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MISSIONS IN IRELAND.

(From the Tablet.)

The writer of the little work, of which we give the title above, has written from a sentiment of the justice due to the Irish people. It is well known (for they are not people who put their lights under bushels) how loud are the Protestant "missioners" in their claims. If we listened to them we should believe that the Catholic faith was altogether on its last legs in Ireland. The Government only wishes, no doubt, that it could be of the same opinion. The book before us is a popular account of several missions undertaken by the Fathers of Charity, not only in country, but in town parishes, all over Ireland. The success attending these missions furnishes, of course, the real answer to any of the noisy announcements of the Exeter Hall declaimers, and we have but to give our readers a few extracts from many accounts, which, we will promise, shall be fair specimens of the whole, to convince them, if they are not quite well enough convinced already, of the true state of things. Thus:—

The reverend Dr. Gentili, writing to a friend in England concerning the issue of the first mission, preached at Saint Audeon's Church, expresses himself in the following terms:—

"I was kept up in the confessional a good part of the night, and so were others of the Clergy. If we had forty or fifty Priests, we should not gather all the fruit that might be gathered; and, therefore, you may see that a mission preached here (Ireland) bears double the fruit of those in England. Thousands upon thousands went to Holy Communion this morning at the different Masses. Two, and sometimes even four Priests, were engaged in giving Holy Communion to the Faithful, in order to dismiss the people, that others might take their place in the church; and the church, remember, accommodates thousands. You will be glad to hear how Almighty God has vouchsafed to bless our first mission in Ireland, by the conversion of fifty-five Protestants, and a Confirmation of 850, and more than 20,000 Communions. Hundreds and hundreds approached the Holy Sacraments for the first time in their life, or after many years' absence."—(Pp. 6, 7.)

The Father died at his post:— "The death of this zealous servant of God and holy Missionary was the close, or rather the crown, of the missions preached by the Fathers of Charity in Catholic Ireland during the year 1848. The announcement of his death was like a powerful electric shock, which pervaded every rank and class of Dublin society, but was felt perhaps most by the humbler classes of the inhabitants. It was then that it appeared how wonderful was the impression which his eloquence and sacred ministrations had made upon the whole population, as well as how great was the estimation in which he and his labors were held. No sooner was it reported that he was dead than such a crowd gathered round the Augustinian chapel-house that the thoroