STORY OF ST. KEVIN'S SCHOOL

The Irish Reformatory Schools' Act received the royal assent on the 2nd August, 1858. For many years before the passing of this Act there was a recognised class of Juvenile convicts whose ages ranged from twelve to eighteen years.

Heretofore, these convicts, some 50% of them orphans, vagrants, homeless uncared for street urchins, when sentenced, were committed to criminal gaols. On the expiration of their sentences they were turned loose to roam the streets again. There were no Welfare Officers to help them into employment of any kind and the workhouse refused to take children direct from prison. It is feared that in many cases they fell back into evil ways and, growing up in vice, further swelled the criminal population.

In 1857, Parliament voted a grant of £10,000 for the erection of a juvenile convict prison on Lusk Common. This money was never expended. The passing of the Irish Reformatory Act and the establishment of the schools resulted in such a noticeable decrease in the number of juvenile convicts, that, in the opinion of the authorities, the erection of the prison was considered unnecessary.

St. Kevin's School for Catholic boys, Glencree, Co. Wicklow, was the first Reformatory School certified in Ireland and, when certified in April 1859, consisted of one of those small barracks or outposts built after 1798 to further the campaign against the Wicklow Insurgents. The Oblate Fathers although but three short years established in Inchicore were entrusted with the responsible and arduous task of

managing the school and directing the first really serious effort at Government level to regenerate the juvenile delinquent.

Being the only Roman Catholic male reformatory open before July, 1860, the numbers rapidly increased and extensions to the existing buildings were commenced in the autumn of 1859. Soon the place was able to accommodate 250 boys supervised by a staff of 22 under the management of Fr. Francis J. Lynch, O.M.I..

Dr. Raverty, medical attendant of the Institution pays the following tribute to Fr. Lynch and his staff for their devotion to duty during the epidemic of influenza in the exceptionally severe winter of 1861:

"The excellent hygienic arrangements, however, enforced with unremitting assiduity and intelligence by your highly efficient staff, have proved so effectual, that at present, of 253 juveniles, there are but three in the infirmary. This gratifying state of affairs I attribute solely to the regulations as to diet, hours of meals, studies, exercises etc, so eminently calculated to ensure a sanitary condition as to leave nothing 'to be desired.'"

The Revd. Manager's Report for the two years ending April 1st, 1861, contains ample details of the progress of the Institution from the date of its foundation in 1859, not only as regards the results attained in the management of the boys, but also in relation to the material development of the premises. The old Barracks contained the Infirmary, the rooms of the Manager and mem-

bers of the staff and the workshops of the cabinet-maker, tailor and shoemaker.

The important improvement of lighting the entire Institution with gas was successfully carried out and the inconvenience from deficient lighting in the long winter's evening was no longer felt. The ambitions of the indefatigable and enterprising Fr. Lynch were not yet fully realised. The Report goes on, "...It becomes a matter of urgent necessity to commence, without delay, the erection of suitable premises not only for the trades actually taught but for several others in which it is desired that the boys should be employed."

By 1862, the premises consisted of:

St. Kevin's Chapel	95 x 20
Schoolroom	105 x 19
Refectory	94 x 19
2 Dormitories	— — —
Bread store	12 x 12
Kitchen	21 x 19
Linen Room	60 x 19
Laundry	60 x 19

There was a farm of roughly 100 acres of land attached to the Reformatory, which was almost entirely unclaimed. The Fathers were sadly hampered in their efforts at reclamation by the fact that the boys under their care were city-bred and unaccustomed to, and unskilled in, farm work of any kind, and because there were no farm buildings save the stable, and no farmyard proper for carrying on the work of an agricultural colony. In spite of these obvious disadvantages, extensive and valuable improvements were made in a short time.

Lest it should be thought that we are over-estimating the value of the work done or seeing it through rose-tinted glasses let us examine it as it appeared to the calculating survey of the Inspector appointed by the City Council. Writing in 1862, he states in the Appendix to his report:

"Tailoring, shoemaking, carpentry, cabinet-making, turning, quarrying and gas-making form the occupation of the boys. The shoes and clothing of the staff and inmates are made entirely by the boys and their workmanship was most creditable. The carpentry, cabinet making and turning are much approved of by furniture dealers and friends of the Reformatory.

A considerable profit could be made by the sale of the furniture in Dublin, but the manager, Revd.

Fr. Francis J. Lynch, O.M.I., is unwilling to push a trade or open a depot lest he might be considered as interfering with the honest artisan."

The system of management was founded on that of Ruysselede and according to the Inspector's report the results were assuring and satisfactory. By careful classification, the most complete supervision was maintained, and individualization evident in every department.

The boys were taught reading, writing, ciphering and geography on what were then the newest and plainest methods. An excellent Fife and Drum Band had been organised and this so pleased the Inspector that he stated in his report: "I believe a large Reformatory possessing a band is much more easily managed and the boys kept in much better humour and spirits than in one, the manager of which is opposed to the introduction of music."

Fr. Lynch adopted with wonderful results the plan carried out at Mettray, that is, impressing on the boys that the connection between them and the Institution was never severed; that it was a home to which those who were well-conducted might return until a new source of livelihood could be obtained. These boys were very fortunate by comparison with those waifs who came out of criminal institutions without a haven of hope to return to or a friend to offer guidance. Indeed, the products of the Poor Law System were little better off.

The following extract from the *Freeman's Journal*, 4th May, 1860, referring to the South Dublin Union is a strong condemnation of the conditions prevailing in that Institution:

"The deficient classification of the inmates is more injurious to the young than to the old. But, pernicious as it is generally, it is more especially so in the case of young girls so that the designation, Poor House girl, obstructs the endeavours of that class to emerge into a life of honest industry. There is a lack of technical training, and absent also, is that high order of female supervision without which it is all but impossible to preserve the young from becoming demoralised. Of book-learning the children get enough but no means are afforded them of earning their bread by working at a trade or entering domestic service even at the lowest capacity."

It was when intervening on behalf of the female inmates of the South Dublin Union, in a dispute which they had with the authorities there that the Chaplain, Father Charles Fox, O.M.I., from



**Winter's white hand on the gardens at Glencree**

Inchicore, was requested to leave that institution. Father Fox must have been in St. Kevin's in the late 1860's for it said that it was he who baptised Oscar Wilde. It is well known that a Passionist Father gave Wilde the last sacraments at his deathbed in Paris. It is neither well known nor documented that Wilde was baptised by an Oblate Father in Glencree.

Lady Wilde—Speranza of "The Nation"—was in the habit of going to Bray or Glencree during the summer months. She spent some summers in the house of a farmer named Evans in Upper Glencree. She wished to attend Sunday Service, and the only Service available, and to which she went, was Mass at St. Kevin's Chapel. It is said that she asked Fr. Fox to baptise her two children. Fr. Fox demurred as the children were about 10 years of age and the consent of the other parent would be necessary. It was agreed to consult Sir William Wilde. Sir William is alleged to have said that if baptism would make the children more like their sainted mother that he would have no objection. Fr. Fox went subsequently to the American province and

there may well be a record in the United States among his papers.

St. Kevin's was considered the Reformatory for the City of Dublin and, as such, did much over the years to reduce juvenile crime and to break up bands of child criminals. The authorities in the City recognised its worth and gave it unstinted support.

The reformatory is now housed in Daingean, Co. Offaly. In 1940, the Oblates left Glencree. St. Kevin's has since been in turn empty and headquarters for Bord na Mona workers in the Glendhu, Featherbed, and Kippure mountains; in the years immediately after World War II it was a Red Cross rehabilitation centre for French, Austrian and German children.

Today beside the Military Road, and facing the mountain side is a statue of the Good Shepherd, a touching tribute to the work of the Oblate Fathers in Glencree. It bears the following inscription:

Tóigeadh an dealbh so an Tréadaidhe Maith i ndíl-chuimhne sagairt agus bráithre na n-Oblát a chaith a saoghal ar son maitheasa buachailli Scoil Caoimhin Naomhtha, 1859-1940.

# *Robert Francis Cooke*

## **O B L A T E   O F   M A R Y**

The official records, presumably, will tell you that Oblate history, as far as Inchicore is concerned, began in 1856. If you have a penchant for historical accuracy, you will be interested to know the precise date given is June 29th, when the first High Mass was celebrated in the newly-erected church of Mary Immaculate. Such are the bald facts of history, and you may rest content with them. Beginnings such as this, however, are never as transparent as they seem to be. A ship's life does not begin with its maiden voyage nor a bird's the first time its trembling wings feel the sustaining air. And if you have an eye for what is popularly called the "romance" of history, you will suspect a story behind the century-old Oblate foundation at Inchicore—a story rich in what the journalist calls "human interest". Your intuition has not led you astray. Oblate Inchicore has its story as well as its history, and the hero of the story is Robert Francis Cooke.

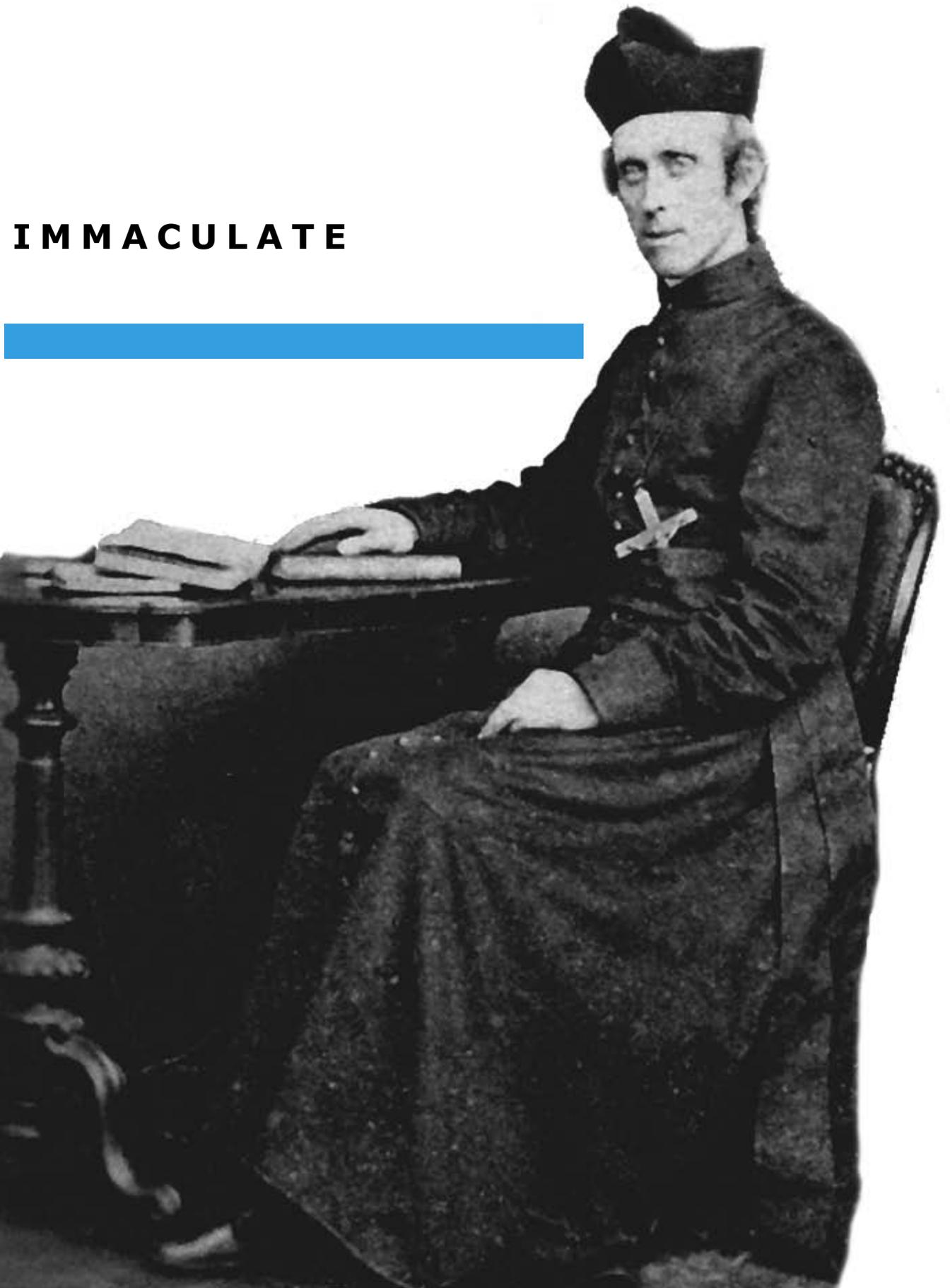
There is a heroine too, and, though she fades from the scene early on, the story would have been very different without her. In the last decade of the 18th century we first encounter her. She is the respected and distinguished lady of Kiltinan Castle in County Tipperary. Her husband is the prosperous landlord of the district and, like practically all the landed gentry in Ireland at the time, a Protestant. She is a Protestant, too, and the happy mother of two growing boys. When next we meet her, ten years later, she is an outcast and a runaway, poor and unknown, forced to scrape a living for herself and her two sons by teaching in the little town of Dungarvan, Co. Waterford. Forced, but not through any unkind cut of fate or reversal of fortune. In the intervening years her husband had

died and she had become a Catholic. Her two children also. If she had stayed on as mistress of Kiltinan, her boys would have been taken from her and reared as Protestant wards of the State, according to the Penal Code in force at the time. They would eventually have succeeded to her husband's property—but at what a cost! The valiant woman took the only course her conscience would allow her to take. Taking her sons and what few possessions she could carry, she fled from her home and people, choosing to live poor and a stranger rather than jeopardize the Faith of her little ones. Could she have looked into the future and seen the grandson God was to give her, the widow Cooke would have felt her sacrifices had been amply rewarded.

Robert Francis Cooke was only a youngster when his grandmother died—old enough, however, as he himself tells us, to appreciate the old lady's great worth and the debt he owed to her courageous loyalty. God had spared her long enough to leave the imprint of her staunch character and unswerving Catholic convictions upon the boy. He was destined to see her again in unforgettable circumstances, before many years had passed.

Robert was born in Dungarvan on 14th February, 1821, eight years before the passing of the Catholic Emancipation Act, in virtue of which beneficence Irishmen might dare once again to consider themselves as free citizens in their own country. Educational conditions for Catholics were far from ideal at the time, but young Robert Cooke profited so well by whatever facilities were available locally that his father, by then a fairly prosperous business-man in the town,

**IMMACULATE**



decided to send him on for University studies in Dublin. There for some time, he took his place among the students of Law and Medicine—a virtually unknown young man, swallowed up in the life of the busy metropolis. Dublin was heedless of him then, but one day it would feel the impact of his saintly personality. Little is known with certainty concerning this first sojourn in the city. It can scarcely have lasted long, at any rate, for he was still little over twenty years old when he returned to the south to take up a position as doctor's assistant in the town of Cashel.

He was there in Cashel, a young man feeling his way in the world and eager to succeed in the profession for which he seemed best equipped, when there occurred that extraordinary experience which was to change the whole trend of his life. A detailed description of the event is, unfortunately, not available, but the main facts are clear beyond dispute. His deceased grandmother, that saintly woman to whom, under God, Robert already owed his Faith, appeared to him one night to complete her God-given mission and show him where his true vocation lay. In later years, Father Cooke used tell what happened. "Leading me by the hand into an immense plain of dazzling brightness, my grandmother brought me to the foot of the throne of a great Lady clothed in blue and crowned with stars. Kneeling down, I felt the Lady's hand upon my head, and, as I received her blessing, a voice whispered to me that God willed me to enter the religious Society dedicated to the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin."

Robert Cooke's reaction to this extraordinary favour of heaven can more easily be imagined than described. The hour of grace had struck for him and all that was noble and of high purpose in that fine young character vibrated in response to the call. This was no "conversion" in the sense of a turning away from sin to follow the path of grace. It was surely, however, no less far-reaching in its effects. Thereafter, Robert Cooke was a new man, a man of God. Life took on a deeper, richer, significance for him. Thereafter, he was an Oblate of Mary at heart, even though some time was to elapse before he heard of the Oblate Congregation. But when he did, immediately, as he himself relates, he said to himself, "This is the Society to which I have been called; in the name of God I will be an Oblate of Mary Immaculate." One thing is beyond conjecture. On that privi-

leged night, his devotion to the Mother of God took on a new character that was to make it the most remarkable feature of a very remarkable career. She it was who directed his priestly labours. She it was who inspired him to undertake the seemingly impossible. She who taught him to hope on when everything seemed doomed to ruin. It was for Her sake he laboured on, when failing health cautioned him to rest. Only when the full story of Father Cooke has been written will it be possible to estimate the part played by the Blessed Virgin Immaculate in that marvellously generous and self-sacrificing life.

But let us return to our story. With heaven's secret message whispering in his heart, Robert Cooke left Dublin in the March of 1843 on the first stage of the great adventure of his life. Accompanied by two other young Irishmen, he was on his way to the Oblate Novitiate of Notre Dame de l'Osier in France. He was then just twenty-two years old. On June 14th of the following year, with a heart brimful of happiness and self-immolation, he pronounced the vows which made him an Oblate of Mary Immaculate. Shortly afterwards, he was sent to Marseilles to continue his studies and prepare for ordination. It was during his time there that he first met the Venerated Founder of the youthful Oblate Congregation, Monsignor Eugene de Mazenod. The impression made by that meeting was profound—and mutual. The holy Bishop, long accustomed to assess men at their proper worth, was heard to remark afterwards, "If young Cooke were a priest, I would have no hesitation in placing him at once at the head of a community." Such high regard from such a man is indeed a precious testimony to the spiritual maturity and integrity of the young student. That it was no mere empty compliment events were soon to prove, for before his priestly studies had run their full course, Brother Cooke was called to ordination. An urgent appeal for more priests had come to Bishop de Mazenod from his small handful of Oblate sons in England, who were finding it impossible to cope with the demands made upon them by the already extensive and ever-widening English Mission.

The zealous Founder, anxious to supplement them and looking about to see whom he might send, decided on Robert Cooke, the young man whom Providence had sent him from Ireland. Already the Founder had conferred upon him Tonsure, Minor Orders, Sub-diaconate and Diaconate; on June 26th

1846, barely three years after Robert's arrival at the Novitiate, Bishop de Mazenod perfected the work of spiritual paternity by raising him to the Sacred Priesthood.

It is tempting to pause here and try to conjure up the thoughts and feelings of the young man of twenty-five, as he set out for England on his first assignment as priest and Oblate of Mary Immaculate. His deep spirit of faith would no doubt have counteracted any feeling of diffidence he may have had in going as a missionary to the England that had so oppressed religion in his own land. He would have resolved to do his utmost to bring souls to Christ, but how could he have suspected that Oblate posterity was to link him forever with the heroic age of the Anglo-Irish Province! How could he have guessed that he was destined to be, in the words of an Oblate who had the privilege of knowing him in his declining days, "part and parcel of the whole history of the growth of the Oblate Congregation in these parts"—a gigantic figure of sanctity and zeal even in those days when, by God's Providence, such qualities were not rare! For thirty-six years he was to serve the Church of God as an Oblate Missionary. For a great part of that time he was to be the ambassador of Bishop de Mazenod for these countries, guiding the destinies of a youthful Province, founding, administrating, directing, preaching so successfully and with such distinction in almost all parts of England, Ireland and Scotland that his name was to become a synonym for "Oblates of Mary Immaculate" and the Congregation to become widely known as "Father Cooke's Order".

Such glory as this had little place in his thoughts at any time, least of all when, before setting sail for England, he knelt in humility at the feet of Notre Dame de la Garde in Marseilles and placed himself and all he hoped to accomplish in Her maternal hands.

It is not proposed, indeed it would be impossible in a short study such as this, to cover in any detail the activities of Father Cookc during the thirty-six years of his extraordinarily fruitful apostolate. At the same time, some account, however unsatisfactory, must be attempted if the reader is to form .an adequate picture of the man's greatness. This brief chronicle of his life will, moreover, serve as a useful background for the points to be developed further on.

In July, 1846, one brief month after his ordina-

tion, Father Cooke arrived at Grace Dieu, Leicestershire—a place forever associated in the minds of English Catholics with that other heroic priest, Fr. Luigi Gentili of the Institute of Charity. There, for the space of a year or so, Father Cooke was part of a small Oblate community engaged in missionary work over a large area of the surrounding townships. Characteristic of those days was the practice of open-air preaching, a system seldom followed anywhere today, but which, in the early years of the English Mission proved wonderfully successful. Churches were few and inadequate, if they existed at all. Where they did exist, they were very poorly attended, Catholics being pitifully few. The missionaries, therefore, went out into the highways and byways, in accordance with the divine injunction: "Compel them to come in." We are indebted to Father Cooke himself for the following interesting account of the regular procedure: "On the arrival of a Father in a village in which there was not, perhaps, a single Catholic, he commenced a course of visits from cottage to cottage, to announce the sermon he was to preach the same afternoon on the village green, and to invite the inmates to come to hear it. The general answer he received was, 'Thank you, Sir, we will come'. In the meantime, a small platform of some sort was erected on a convenient spot. As the hour of the sermon drew nigh, numbers of villagers might be seen approaching the place of rendezvous in a serious, thoughtful manner. In many instances, each bore a chair. ... When all who were expected had taken their places, the sermon began. The subject was always some great Christian Truth, such as salvation, conversion, the Passion of Jesus Christ—controversy was always avoided. At the close of the sermon expressions of satisfaction and goodwill fell from the lips of several in the crowd, accompanied by invitations to the Father to renew his visit at some early date. Many also on these occasions used to express their astonishment that such Scriptural doctrine could be preached by a Catholic priest, as they had always been led to believe that Catholic priests did not hold with Scriptural truths. This first glimpse of the beauty of Catholic teaching having dawned on their unsophisticated minds, a thirst for further knowledge was produced on the part of several among them, which caused them to pursue their search after truth until finally they entered the one Fold of the True Shepherd."

This was the type of work that appealed most to the apostolic heart of the young priest, but he was not destined to remain long at Grace Dieu. There were other fields of labour calling for his special brand of missionary zeal. In 1847, Fr. Perron, first Superior of the Oblate Mission in Yorkshire, died of fever. Appointed to succeed him, Father Cooke took up residence in Everingham, where he remained until 1851, reaping a stupendous harvest by his preaching both in Everingham itself and in the neighbouring town of Howden. In May of that year, he left to begin a new Mission station at Mount St. Mary's, Leeds. A providential meeting with a priest-convert had given him the opportunity for which he had long been praying—that of entry into one of the larger manufacturing cities of England, where a multitude of poor, neglected souls would provide him with work more suited to his calling as Oblate. There for six long and trying years, the divine seal of suffering was pressed firmly home on the valiant soul of Robert Cooke. With Leeds as base, the indefatigable missionary travelled over Yorkshire and Lancashire, preaching the word of God and reaping an amazing crop of conversions. Within a year, he had achieved another English foundation for the young Province—Sicklinghall, Leeds' second Oblate House.

In December 1852, with the help of kind benefactors, Father Cooke established the first Scottish foundation—Galashiels. It would appear from reliable sources that the Oblates were the first religious body to settle permanently in Scotland after the return of religious toleration.

From Scotland, at the urging of Bishop de Mazenod, Father Cooke turned his attention to Ireland as the land of promise for future vocations. That was in 1856. As yet, there were no Oblate Houses in Ireland nor had any missions been preached there by Fathers of the Congregation. After several dramatic interventions on the part of Divine Providence, the first Irish House was opened at Inchicore, Dublin—destined from the start to be the centre of radiation for fruitful missionary activity all over the country.

Father Cooke was, by this time, Provincial, having already held the post of Vice-Provincial since he was twenty-eight! Other Irish foundations followed on Inchicore in rapid succession: (Glencree Reformatory began its long and important career in 1859); Belmont House (now the House of Philosophy, though in its beginnings a Novitiate for

the Province) became Oblate property in 1863. Three more English houses were to be added before Father Cooke's first term of Office as Provincial came to an end. A foundation was made in Rock Ferry, Cheshire, in 1862. Three years later, the two very important London establishments of Kilburn and Tower Hill came into being, thanks to the tireless efforts of Father Cooke.

In 1867, Fr. Pinet was named Provincial, relieving Father Cooke of a heavy burden that, as Vice-Provincial and Provincial, he had gloriously shouldered for well-nigh twenty years. For six years thereafter, Father Cooke was stationed at Kilburn under the superiorship of Fr. Arnoux and, we are told, "adapted himself with wonderful success to a mode of life which to him was almost a novelty."

Following the General Chapter of the Oblate Congregation in 1873, Father Cooke found himself once more at the head of Anglo-Irish affairs. He set about the familiar task with all his old vigour renewed, "ever full of new plans for the Province, ready with directions to others, never neglecting the regular visitation of the various houses." This time, his period of office lasted only four years, after which he was appointed Superior of Tower Hill. Although he was by no means an old man as years go—he was only fifty-six at the conclusion of his second provincialship—his vitality was sapped. The incredible labours of that full life had taken their inevitable toll on a constitution that at no time could have been rated robust. Nevertheless, the holy Oblate relinquished none of the works to which he had devoted his life.

Considering the exacting nature of Father Cooke's position as father and guardian of a developing Province with all the problems such a task would involve in terms of foundations, finance and personnel, it might be imagined that little time would be left for preaching. It is, however, precisely as a preacher of missions par excellence that Father Cooke can justly lay claim to everlasting greatness.

All other activities were secondary as far as he was concerned. The appeal of the missionary apostolate knew no rival in the heart of this priest. He was, first and foremost, always and everywhere, the Oblate Missionary. Preaching was his first love, the chief food of his priestly life, even since his scholastic days at Marseilles, when he had begged leave to go and evangelise the English-speaking

railway workers in the neighbourhood. "For the full thirty-six years of his priestly career, he had", writes Father Dawson, his biographer, "no other life than that of an Oblate Missionary." Even in his declining years, when his body was sick and ailing, he still took part in several mammoth missions preached in Ireland. "Though his voice was no longer what it had been, his burning zeal and piety and charity were what they had never failed to be." He was, as is often said nowadays though never so truly, "a man with a mission", and his mission was to preach the Gospel of Christ in season and out of season, wherever it was the Divine Will that he should find himself. "He seemed ever to have before his mind the words 'vae mihi si non evangelizavero', interpreted as "woe to me, if my whole life is not a preaching of the truth of the Catholic Faith." Such is the weighty testimony of Fr. Arnoux who, as Father Cooke's Superior in Kilburn, had the opportunity of appreciating the mind of the holy priest and of gauging the spring of his tireless activity.

During the fifties and sixties of the last century, Father Cooke was beyond question the most distinguished missionary of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate in these countries. Despite the arduous responsibility of his position, there was never a period when he was not labouring in some part or other of England, Scotland or Ireland. The success which crowned his efforts can have been little short of phenomenal, when we consider the weak constitution of the man, the extremely fatiguing business which travel was in those days, and the wide variety of conditions in the different parishes where he preached. Father Cooke's enterprising and inspired zeal knew no bounds; his resilient adaptability was seemingly limitless.

During those two momentous decades, Father Cooke was at the peak of his powers as a preacher. As his capacity developed, there developed also an insatiable yearning to spend himself, ever more and more, in the work of his predilection. "He went on from Mission to Mission", writes Fr. Dawson, "growing in reputation and in power for good." So athirst was he for apostolic activity that personal discomfort or fatigue counted for nothing. No amount of preaching could exhaust or even mildly satisfy his zeal, nor could he be called to the Confessional too often or detained there too long.

While he was in England at this time, we are told "preaching twice on Sundays, instructing

converts, attending sick-calls and giving conferences were among the customary things that fell to his share; and it was usually the lion's share. He realised St. Paul's ideal of the perfect Christian and was 'ad omne opus bonum praeparatus'." So boundless was his energy while preaching a Mission in Jersey that, as Fr. Richard noted in his diary at the time, "the people thought he was more than human."

It was in Ireland that his preaching met with the most enthusiastic response. Ireland had then but recently emerged from her long night of religious persecution; the grim memory of Penal Times still haunted her older sons and daughters. The Faith, so long savagely suppressed, starved and ground under heel, was now jubilantly resurgent. Like a man released from a dark, dank and stifling dungeon, Catholic Ireland was stretching its emaciated limbs in the glorious warmth of a new sunlight, expanding its withered lungs to breathe in deep draughts of life-giving doctrine, so long denied it. This was a time of very special grace, a time of extraordinary receptivity and co-operation on the part of the faithful, a time of miraculous fecundity in the sphere of Mission-preaching. Father Cooke was not the man to miss such a God-given opportunity. He became, as Fr. Dawson tells us, "the ever-welcome messenger of God in communities and parishes throughout the length and breadth of Ireland."

Public Missions, whereby souls might be garnered in mighty sheaves—that was the work dearest to his heart, the work that gave him the greatest satisfaction. Yet he preached, just as devotedly, just as painstakingly, the quiet Annual Retreats for the Oblate Fathers and Brothers at Inchicore, and this for many years, even when the burdens of Provincial administration pressed most sorely upon him. For many years, too, he was the ordinary Lent and Advent preacher in the Carmelite Church, Clarendon Street, Dublin. As a spiritual director, his reputation was very high. Nuns eagerly sought him for their Annual Retreat. Fr. Dawson, writing in 1916, mentions the significant fact that "even still in many convents, they speak of his instructions and direction, and evince an eager interest in everything concerning the memory of one whom they regarded as a saint". Occasional sermons, collegiate retreats, lectures, and novenas — all were regular outlets for his consuming zeal. Over and over again came personal invitations from various dioceses in Ireland and England that he should

preach their pastoral or clergy retreats. That very distinguished friend and admirer of Father Cooke, Cardinal Manning, favoured him with such a request for the vast Archdiocese of Westminster.

What manner of preacher was this amazing Father Cooke? Fr. Arnoux, a lifelong friend and devoted confidant, is the source of many of the interesting and edifying details which have come down to us regarding the life of the great missionary. He has noted that, even as a student in France, Robert Cooke gave abundant promise of that gift of animated eloquence, which he afterwards brought to such a pitch of perfection and used, to such good purpose. He has noted, too, how tremendously impressed the young student was by the style of preaching employed by the holy Founder of the Oblates, Bishop de Mazenod. Such, young Cooke considered, should be that rhetoric of the heart — simple, luminous, manly — which would be sure to reach and move the hearts of the people. In view of Father Cooke's utter devotion to the venerable Bishop, his preaching inevitably took on all the characteristics he had found in the preaching of his model.

Bishop Jolivet, O.M.I., of Pietermaritzburg, writing an appreciation shortly after Father Cooke's death, has left some illuminating words on the subject of his preaching. "My first acquaintance with Father Cooke dates from 1849, when I was sent to Everingham. Father Cooke was then in his prime, a zealous missionary, an eloquent preacher and a devout religious. ...I was much impressed by Father Cooke's manner of preaching at that time. Although I had heard the best preachers of the day, although I had followed the conferences of Lacordaire at Notre Dame de Paris, I had no difficulty, even with my imperfect knowledge of English, in discerning in Father Cooke's sermons the true ring of Christian eloquence. He wrote his sermons carefully, but seldom followed in the delivery what he had written. ...In a sense, therefore, his sermons were never written, and if preached as written, they would probably have lost their most striking feature — the sudden burst of inspired eloquence."

Fr. Dawson, who, no doubt, often heard the great Father Cooke preaching, tells us that he had "a solemn voice which always riveted attention. Everything combined to make the effects of his Missions most wonderful and most consoling. The enthusiasm of his hearers bore a propor-

tion to the electrifying power of his preaching; and his enthusiastic zeal in turn was increased by the blessed results of which he was allowed to be the witness."

Perhaps the most precious tribute ever paid to the memory of Father Cooke the missionary is that contained in the sober words of the aged widow of Ambrose Phillipps de Lisle. Ambrose Phillipps, an intellectual, devout and wealthy convert to Catholicism, was the generous founder and patron of Grace Dieu, the scene of Father Cooke's first preaching in England. Previous to the arrival of the Oblates in the area, Grace Dieu had already attracted nationwide attention through its association with the heroic and saintly Rosminian, Father Gentili. It was he who had inaugurated the system of open-air preaching which was continued by his Oblate successors at Grace Dieu. Mrs. Ambrose Phillipps, sharing to the full her husband's magnificent efforts in the cause of England's conversion, had witnessed the growth of the mission-station at Grace Dieu and, in her capacity as wife of the renowned convert, had been privileged to know all the apostles "whom God had so generously directed to that once desolate corner of His Vineyard. In view of her privileged experiences, the tribute that Mrs. Phillipps paid to the memory of Father Cooke is the most significant. Writing in 1882, after the lapse of over thirty years, she showed how vividly she still remembered the Oblate who had begun his ministry at Grace Dieu. "There is a wish expressed", she wrote, "that a memorial should be erected to the memory of your saintly Father Cooke. I should be sorry not to contribute my mite to the memory of a man whom I have always venerated as a Saint. ...There are few things I have regretted more than his leaving this neighbourhood, where his memory is still venerated. ...It is about 34 years since he left ... there is no longer the quantity of conversions as in the days of Father Cooke. I have always looked upon him as a true apostle."

The quantity of the conversions, and, she might truly have added, the extraordinary nature of many of those conversions and of the other wonderful things connected with the holy Oblate's name. It is not possible to make a study, however superficial, of the great Father Cooke, without being deeply impressed by the element of the extraordinary, to use no stronger word, which constantly occurs in every record of his activities.

While guarding against undue credulity, one is struck by the very obvious truth that God, in His mysterious way, made exceptional use of this holy priest and missionary as an instrument of His power, mercy, justice and love. Indeed, the story of this giant of the Lord tempts one to compare him with the apostles of old. There is so much of the wonderful and the strange that it is difficult to realise that Father Cooke is of our times. One feels that he belongs to other times, other places than the prosaic “enlightened” world of the 19th Century, when the age of miracles seemed well and truly dead.

Yet, when it is remembered that Father Cooke laboured in the England of the “Second Spring” and in the Ireland of Catholic Emancipation—an Ireland lately emergent from the catacombs—it is not hard to accept the fact that God was indeed pleased to confirm the teaching of His faithful disciples by signs and wonders. It was, after all, a world of fresh and wonderful beginnings as far as Catholicity was concerned, and who will be surprised that the miracles of the first age of Christianity were repeated if only on a minor scale?

It is not to our present purpose to give a detailed account of the extraordinary happenings coupled with the name of Father Cooke. Remarkable interventions of Divine Providence in the priest’s own personal regard, marvellous predictions, and prophetic warnings uttered to sinners, cures, amazing conversions—such things were of common occurrence in the ministry of Father Cooke. He himself has many times borne witness to these divine favours, attributing them all to the tender love of the Immaculate for her Oblates and their cause. Recounting some of these signal graces, he concludes thus: “One never grows weary of speaking of the marvels of the divine Mercy. To recount them is to cause people to love the instrument that God uses in bestowing them. Here is what the Lord has designed to do through the zeal and devotion of the Oblates consecrated to His Mother!”

The following well-considered verdict on the question of Father Cooke’s extraordinary powers comes from the pen of Fr. Dawson who, as a contemporary was surely in a position to speak. “There was an atmosphere of the marvellous about the Reverend Father Cooke. Miracles were freely attributed to him. He was certainly the means of working many a miracle of grace on behalf of poor sinners—such was his fiery zeal,

such was his power to carry an audience captive by his truly apostolic preaching, and such and so great was his spirit of faith and prayer. Did he also work miraculous cures of the sick, and read the heart’s secrets, and foretell the future? It is not our place to decide. But we should think it very rash indeed to assert that all the popular stories which represent the holy missionary as a seer and a wonder-worker had no other foundation in the beginning than the vivid imagination of the devout and simple, joined with their reverence for Father Cooke’s priestly character and personal reputation.”

The reader who has followed us thus far must surely feel the time is ripe for an appreciation of the inner spirit of Father Cooke, a consideration of the hidden wells of holiness which produced the character we have been studying and from which emanated those manifold and wonderful activities which we have admired. The time is ripe, indeed, but no attempt is here being made to probe the interior life of Father Cooke. In view of the lack of material evidence on such a delicate matter, it would be an impertinence to attempt anything like an analysis of the spirituality of such an outstanding priest. For a properly balanced assessment of Father Cooke’s spiritual character we must wait until a competent and thoroughly informed biographer has taken the matter in hand and given it the careful study it deserves. Let us hope the advent of that biographer will not be too long delayed—the remorseless march of time is every day setting a greater chasm between our times and Father Cooke’s, and making the success of such an undertaking more problematic.

One thing it is safe to say: Such a biographer, in assessing Father Cooke’s spirituality, must necessarily insist on three qualities, besides the holy Oblate’s spirit of Faith and prayer. First, he will emphasise the absolute and unwavering fidelity of the saintly religious to the precepts and directions of the Oblate Rule. If ever an Oblate could claim exemption from observing the letter of his Rule in all its detail, that man, one would say, was Father Cooke. A study of his life will show that, on the contrary, he never deviated by as much as a hair’s breadth from its exact and loving fulfilment. This, as every religious must admit, called for nothing less than heroism. Secondly, the biographer will stress his marvellous austerity. In this connection,

the testimony of Brother Vernet, O.M.I., proves invaluable. He was a French Oblate who rendered exceptional service to the Anglo-Irish Province in its early days and lived for many years with Father Cooke. Writing later of Father Cooke's extraordinary power for good, he goes on to say: "The marvellous occurrences I relate will not cause so much surprise if I tell what manner of man Father Cooke was, in his private life, during the ten years that I had the blessing of having him for my Superior. During the first Lent that we spent together, not an ounce of meat was allowed to come into the house. In the second Lent the very same strict observance was followed. Father Cooke's only drink in those early days was water. Later on, the doctors ordered him to take beer or wine at dinner because of his weakness, which was so great that he was subject to fainting fits. ... This holy superior and missionary used to wear alternately a hair-shirt and a broad iron chain, which was studded with from 150 to 200 iron points. "We have need", he said to me, "of extraor-

dinary graces and blessings and these are not usually granted if penance be not joined to prayer."

We have left to the last what was surely the most important feature of all—the holy Oblate's filial love for Mary Immaculate. In the beginning, She had asked him to devote his life to Her service. He gave it to Her, "full measure, pressed down and flowing over". What more need be said?

Father Cooke was visiting the school of Tower Hill parish, active to the end, when the last and fatal illness took hold of his worn-out frame. That was on June 16th, 1882. A medical examination revealed an advanced stage of pulmonary congestion. Two days later, he died. On Wednesday, June 21st, after Solemn Requiem Mass and Office, presided over by Bishop Weathers and attended by a vast throng of clergy and people, Father Cooke's remains were consigned to earth in Saint Mary's Catholic Cemetery, Kensal Green, London, there to await, in the care of his beloved Mother, a glorious resurrection.

## **List of those who have entered the Oblate Congregation from the district of Inchicore**

*The date following each name indicates the year of entering the Congregation.*

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|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Bro. Paul Banim (1882).       | Fr. Colbert Byrne (1937).            |
| Bro. Hubert Flanagan (1887).  | Fr. Patrick Brennan (1938).          |
| Fr. Thomas Leahy (1890).      | Fr. Frank Forde (1941)               |
| Fr. Joseph Maher (1891).      | Fr. Dermot Tuohy (1942).             |
| Bro. Richard Donegan (1898).  | Fr. Patrick Guidon (1943).           |
| Bro. John Hennessy (1899).    | Fr. Michael Morrin (1943).           |
| Fr. William Soye (1900).      | Fr. Patrick McNamara (1944).         |
| Fr. William Doyle (1909).     | Fr. Thomas Shortall (1946).          |
| Fr. Farrell Bamin (1920).     | Fr. Ciaran Dillon (1947).            |
| Fr. Henry Ward (1927).        | Schol. Br. Christopher Dunne (1950). |
| Fr. Denis Bowes (1928).       | Schol. Bro. Pascal Dillon (1950).    |
| Fr. Michael Mulvany (1928).   | Schol. Bro. Paul Byrne (1951).       |
| Fr. John Ryan (1930).         | Schol. Bro. Vivion Daly (1952).      |
| Bro. James Duff (1931).       | Bro. Laurence Kearns (1953).         |
| Fr. Patrick O'Toole (1932).   | Schol. Bro. Thomas Giblin (1953).    |
| Fr. John Mulvany (1933).      | Novice Bro. Patrick Corbett (1955).  |
| Fr. Patrick Keane (1935).     | Novice Bro. Edward McMahon (1955).   |
| Fr. William Morrissey (1936). |                                      |

# Peregrinare *per* Oblatos

by Sean Archbald OMI

When Bishop de Mazenod, the Founder of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, wrote a charter for his spiritual family, of devotion to Mary, Mother of God, he had this to say: "Our members must ever foster in their own hearts and promote among the faithful, a tender devotion to this Heavenly Patroness and Mother." It was not enough for individual members of the Congregation to cherish the Mother of God in their own hearts and lives. They must do much more than that. They must preach Mary to the world; introduce Her into everyday life, into factories and families, into prayer time and playtime. Generations of Oblate Missionaries have laboured to fulfil the injunction of their venerated Founder. For themselves, they cherish Her as a mother; for others they speak from pulpit and platform of Her virtues and Her power. They guard Her shrines and sanctuaries in many lands, from Canada to Poland and from France to Mexico.

The association of the Oblate Fathers with the work of caring for Marian Shrines and promoting pilgrimages goes right back to the earliest days of the Congregation. Bishop de Mazenod himself never refused a foundation near a shrine of the Blessed Virgin, and always welcomed invitations made in the name of the Immaculate Virgin as signs of Providence. He sent his sons from district to district throughout France, to restore the chapels of their Mother and to place their works and their preaching under Her protection. In Marseilles, they restored the temple of and expanded devotion to Notre Dame de la Garde. Their first Juniorate was under the shadow of Our Lady of Light and the novices were trained under the patronage of Our Lady of the Willows. In addition to these first institutions in or near Marseilles and Aix (the cradles of

the Congregation), Bishop de Mazenod sent his envoys as far west (in France) as Our Lady of Talence and Our Lady of Arachon, north to Our Lady of Clery and east to Our Lady of Sion. A foundation much later than these was Our Lady of Pontmain—one that has become the most famous of all Oblate Marian guardianships in France.

Religious persecution tore away many jewels from this Marian crown, but in 1926, in a letter to the Oblates, Pius XI praised them for having begun to win them back again. Not only did they win back many of the old shrines and places of pilgrimage but they took over the care of additional ones like Benoitte-Vaux in the Meuse, Neuvizy in the Ardennes and Mons-en-Baroeul.

Oblate missionaries carried this Marian shrine tradition outside France to the ends of the earth. This was the tradition the founding Fathers brought with them to Ireland one hundred years ago. Their first permanent foundation at Inchicore, Dublin, was dedicated to the Immaculate Mother of God. They set about promoting devotion to Her in the tradition of the Congregation. Within the first year of their establishment at Inchicore (May, 1857), they organised the cult of May Processions in honour of Our Lady. In this they were one of the first, if not the first, to do so in Ireland.

After the announcement of the Episcopal Commission's findings regarding the Apparitions of Our Lady to St. Bernadette at Lourdes (1862), a tremendous impetus was given to devotion to the Mother of God all over the world. Pilgrimages began to make their way to the new shrine, as Our Lady Herself had demanded during the 14th Apparition. The first official diocesan pilgrimage arrived at the new Pyrenean shrine,

during 1864, from neighbouring Loubajoc. But it was the coming of the railway to Lourdes in 1867 that set off the flood tide of pilgrimages that has continued to grow ever since. Ireland did not take to the pilgrimage movement right away. In those days, Lourdes was a very far country indeed and it needed a considerable amount of courage to set out on such a long journey. Many individuals made the journey as a private act of devotion, but for the vast majority Lourdes was no nearer than the white blue-cinctured statue of the Mother of God that began to make its appearance in churches and chapels all over the country.

The year 1883 saw the celebration of the Silver Jubilee of the Apparitions of Lourdes and the appointment to the provincialship of the Oblate British Province, Father William M. J. Ring — a man gifted with an astounding gift for organization and administration. On assuming office, Fr. Ring set about promoting the Oblate tradition of public devotion to Our Lady and pilgrimage to Her shrines. He determined on organizing a full-scale pilgrimage from this province to Lourdes as a solemn public act of homage from British and Irish Catholics to the Mother of God. At first the undertaking seemed too great, too ambitious a project to succeed. But with characteristic energy and resource, Fr. Ring overcame all obstacles. He wrote to Cardinals, Archbishops and Bishops in Ireland and England and even in France for approval and blessing on the proposed pilgrimage.

From one and all he obtained gracious encouragement. Parallel with the pilgrimage organization, Fr. Ring had put Brother Malone, O.M.I., to work building a replica Grotto of Lourdes in the grounds at Inchicore. This was solemnly blessed and opened on May 1st with more than 6,000 people participating in the ceremony. According to newspaper reports of the occasion, the ceremony was quite a colourful affair with contingents from nearly all the confraternities and sodalities of the city taking part in the procession. Father Ring used the occasion to speak of the forthcoming pilgrimage to Lourdes and to explain his plans for enrolling associate members. Those enrolled as associates were to enjoy all the privileges of the pilgrimage if they undertook to recite certain prayers during the days of the actual pilgrimage. Pilgrimage associates are a normal adjunct of all pilgrimages today, but seventy years ago the idea was, if not revolutionary, at least novel. For this first pilgrimage to Lourdes from Britain and Ireland, Father Ring enrolled no less than the astounding total of 1,000,000 associates. As well, he initiated the idea of bringing “petitions” from those at home to the Shrine with the pilgrimage. One hundred thousand “petitions” went with the pilgrimage and rested on the altar of the Basilica at Lourdes during the offering of Holy Mass.

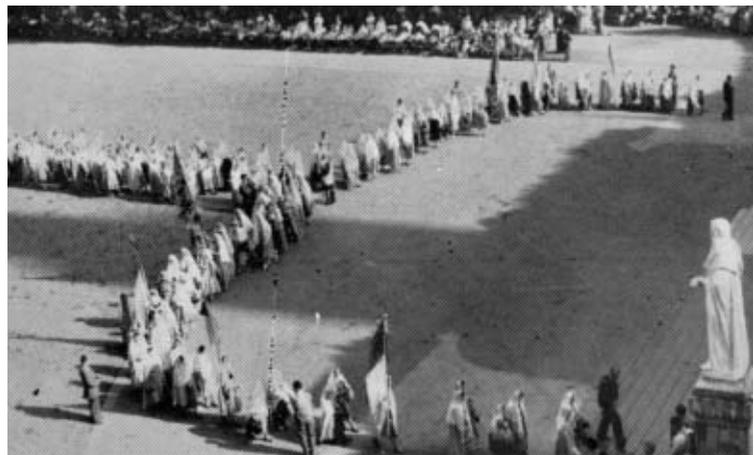
The pilgrimage had an excellent, press during the weeks immediately preceding departure, and public interest was focused on it from all over the country. The pilgrims,





**Top: A group of pilgrims pray before the Grotto at Lourde and (right) the scene before the Grotto when the invalids are placed there after the Baths in mid-morning or afternoon.**

**Right: Procession of the Blessed Sacrament—Children of Mary lead the way towards the steps of the Rosary Church.**



**Below: A typical group photograph of pilgrims at Lourdes. This one shows the members of the 1953 OMI Pilgrimage.**





**A Group of Invalids, together with Medical and nursing Staff, Brancardiers and Helpers on the 1953 O.M.I. Pilgrimage to Lourdes.**

300 of them, left Dublin towards the end of the month of May, crossed over to England where they were joined by an English contingent that included the Duke of Norfolk, Lord Denbigh and Lord Herries. Then on to France, through Paris where crowds of well-wishers cheered 'les Irlandais' as they entrained for Lourdes. The days in Lourdes — only three—were days full of prayer and ceremony. According to Father Ring, it was a triduum of supplication that was whole-heartedly entered into by the pilgrims who realized that they were ambassadors of their country's faith and behaved themselves as such. Comments at the time in Lourdes showed that 'les Irlandais' made no small impression by their earnest devotion and their orderly, disciplined carrying out of ceremonies. They were accorded their full complement of privileges at the Shrine by the ecclesiastical authorities, leading the Blessed Sacrament Procession in their turn and so on. Father Ring's organising genius was fully employed every minute of the stay and he made the pilgrimage machinery run very smoothly.

With this pilgrimage of 1883 the foundations of a tradition amongst the Oblate Fathers of the Irish

Province were well and truly laid. A pattern was set that has continued down to this day and has, in large measure, set the tempo of all other pilgrimages from Ireland. The 1883 pilgrimage set alight a spirit that has gone from strength to strength since that time. A second pilgrimage was organised three years later (1886) by Father Ring, and set out two hundred strong, whilst at home the almost unbelievable total of five million associates joined in prayer with the pilgrims. This pilgrimage had the extra feature of a visit to the Shrine of the Sacred Heart at Montmartre in Paris. Such an item may seem rather commonplace nowadays, but it must not be forgotten that seventy years ago travel amenities were far below the standards we are used to today. A pilgrimage was a major feat of organising and entailed no small amount of hard work.

The first pilgrimage to Rome was in 1393 on the occasion of the Episcopal Golden Jubilee of Pope Leo XIII, and was undertaken by Father Ring at the request of Cardinal Logue. Being the first national pilgrimage, its organisation was the source of much anxiety and the position of national Director was no sinecure. Dr. Logue, however, felt that in

Father Ring he had found the best man available and, in the event, his faith was fully justified. Three hundred and fifty pilgrims travelled to Rome, associates numbered 760,000, and no fewer than twenty bishops and seventeen hundred priests co-operated in the general organising activity.

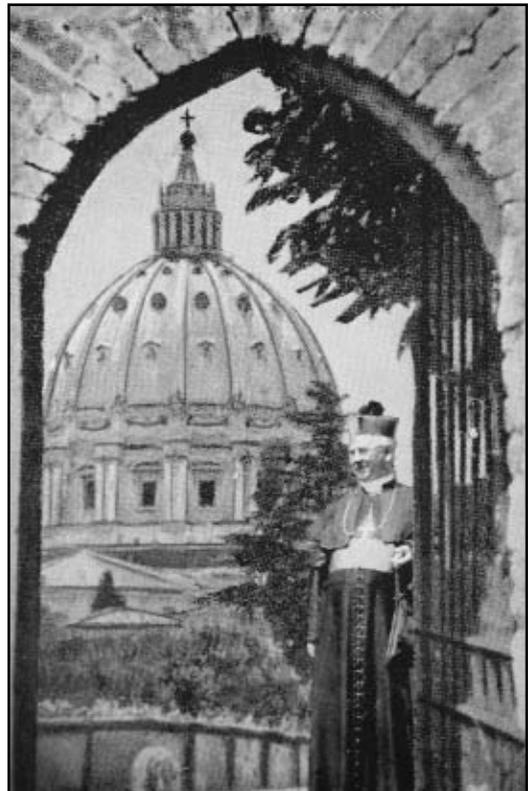
The Rome pilgrimage of 1900 was a spectacular affair. It had been organised at the request of the Irish Hierarchy to mark the Holy Year. Led by Father Ring, the pilgrims set off from Westland Row, serenaded by the Rathmines Boy's Brigade Band, on October 16th of that year. Cardinal Vaughan went out of his way to greet the pilgrims in London. "I bless with all my heart", he said, "the grand Irish Pilgrimage passing through London on its way to Rome." Five hundred strong, the pilgrims mustered in the Eternal City on October 23rd. Cardinal Logue presented the pilgrims to the Holy Father on the 27th and at the same time presented the names of the half-million associates contained in several richly bound albums. On their return to Dublin on November 9th, the pilgrims marched amid cheering crowds to Inchicore. At Kilmainham the horses were unhitched from the open carriage in which Father Ring was seated and the carriage drawn by the men the further mile to the Oblate Church. Here in the grounds, an enormous 'welcome home' bonfire blazed whilst a Te Deum was sung and a formal Address of Thanks was presented to Father Ring in recognition of his accomplishments.

Altogether Father Ring was responsible for the organisation and leadership of ten pilgrimages from Ireland. Seven of these were to Lourdes and three, at the instigation of the Irish Hierarchy, were to Rome. When he was quite an old man, Father Ring began the organising of a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. All plans were laid and details worked out, but the onset of the First World War in 1914 killed the project.

The departure of Father Ring for the United States to engage in preaching work, employment that extended eventually over almost ten years, the disruption caused by the 1914-18 War and the years immediately following it, these and other internal factors caused the suspension of Oblate Pilgrimage activity in the Irish Province for almost

twenty years. But the spirit and the flair had not died: it was merely dormant and waiting for a spark that would set it alight again. This spark was to come in the year 1924 when Father Michael Sweeney, O.M.I., was appointed official Preacher to the 2nd Irish National Pilgrimage to Lourdes. He was the first to give out the Procession Invocations at the Shrine in the Gaelic tongue. As his magnificent voice reverberated over Rosary Square (there was no Public Address system in those days) there was listening a very good friend of Ireland, Bishop Amigo of Southwark. With a twinkle in his eye he came to Fr. Sweeney afterwards and asked him: "Father, could you tell me when did the Hungarian pilgrimage come in?"

This debut of Fr. Sweeney at Lourdes was the prologue of a new chapter in pilgrimage work from Inchicore. The next year a small pilgrimage was brought to Lourdes under the leadership of Fathers L. Foley, O.M.I., and Daly, O.M.I., but it was Father W. F. O'Connor, O.M.I., who fully revived the tradition in 1927. From that year until the outbreak of the Second World War, an Oblate Pilgrimage left for Lourdes every year with the



**Bishop Collier, leader of the Holy Year, 1950, Pilgrimage, enjoying the Roman sun.**

exception of the year of the National Pilgrimage in 1933. Father Sweeney took over the direction of the Pilgrimage work in 1931 and, with the help of Fr. M. Fitzsimons, O.M.I., (the present Provincial of the Anglo-Irish Oblate Province) and Fr. J. Phair, O.M.I., was responsible for a series of notable Pilgrimages through the next decade. He himself was created an Honorary Chaplain of the Grotto by Bishop Gerlier in 1932 in recognition of his outstanding services in promoting devotion to Our Lady of Lourdes. Two of the pilgrimages during these years, one 1,200 strong and the other 1,500 strong, went direct from Dublin to Le Verdun (Bordeaux) by sea aboard the "S.S. Athenia". Then came the War and the suspension of all pilgrimages. It was to be eleven years before another Oblate pilgrimage set out from Ireland, and then it was to Rome on the occasion of the Holy Year of 1950. In that memorable year, with Dr. Collier, Bishop of Ossory, as Spiritual Leader, 550 pilgrims retraced the steps of Fr. Ring and the first Irish pilgrimage fifty-seven years before. Fr. E. J. Doherty, O.M.I., had been appointed Director of Pilgrimages for this event, a position he holds up to the time of writing. The Holy Year pilgrimage was a new departure in pilgrimage work as it was the first time that air transport had been employed in this sphere under Oblate aegis. Seventy of the total 550 pilgrims made the journey to Rome that year in exactly five and one-half hours. It was a vast change from the leisurely days of fifty years before. The next year (1951) the Oblate Pilgrimage to Lourdes was resumed and each year since its banners have floated joyously in the sun-warmed breeze beside the Gave leading many thousands of pilgrims to the feet of the Virgin of Massabielle.

We should mention here another Pilgrimage road now trodden annually under Oblate auspices. Since 1951, each year in the month of June, hundreds of people make the Lough Derg Pilgrimage to St. Patrick's Purgatory with the Oblate Fathers. The same earnest atmosphere that has always characterised their pilgrimage efforts pervades this newest Oblate pilgrim path and gives promise of becoming a worthwhile tradition. At Lough Derg, pre-eminently, the emphasis is on prayer, penance and fasting—the kernel of all pilgrimage.

In this, their Centenary Year, the Oblate Fathers of the Anglo-Irish Province may be justly proud of their efforts in helping Catholic Ireland travel the way of the pilgrim. Since the first epoch-making pilgrimage of 1883, many feet have trodden the pilgrim way with them and returned richer and wiser and holier. Thus have they tried and continued to try to fulfil the mandate of their Venerated Founder, Bishop de Mazenod, and the invitation of the Mother of God—"I want people to come here in procession." As a man convalescing after a debilitating illness goes abroad seeking new health under sunny skies, so does a weakened faith seek and find new grace, new energy, a new spirit of living at the Shrine of Mary's Visitation. That many souls may find and keep such spiritual health is the *raison d'être* of all pilgrimage work.

We will go into His tabernacle, we will adore in the place where His feet stood—so King David wrote of his own city, Bethlehem, foreseeing through the Holy Ghost that it was one day to be the birthplace of Christ. We will go into Her tabernacle, we will adore in the place where Her feet stood; for Bethlehem and Lourdes, what are they but the two sides of one mystery, the twin pillars of the Incarnation.



# HOUSE of RETREAT 1856 - 1956

## PROVINCIALS

1856-1867	Fr. R. Cooke
1867-1873	Fr. J. Finet
1873-1876	Fr. R. Cooke
1876-1883	Fr. T. Gubbins
1883-1887	Fr. W. Ring
1887-1890	Fr. C. Tatin
1890-1896	Fr. M. Gaughren
1896-1898	Fr. W. Miller
1898-1900	Fr. C. Cox
1900-1904	Fr. D. McIntyre
1904-1910	Fr. J. McSherry
1910-1915	Fr. James O'Reilly
1915-1921	Fr. T. Leahy
1921-1930	Fr. J. Scannell
1930-1939	Fr. J. Danaher
1939-1945	Fr. M. O'Ryan
1945-1951	Fr. J. O'Shea
1951-	Fr. M. Fitzsimons

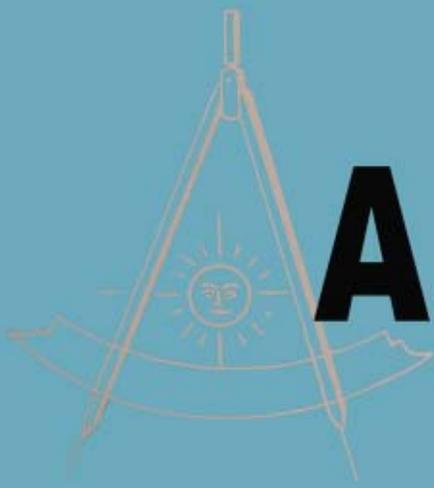
## SUPERIORS

1856-1857	Fr. G. Richard
1857-1858	Fr. R. Cooke
1858-1860	Fr. J. Arnoux
1860-1863	Fr. L. P. Fox
1863-1869	Fr. J. Gubbins
1869-1873	Fr. P. Kirby
1873-1875	Fr. N. Crane
1875-1877	Fr. T. Ryan
1877-1881	Fr. M. Shinnors
1881-1886	Fr. P. Brady
1886-1892	Fr. S. Nicoll
1892-1901	Fr. W. M. J. Ring
1901-1904	Fr. S. Nicoll
1904-1911	Fr. D. Wilkinson
1911-1919	Fr. J. McSherry
1919-1922	Fr. J. Wheeler
1922-1925	Fr. M. O'Reilly
1925-1934	Fr. M. Sweeney
1934-1940	Fr. D. Collier
1940-1946	Fr. M. Sweeney
1946-1952	Fr. M. Butler
1952-	Fr. J. Moran



Fr Michael Fitzsimons OMI, present Provincial of the Oblate Anglo-Irish Province. Appointed in June, 1951.

Fr James Moran OMI, present Superior of the House of Retreat, Inchicore. He was appointed in February, 1952.



# A reversal

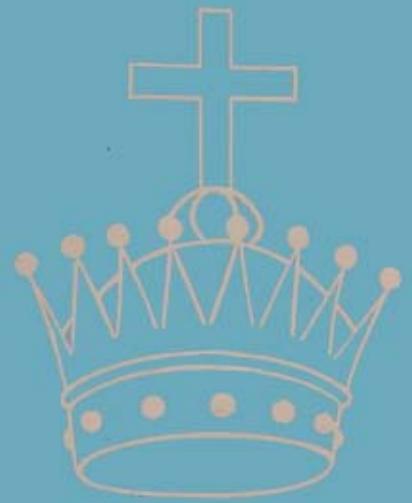
The coming of the persecuted Oblate Community from Autun (France) to Ireland in 1880 was a reversal of roles. Since its foundation by Jesus Christ, the Catholic Church has ever been the victim of persecution when evil men have assumed political power. France was but following in the footsteps of many predecessors when, three-quarters of a century ago, unscrupulous, Christ-hating men came to power in the political scene and set about ridding the land of all Religious Orders and Congregations that had been the glory of the Church for centuries.

The bitter anti-clerical current, rife for long in French life, made itself vocal through the famous slogan of Leon Gambetta pronounced at Romans in September, 1878: *Le clericalisme, c'est l'ennemi*. The poison had long been nurtured in the Masonic Lodges of the Grand Orient. Step by step its sponsors had nursed it along in public life. Election by election its advocates had won their way to the Senate and to the Chamber of Deputies, until Marshal McMahon, a devout and convinced Catholic, in January of 1879 found it impossible to carry on any longer as President of the Third Republic against an overtly hostile Legislature, and tendered his resignation. McMahon was succeeded by Jules Grevy as President and Gambetta took over as Premier in the Chamber of Deputies.

A bare six weeks after assuming power, the new Government introduced legislation in the Chamber unashamedly aimed at the



# of roles



destruction of Christianity throughout the nation. To justify itself, the Government spokesmen claimed that the sympathies of a great number of Catholics, including many of the clergy, were for the monarchical parties.

The new legislation aimed at removing all clerical influence and teaching from the primary schools right up to the universities. Cardinal Guibert, O.M.I., Archbishop of Paris, addressed a letter of protest to the Chamber on March 26th, 1879, but it was ignored. He then addressed himself to the members of the Senate in a famous appeal of July 25th and, as a result, the Senate opposed its veto to the Law. Bitterly incensed by this reversal before the Senate, the Government set itself to have revenge and in March of the next year enacted the famous "Law of March 29th" whereby all religious congregations were deprived of the legal right to existence within the State if not recognised by the State. Religious bodies were given a period of time within which to apply for recognition or suffer dissolution. In July, by Government decree, the Jesuits were expelled from France and their property seized. The other Orders and Congregations were at the same time given a limit of three months in which to petition for State recognition. This law affected no less than 8,000 men and 100,000 nuns. The Catholic reaction was immediate and vigorous; 2,000 lawyers gave a collective opinion that the decrees were illegal and 400 magistrates resigned rather than carry them out. All to no effect.



Our little story concerns the fate of one of the Oblate Communities in France and the effect on it of the pitiless secularisation of French life.

In 1862, the year following the death of Bishop de Mazenod, Founder of the Congregation, the Oblate authorities took over an abandoned Visitation Convent (founded by St. Jane Chantal) near the episcopal city of Autun in Burgundy. Here was established the senior house of Philosophy and Theology of the Congregation in France. In November of 1880, the community consisted of some 40 students (Scholastics), a number of Brothers and the Professorial staff. Thither, on the 4th November, amid all the noise and panoply of war (as it was subsequently described) came the police and a detachment of infantry to dislodge the members of the community.

For three days and three nights beforehand the Fathers and Brothers of the House had been continually on the alert for this coming of the agents of the "law." Willing sentinels from all parts of the town had posted themselves at vantage points around to watch the approach of the "enemy". Within the monastery along with the community, there was over a hundred men, with twenty priests and Msgr. Peraud, Bishop of Autun, a very good friend of Ireland. On their arrival the police and military advanced on the town as though engaged in a full-scale war. Citizens were strictly confined to their homes and forbidden the streets. At the entrance to the monastery, accompanied by the intimidating display of force, the officer-in-charge of the operation pounded upon the door and demanded admittance. A famous lawyer and friend of the community, Monsieur Changarnier, answered from within and protested in the name of the law at the outrage being attempted. Sappers went to work on the door and in a short time had demolished it and gained admittance. The officer-in-charge advanced within and there came face to face with Bishop Peraud, who solemnly excommunicated all concerned with the outrage. Then, Father Tatin, Superior of the House, advanced with M. Changarnier and with great dignity proceeded to speak a formal protest: "Before God, who sees us and will judge us, in the name of all who live in this House—both French and strangers, I, unworthy though I be, as Superior protest in the strongest possible manner against the sacrileges you are about to perpetrate. ..." Fr. Tatin went on to say that outrage was being committed against men

consecrated to God, against guests of France who were residing in the House, against the law of the land. When Fr. Tatin had ended, others in the company added their protests. All was in vain. The decrees must be executed. Every religious in the house was evicted from his cell and his property flung into the streets after him. The doors of the chapel were sealed and formal possession was assumed by the State. The grim work was all accomplished in about three hours.

The expelled community found themselves in the streets without a home or a shelter. There were many and obvious signs of sympathy from the people of the town who had gathered around in spite of official orders. Many women wept and the men expressed their feelings and their sympathy in open terms. There were hisses for Gambetta and Constans mingled with shouts of *Vivent les Oblats* and *Vivent les Peres*. Even members of the police who were forced to do the unwelcome work, were not ashamed to show their sympathy. The good bishop, Msgr. Peraud addressed the crowd to thank them for their manifestation against the rank injustices being perpetrated and, in a very moving scene, solemnly imparted his blessing to the kneeling populace. He then led the way to the Episcopal residence where he offered lodging to the 'homeless' ones for the time being. As the sad procession made its way from the scene of the crime, every officer of the regiment drawn up along the street, doffed his hat as each member of the community passed by.

Strangers in their own land, the expelled community set out for Ireland, where hospitality had been offered them in their distress. It was indeed a strange reversal of roles in the history of the two countries. For over two hundred years till then, it had been the other way about when France had gladly opened its doors to exiles from Ireland, who had been expelled from their own land because of their love for it and for the Church of God therein. At Paris, St. Omer and other centres, hospitality had been held out gladly and willingly to generations of Irishmen and women fleeing from unjust laws and persecution for their Faith. Now, in a little way, Ireland had the chance to repay the age-old debt.

The weary travellers from Autun arrived at the North Wall in Dublin on the evening of November 8th, 1880, and there were met by Fr. M. Shinnors, O.M.I., Superior at Inchicore, accompanied by Fr.

W. M. Ring, O.M.I., and a large gathering of men, who (as a report of the event noted) “loudly and repeatedly cheered the exiles and then knelt reverently to receive the good Fathers’ blessing.” A procession of more than twenty cars and carriages accompanied the Fathers and students through the city via the Quays and Kingsbridge. At Kingsbridge, a crowd estimated at not less than 4,000 people met the procession and the “exiles” were again cheered to the echo. It surely must have been heart-warming for the dispirited and tired travellers and a welcome change from the miseries that had been heaped upon them only a few days before. The procession and the crowd moved on to the Oblate Fathers’ House at Inchicore, where torches were lit and a Brass Band added some sound to the occasion. Long after the visitors had arrived at the House of Retreat, the crowd continued to mill about the grounds and on the highway. Calls for words from the superior of the exiles were heard and, eventually, Father Tatin appeared and in a short address expressed the feelings of himself and his confrères at the wonderful reception accorded them. They were tremendously moved by the obvious sincerity of Irish faith and Irish hospitality. The Superior of the House of Retreat, Fr. Shinnors translated Fr. Tatin’s words and added some remarks of his own and when he made reference to Gambetta and Constana, boos and hisses became the order of the day. Some began to introduce a little French into the proceedings. The efforts at pronouncing *Vivent les Peres* and *à bas Gambetta* were not exactly according to the rules of *l’Academie Francais*, but they were vehement and left no doubt as to where the sympathies of *Inchicorites* lay.

The new community within a community at Inchicore settled down to their old scholastic regime. They were housed on the top floor of the present House of Retreat and remained there for

more than four years until suitable alternative accommodation was secured at Belcamp Hall, Raheny, Co. Dublin. They settled down in Belcamp for a further four years of exile. In 1888, the Scholastic community left Ireland to return, not to France but to Bleyerheide in Holland for a further stage of wandering. The community eventually settled down at Liège in Belgium and remained there for many years. Today the central House of Studies for the French Oblate Provinces is situated in a magnificent establishment at Solignac in South-eastern France.

There are few if any now living in Inchicore who remember the events of November, 1880, when the hand of friendship and hospitality was generously extended to religious brethren of the Oblate Fathers. But the incident is not forgotten and will always be held in grateful memory by the Oblate Community. It is set down here in the hope that this may help to keep that memory alive. The standard of generosity and cooperation was on the same level as that which characterised the arrival of the Oblate Fathers in Inchicore a quarter of a century before, and that continues between the Oblates and the people of Inchicore today. *Floreat, crescat.*

As a postscript one could add that history seems to have a habit of repeating itself in this matter of religious persecution. Sixteen years ago, another Oblate Community was called upon to give hospitality to another group of their scholastic brethren fleeing from the menacing hand of persecution in Central Europe, when Polish, Dutch and Ceylonese Oblate students were given sanctuary at the Irish Scholasticate of the Congregation in Piltown, Co. Kilkenny. It was the same formula of hate and injustice, rearing its head under a military guise, as that which had forced a former generation of students to our shores sixty years before. The little tyrants who caused these miseries and upsets have had their little day. The Church of Christ goes on.

# MAN

## *of Courage*

By Paul M. Byrne, O.M.I.



Most of us never have to do battle with a situation where moral courage is strained to breaking point, where we weigh our principles against the 'bulk of actual things'. Father Lawrence Prideaux Fox, O.M.I., did so, not once but twice. He did so once when he weighed the force of Quaker tradition, family ties and worldly prospects against the Faith of the Catholic Church: he opted for the Church. The second battle was waged later in life and is the subject of this story.

Breakfast had just finished in the South Dublin Union on the morning of April 7th, 1860 as Father Fox finished a priestly visit to the sick wife of a doctor at the Institution. On his way out, he was just passing a window that overlooked the big dining hall when an uproar broke loose in the hall below him. He paused to look down for the cause of the upheaval—a simple action that was to cause his name to be paraded before all Ireland and his honour defended in the British House of Commons.

On that particular morning, the Matron of the Institution had ordered a search of all the women residents as they left their breakfast. Some clothes had been taken from the Stores and, in true poor-house tradition, suspicion fell immediately upon the poor. Matron decided that the clothes were being worn by the women. These, as they came to the door of the dining room, were stopped and searched or at least some of the leading ones were subjected to an indignity that left no doubt in the minds of the remaining majority. They were all to be searched in the presence of the male attendants. They would, quite rightly, have none of it. There was a rush for the doors and most of the women escaped into the courtyard outside. The attendants hastily closed the doors and made prisoner the remaining women within. Those on the outside began to throw stones at the windows and began a minor riot. Those unfortunates inside were forcibly held and searched by the attendants whilst the Master of the Workhouse looked on at the scene.

*Lawrence Charles Priedieux Fox was born in 1820 of an influential Quaker family in the county of Devon. A boyhood friend was Charles Dickens, a friendship that was continued when he went to London to take up dentistry. At 23 years of age, Lawrence Fox forfeited family esteem, friends and professional hopes when he became a Catholic. He was professed as an Oblate of Mary Immaculate in 1849 and ordained priest four years later. His first assignment was to Scotland, where he soon won acclaim as a preacher. In June of 1856, he became a founder member of the Oblates at Inchicore and in Ireland. In the next ten years he travelled the length and breadth of Ireland preaching Missions. Between times he found opportunity to begin the tradition of the famous Crib at Inchicore, to rule the Community there for three years (1860-1863) and to actively concern himself with the plans for the House of Retreat. From 1866 to 1872, Father Fox was Superior of the new Reformatory foundation at Glencree, Co. Wicklow. This was followed by a further spell of Mission work from Inchicore and Chaplain work at the Dublin Union. Subsequent labours were in England where he numbered amongst his friends such names as Newman and Manning and Frederick Faber. At an age when most think of retirement (67 years), Father Fox accepted an Obedience that sent him to Winnipeg, Canada, where he laboured in parochial work for over ten years. Here it was said of him that he was "an artist and a poet whose eloquent and scholarly sermons drew crowded congregations". His declining years were in the haven of a Novitiate House (at Tewksbury, Mass) where he was called to his reward on April 1st, 1905.*

The riot outside continued and eventually led to a number of the 'rioters' being arrested and slated to appear in Public Court for police prosecution.

Sheer chance had placed Father Fox in a position to see all that had happened and, at the same time, placed him in a dilemma. Gross injustice had been perpetrated before his eyes. He knew full well that right was on the side of the women involved, but in his heart he knew that the version that officialdom would render publicly would be a travesty of fact and would result in the accused women receiving

heavy jail sentences. He realized, too, that any intervention on his part would mean contradiction, bigotry, bitterness and loud-mouthed publicity. It was easy to foresee how the non-Catholic majority on the Board of Guardians—in an age and city of bitter denominational quarrels—would treat the Catholic Chaplain in their employ if he defended or raised his voice for the poor against the authority of the Board's officers. In defending a few of his beloved poor, he would be jeopardising all possible future good he could do for all the others. Would it not be better to depart quietly, still unseen and keep a closed mouth as to what he had witnessed.

To a man of Father Fox's fibre this last solution could not find favour. He sat down and wrote a detailed account of the scenes he had witnessed to a Mr. Plaice, one of the Catholic members of the Board of Guardians. He did not mince matters, and his letter straightaway sparked alight the indignation of officialdom. In a leading article on the subject at the time *The Freeman's Journal* remarked:

"The Commissioners had a pique against the Rev. Mr. Fox because he stated that the conduct of the searchers was 'scandalous, abominable and obscene' . . . he refused to withdraw the language he at first used. He adhered to the 'scandalous, obscene and abominable' character of the affair and therefore he was dismissed."

He was dismissed, but that was to be some time after the morning of April 7th. Meanwhile, Mr. Plaice received Father Fox's letter, which contained an offer to present his version of the story in Court if necessary. Need there was. Some days after the 7th of April the accused women were brought before the Magistrate of the Police Court. The evidence for the prosecution was given by the same attendants as were involved in the incident of the search. They lied artistically and, as was later said, "the Magistrate was about to inflict severe punishment, when the Rev. Mr. Fox, Catholic Chaplain, gave his version of what had occurred. The Magistrate had previously heard the depositions of the officers on oath, but such was the impression made on him by the statement of the Rev. Mr. Fox that it induced him to make a very material alteration in the sentence which he had intended to pass on the women."

Father Fox had done his duty and struck a blow for justice. But such an affront to "law and order and authority" could not go unheeded. Nor did it. On the 12th April the Master of the Workhouse reported the interference of Father Fox to the Board of

Guardians. In the heated meeting that followed, Mr. Plaice and the Catholic Guardians defended Father Fox against the bitterness of the Master. It was decided that the Poor Law Commissioners be asked to hold a sworn enquiry.

The enquiry was duly held and, as was subsequently stated in the House of Commons during the Debate on the affair, “the Master and Father Fox gave diametrically opposed evidence. Only one could be true, and yet, Father Fox gave evidence which corroborated that of several other persons whose veracity cannot be impeached.” The result of the Enquiry was a Sealed Order removing Father Fox from his post as Chaplain to the South Dublin Union.

Nothing daunted, Father Fox continued to attend the Union in an unofficial capacity hearing Confessions and ministering to the sick. He ignored the bitterness of the authorities who must have seen in his presence a reproach to themselves. The Master’s conscience was, evidently, much troubled for he began to take steps to prevent his even seeing Father Fox. He left orders with the gate porter that the Rev. Mr. Fox was on no account to be admitted to the institution. Mr. Plaice remonstrated that such a proceeding was beyond the law. Father Fox could not be prevented from visiting the Workhouse. He took the case to the Poor Law Commissioners. These latter had, of course, to stand over their dismissal order and accordingly sent a letter to the Board of Guardians:

Poor Law Commission Office,  
Dublin. 11-7-1860.

Sirs,

The Commissioners do not wish to re-open the circumstances under which the Rev. Mr. Fox placed himself in a position which forced the Commissioners to dismiss him ... if they permit daily and hourly intimate intercourse of the inmates with a clergyman who has brought a charge of the most shocking indecency against the Union officers, which he has totally failed to substantiate and which up to the present time he has omitted to withdraw or even qualify (sic), such a proceeding will be held to amount to an admission of the past of the Guardians that the charge is substantiated and hence render it difficult, if not impossible, for these officers to maintain due order and subordination in the House.

B. Banks, Chief Clerk.

When this piece of scurrility had been read at the meeting, a certain Mr. Bonsall proposed and had carried the resolution:

“That the recommendation of the Commissioners in the letter now read be adapted and that the clerk inform the Rev. Mr. Fox that he will not be permitted to discharge any duty in this Workhouse in defiance of lawful authority.” Without doubt some of the Board members were of the opinion that Father Fox was merely a henchman of their *bête noir*, Dr. Cullen, Archbishop of Dublin, who was supposed to be “attempting to uphold ecclesiastical authority in contempt of British Law.”

The personal insults, the ignoring of his testimony on oath, his unjust dismissal—all these were directed against Father Fox himself and were suffered in silence. But this last order, whereby his beloved poor were to lose his ministrations, was too much. Where before there had been a quiet, resigned man, there was now a dynamic figure wielding the influence he undoubtedly had in high circles.

And so, to Friday evening, August 3rd, 1860, in the House of Commons, The O’Donoghue catches the Speaker’s eye as he rises to his feet and the justification of Father Fox has begun. The O’Donoghue, in a brilliant speech, sifted the evidence and showed up the glaring contradictions in the testimony of the attendants of the South Dublin Union. Continuing he said:

“I wish to impress on the Hon. Members that the Rev. Mr. Fox has no wish to gloss over the part he has taken in the transactions which ultimately led to his dismissal. He believes that from beginning to end he has done neither more nor less than his duty and he cannot be persuaded that public opinion will refuse to sustain him. On his behalf, I am anxious to state the facts candidly and impartially. ... They did not venture to allege that Mr. Fox did more than his duty in generously coming forward to counteract the statements of men who, in order to excuse themselves, accused others. ... Mr. Fox was a most meritorious public officer held in high esteem by the inmates of the Workhouse. ... I sit down with the firm belief that the character, honour and honesty of the Rev. Mr. Fox, who did no more than his duty, if not safe in the hands of the Poor Law Commissioners, is at least safe in the hands of the House of Commons.”

The O'Donoghue was followed by Mr. Brady, who paid high tribute to the character of Father Fox and called upon the Government to do justice to "that much injured gentleman". The whole House applauded when Mr. James said that "the search was admitted by the Attorney General for Ireland to have been quite illegal, and yet a clergyman of Mr. Fox's high character was dismissed for merely protesting against it."

Seizing the opportunity of the evident good will in the House, Lord Fermoy put a motion:

"that this House is of the opinion that the conduct of the Irish Poor Law Commissioners, in relation to the dismissal of the Rev. Mr. Fox from his office as Chaplain to the South Dublin Union and occurrences which gave occasion for it were not calculated to promote confidence in the administration of the Poor Law or in the exercise of the powers of the Commission." Triumph was very near for Father Fox. The enemy dared not show open opposition. When Sir George Grey proposed 'further enquiry', they were reduced to using the last-ditch weapon of delay. The House would have none of it and voted against. To end the debate, no less a person than Isaac Butt rose to demand full and immediate justice for Father Fox from the Commissioners.

Public opinion in Ireland was much stirred by the affair. *The Freeman's Journal* devoted a leading article to a review of the case, which, in effect, was nothing less than a complete vindication for Father Fox. The article said:

"The Rev. Mr. Fox conducted himself, throughout the whole series of scenes, with a dignity worthy of his character. ...Mr. Cardwell tells us, with a naive simplicity, that the Commissioners cast no imputation on the Rev. Mr. Fox. Did they not? Why did they not believe one word he had sworn? They set aside his evidence as unworthy of belief. When dismissal under such circumstances follows, the consequence is obvious that the testimony of the Chaplain was of less value and less reliable than that of parties whose indecent conduct provoked the riot. The Rev. Mr. Fox was nobly vindicated. His conduct was approved without qualification or exception by every independent Member who had spoken. His version of the case, as described by his judicious advocate, was accepted as true, and the House of Commons, in the teeth of the Commissioners, declared that he was well justi-

fied in characterising the act of which he complained, and for which he suffered with dignity, as scandalous, obscene and abominable. How the Commissioners will bear this censure we know not, but we do know how 'the Rev. Mr. Fox will bear his triumph.'

Triumph was the operative word and it was found in the letter of the Commissioners to the Board of Guardians dated the 10th of August:

"The Commissioners have decided to reinstate Mr. Fox in the chaplaincy and they trust that the Guardians will co-operate with them in providing for the benefit of the R.C. inmates the services of a gentleman who has heretofore performed the official duties of the chaplaincy in a satisfactory manner."

(Signed) B. Banks. Chief Clerk."

Some of the Guardians found it very hard to eat the humble pie of the instructions of the Commissioners. One Member of the Board complained: "the plain result of this move will be to place beneath the foot of Dr. Cullen both the Law and the Government of this country." In reply to the suggestion that the return of Father Fox would create bitterness in the Union, the faithful Mr. Plaice said: "from what I know of the Rev. Mr. Fox, the Board may be assured that he will act in every respect as a Christian Minister and to the entire satisfaction of the Guardians." But Mr. Bonsall would not be placated. He proposed that: "the reinstatement of the Rev. Mr. Fox, notwithstanding conduct and very offensive letters to the Poor Law Commissioners, leads us to regard the Commissioners as having been coerced into their proceedings in this case by Her Majesty's Government and the Government as having been coerced by Dr. Cullen, and that we regard the result as stated in the letter of the Poor Law Commissioners to be calculated to bring the Law and its administration into contempt."

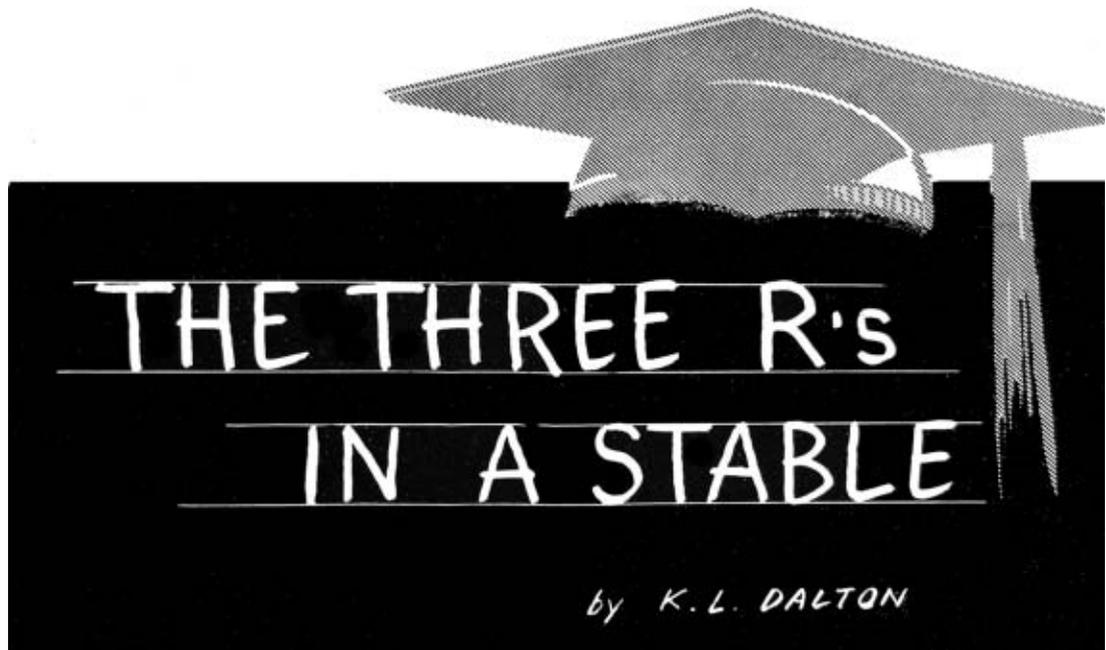
But Mr. Bonsall's attempt to take Father Fox's triumph away from him failed. His motion was lost by twelve votes to four.

Father Fox came back to his beloved poor and fulfilled the prophecy of his friend and champion, Mr. Plaice: "Father Fox will do as he has always done and will act like a gentleman and a Christian priest."



SOLITARY'S RETREAT

*The Beach Walk in the Grounds of the Fathers at Inchicore*



Every religious order has its own technique and methods of working. The Oblates as a missionary order are essentially pioneers. As such they remain just as long as they are needed, no more. In missionary countries they blaze the trail. They dig in and they build but they make provision for the self-sufficiency of the mission in the future. As they work they are helping the infant Church in that district to build up so that in time they can run their own affairs. This pioneering, however, has been seen at work nearer home than the mission countries. An example of the technique was the work of the Oblates in the schools from 1856 until now.

The 1850's saw Dublin immersed in a fight for denominational education. The city was a prey to proselytisers and these were doing most of their campaigning in the schools. The newly founded (1831) system of National Education insisted on mixed school classes. This in theory was to ensure that religion as taught in the National Schools was to favour neither Catholic nor Protestant, despite the fact that the overwhelming majority of the children attending the schools was Catholic. The net result of the theory was the teaching of a watered-down religion, which undermined both the faith and the morals of the children. But even this neutral religion was taught only in those schools where

there was mere theory as it were. In the most of the schools there was taught, unblushingly, the doctrine of the Church of England.

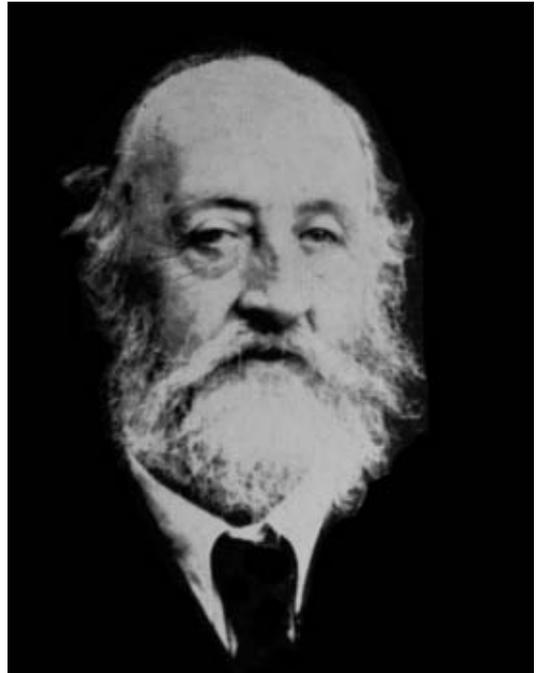
The then Archbishop of Dublin, the great Cardinal Paul Cullen, spent his whole life fighting the menace. He wrote pastoral after pastoral crying out against the methods of those responsible for the system of education. On the very day when the Wooden Church was being built in Inchicore (Friday, 27th June, 1856) the Hierarchy of Ireland issued a pastoral letter to the people. The whole tone of the letter pointed to Cardinal Cullen as the principal architect. From the letter we quote: "The schools held in connection with the National Board of Education have been to us a constant source of anxiety. We regret to perceive that attempts are made, and have been made, in Parliament to render them hostile to our religion, and to convert them into nurseries of proselytism. We regret also to learn, that, in many cases the use of the Sign of the Cross, a practice as ancient as Christianity, and the reciting of a simple prayer, have been interfered with. On this subject it shall be our business to consult on the proper steps to be taken and to seek for our purely Catholic population the advantages of education under purely Catholic principles, a right that has been conceded in other parts of the

Empire, and to which we are equally entitled. Yours it will be, dearly beloved, to withdraw your children from the places of education from which your Parish Priests deem it necessary to withhold their confidence and superintendence, and to contribute according to your means towards the support of those establishments and places of early training in knowledge and piety, which, we bless God, are springing up around us, under the care of the different bodies of Brothers and the consecrated inmates of the several communities of religious ladies which overspread the land.”

The Cardinal in giving Fr. Robert Cooke, O.M.I., permission to found a house at Inchicore a little earlier had asked him to try to set up a school for the Catholic children of the district, and this despite the fact that there was already an adequate school building in Inchicore, a “ Model School”. The Model Schools were anathema to the Irish Hierarchy. “One of the chief grounds of opposition to the Model Schools, as distinct from the ordinary National Schools, was, of course, the fact that from the special position held by the Model Schools in the educational system of the Board, not more than one of these schools could be established in any district so that if attended by the children of the district they should of necessity become places of mixed education. Another grievance is that the Board retains the management of these schools in its own hands and does not entrust it to a local manager”.

Cardinal Cullen watched the setting up of these Model Schools with anxiety and it is certain that he knew exactly the conditions prevailing in the districts where they were. In 1853, a Model School had been set up in Inchicore. No wonder then that he asked Fr. Cooke to try to set up a school which would offset the harm being caused by the newly-founded Model Schools.

But although Fr. Cooke wanted to set up a Catholic School it was going to be no easy matter. Settled in an old farmhouse, with scarcely enough room for themselves, they had to find place for two hundred school children. The schools for which the Bishops thanked God were being conducted by teaching orders. The Oblates were essentially a missionary order and Fr. Cooke and his fellow priests must have feared that in beginning to teach schools in Ireland they would, in time, drift away from the parent Congregation to form a splinter order. And then there was the problem of personnel for the school. They were a tiny community, in demand all over the country to give much-needed mis-



COUNT PLUNKETT

sions. They could have done with double their number to do all the work that was being asked of them and which, after all, they had come to Ireland to do and which was their forte.

But both Cardinal Cullen and Fr. Cooke were resolute men and they realised the great need for a school. One of Fr. Cooke’s problems was partly solved by Brother Lawrence Biggan, O.M.I. He had been a fully qualified teacher in Scotland and even as a layman had been secretary to Bishop Gillis of Edinburgh, where he came to know the Oblate Fathers at Galashiels. He resigned from his position to join the Oblates as a Brother, being too humble to study for the priesthood. For Fr. Cooke he must have seemed like the answer to a prayer. He and Brother Kearney were appointed to teach in the school-to-be. This was opened, like Christianity itself, in an old stable. Of the 200 Catholic children who had, up to then, been attending the Model School, no less than 140 appeared at the Brothers’ school when it opened on January 17th, 1857. The other 60 would have come too, but there was no room for them. This school is the ancestor of the fine building now over-looking Tyrconnell Road.

On July 24th, 1861, the Oblates, again at the request of Cardinal Cullen, opened a secondary school in Thomas Street, in the house now the



**"Well had the boding tremblers learned to trace  
The day's disasters in his morning face"**

Corporation Library. This was a great boon to the Catholics of the city for there were only three Catholic day schools (Secondary) in the city at the time. The next year (June 3rd, 1862), this school moved to a bigger house at 62 Upper Mount Street, Merrion Square.

The house at No. 62 had formerly been the town rendezvous for the members of the infamous Hell Fire Club. The College of Mary Immaculate (as it was known) did not suffer by the change of residence. Under the rectorship of Father Peter F. Kirwan-Nolan, O.M.I., a distinguished scholar and preacher, it acquired an enviable reputation for scholarship, and the commendations of Cardinal Cullen. By 1864 there were 150 pupils on roll, amongst them George (later Count) Plunkett, the famous author and journalist, Dr. E. J. Dillon, and two brothers Gaughren, Matthew and Anthony. Both brothers would become Oblates and Bishops in South Africa. Many Oblate vocations came from the College. In one year (1865) there were as many as five altogether.

These successes were achieved under difficulty. Due to the pitifully small resource of Oblate manpower in the first decade in Ireland, Fr. Nolan had to shoulder the work in Mount Street almost alone. His assistant teachers were two student Brothers who had to teach and try to complete their theological course at the same time. There were no Government grants in those days and finances troubled the College from the beginning. It was a financial crisis that led to the closing of the foundation in 1867 after six fruitful years.

But the good work was still continuing at Inchicore. The reports of the National Board of Education for 1857 record the failure of the Inchicore Model School. "It dragged out a kind of lingering existence until the first of June when it was closed by order of the Board." The report goes on to hint at the conduct of the Model School teachers being in some way responsible for its failure, but it is not inconceivable that the departure of the 150 children to the Brothers' School had quite a lot to do with putting an end to its "lingering existence."

For seven years the Brothers continued to teach school day by day (and at night, too, for adults) in the old converted stable.

In January 1861, the House of Retreat had been completed and within the next three years a large portion of the debt paid off. This allowed the Fathers a financial breathing space and a chance to turn their attention to the urgent need of providing the much-needed proper school building. In June of 1864 the first steps in that direction were taken by the calling of a Public Meeting for the purpose. Dr. Cullen, Archbishop of Dublin, subscribed £50 towards the school at this first meeting and thus paved the way for the erection of the tasteful building that was to be known as the "Chapel School" for the next 70 years.

Until October 1874, the Chapel School remained the property of the Oblates and was manned by Brothers Biggan, Kearney, Mahoney, Manelis and Malone more or less in this order of succession. As pressure of public opinion was brought to bear on the Government regarding the disabilities of Catholics in the matter of control and religious instruction in the National Schools began to have effect, the Oblates at Inchicore decided to bring their school under the aegis of the National School Board. It fell to Brother Manelis, as Manager, to manage the changeover.

In the correspondence regarding the proposed change there is evidence of quite a bit of friction with regard to the display in the School of Catholic symbols such as the Crucifix and statues. A compromise was reached by having the crucifix and statues enclosed in presses, which were opened only at times of prayer and Religious Instruction in the school.

It is of interest to note that this absurd system continued there up to 1926. In that year Fr. Michael Sweeney, Superior at Inchicore and Manager of the School, was preaching in the Pro-Cathedral before the Hierarchy and Members of the Government. During his sermon he pointed out the anomaly and declared it was time for the crucifix to come out of the catacombs in the schools. This he did the next day in the Oblate Schools. Within a week a visiting School Inspector noted the change and told the Manager that he would have to report it. Fr. Sweeney encouraged him to do so and to go to the President of the State himself. Not a word was ever heard afterwards and the Crucifix and Catholic emblems are on display ever since.

The first Principal Teacher to take over the School after the transfer in October 1874, was James Mullaly who remained in charge until 1878. Succeeding principal teachers have been:

John Nealen, 1878-1879.

Michael O'Connolly, 1879-1881.

John Morrin, 1881.

John Feeney, 1881-1883.

W. J. De Vere, 1883.

Timothy Kelly, 1883-1885.

Owen Boland, 1885-1898.

Timothy O'Brien, 1898-1928,

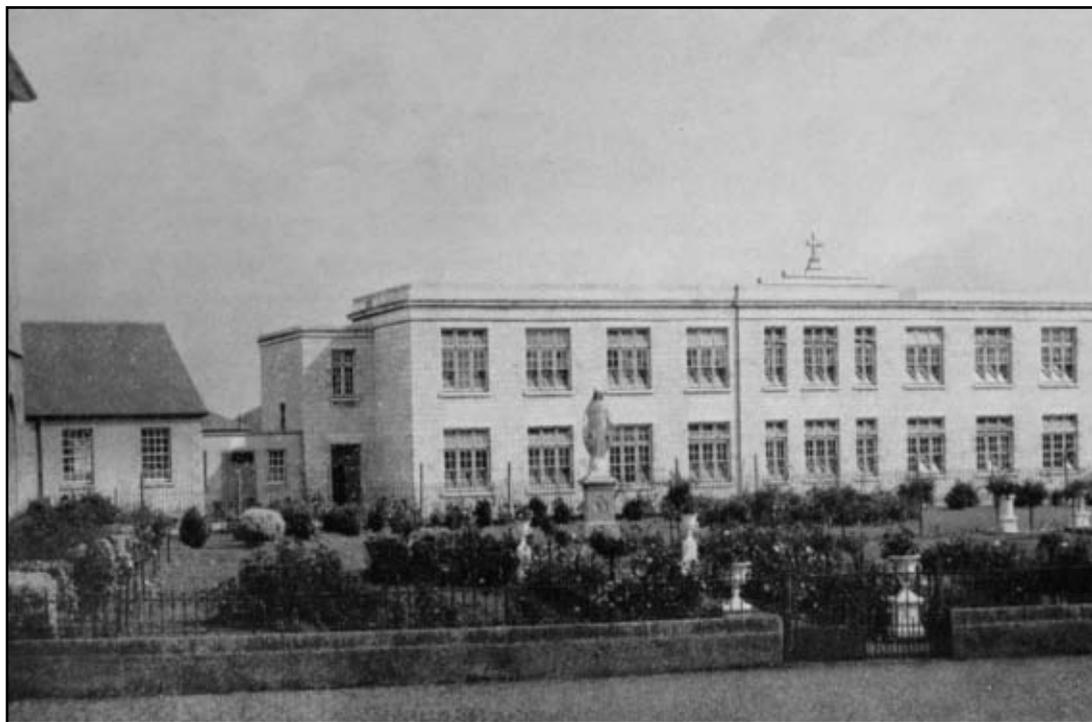
The present Principal is Mr. Edward Doyle, B.A.

With the building of Corporation houses in the present Ring Street area and other local housing developments, the School became too small, and in 1914 the Infant Class was transferred to St. Leo's Hall, an annexe to the House of Retreat.

Further classes had to be accommodated in the same building in 1928. The continued increase of school population in the district led, in 1935, to the decision by Father Daniel Collier, O.M.I., Superior,

to build a complete new School. Thus came into being the present fine granite building, which was opened in 1936 under the title of Scoil Mhuire gan Smál. The Right Rev. Monsignor Cronin, V.G., Parish priest of Rathgar and a former pupil of the "Chapel School", performed the opening ceremony of the new school on August 3rd. The following year the adjoining Assembly Hall, Árus Mhuire, was built and opened for the children and the people of the district.

Today's fine building is a far cry from the beginnings in a stable one hundred years ago. The century has brought many changes materially. The number of pupils has grown from 150 to more than 600; the staff has increased from two members to thirteen. The spirit of the institution remains the same—the spirit of application to work, to order and regularity. The fundamental virtues of piety and respect for lawful authority are encouraged, as is the spirit of co-operation between School and Church and State. The guiding objective has been and is to prepare worthy citizens for the State and the Kingdom of God. Floreat, crescent.



Scoil Mhuire Gan Smál, Inchicore



*"Bring flowers of the fairest, bring blossoms the rarest."*

**The May Processions in honour of Our Blessed Lady have been a feature of Inchicore religious life for one hundred years.**



## *Storming Heaven . . .*

by R. D. FARME

The March, 1941, issue of the Lourdes Messenger (the monthly magazine of the Oblate Fathers) published at Inchicore, Dublin), includes an article entitled "Storming Heaven," which runs: "Rarely, in a lifetime, does one have such a profound spiritual experience as that of the Uninterrupted Rosary Novena. In writing of it one is faced with the difficulty that it seems to elude one's pen. To deal with it properly one would need the gifts of a Chesterton. Apart from its effects on each one individually, it fills so enormous a canvas that one despairs of even delineating it with any degree of detail, and one feels helpless in trying to convey

an adequate idea of the intensive spirituality, the moving Faith, the record crowds, the unceasing prayer, all important factors in a unique experience that we saw before our eyes at Inchicore. Yet what we were witnesses to at the Grotto was only a pale reflection of what was going on all over the country, for never before in the Catholic history of our island, excepting the International Eucharistic Congress of 1932, was there such a wave of organized prayer. For nine days and nights in succession, the incense of the Rosary ascended over all Ireland before the throne of Mary, the Queen of Peace. It would be impossible to calculate the number of prayers offered, but we can readily claim that they may be reckoned in millions. ..."

The Uninterrupted Rosary Novena of February 2nd-11th, 1941, at the Grotto-Shrine of Our Lady of Lourdes at Inchicore was, probably,

the greatest single religious event in the 100-year history of the Oblate Fathers there. Primarily the idea of the Novena was based on the appeal for prayers for Peace by the Holy Father, Pope Pius XII, in those harrowing War days of 1940-1941. Fr. Michael Sweeney, O.M.I., Superior of the Oblate Community at Inchicore at the time, thinking how he could best give practical effect to the Holy Father's wishes conceived the idea of the Uninterrupted Rosary Novena from the remembrance of the Triduum of Uninterrupted Masses at Lourdes in 1935 when the same Holy Father—then Cardinal Pacelli—was Papal Legate to the celebrations. Not without some misgivings, for the project was daringly novel, the members of the Immaculate Conception Sodality (attached to the Oblate Church) were approached and asked to undertake the carrying out of the Day-and-Night Novena. They responded with the alacrity that has always characterised the people of Inchicore in their relations with the Oblate Fathers. From this spark the district was set aflame, then the city and eventually the fire spread round the country through the distribution of leaflets inviting all families to join in the Rosary in their homes during the nine days.

The Novena was begun at 6 a.m. on the morning of February 2nd with the intonation of the Veni Creator and the first Rosary. From that hour until 6 a.m. on the morning of February 11th, the hum of prayer did not cease. Day and night, wet and fine,

snow and sleet through all weather in the open air, the ceaseless throng of people made their way to the Shrine to join for a minute, an hour, a whole night in the canticle of supplication to the Queen of Peace. Estimated figures at the time asserted: Number of people who visited the Grotto, 120,000: Number cooperating from their homes, 300,000: Present at Torchlight Procession, 25,000: Holy Communions in the Church 14,000: Rosaries recited at Grotto, 2,000,000.

The "Storming of Heaven" at Inchicore during the nine days of uninterrupted prayer in the month of February 1941, had for a motive Peace for a world at total war and the protection of Ireland from the ravages of that war. Future historians will tell us how near Ireland was to being engulfed in the maelstrom during the very critical months of 1940/41. One fact is certain: the armada that had been poised for a debouch upon the West was turned Eastwards in the spring of 1941 and the threat of death and destruction and homelessness and famine was averted from Irish shores. Is it presumptuous to think that nine days and nights of unceasing unashamed calling upon the Queen of Peace could have gone without an answer? Or was it that world events subsequent to those days of prayer were but chance events on the stage of history? God knows the answer, but we know that God does listen to the petitions of His Mother.

## ***ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS...***

*Without the co-operation and willing help of a large number of people the present volume would never have been possible. To one and all I wish to proffer grateful thanks.*

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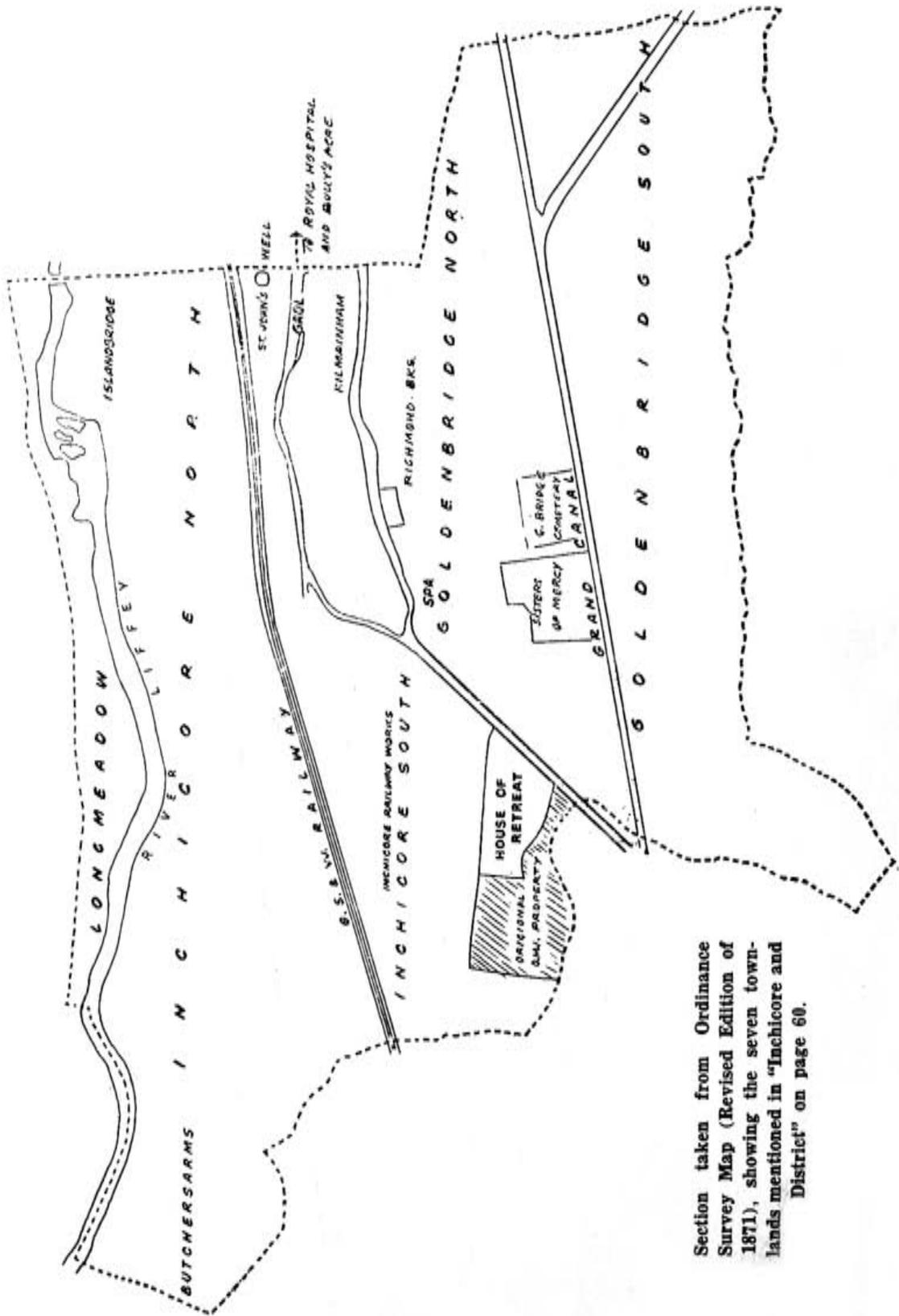
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MICHAEL F. BUCKLEY, O.M.I.

Editor

June, 1956



Section taken from Ordinance Survey Map (Revised Edition of 1871), showing the seven townlands mentioned in "Inchicore and District" on page 60.

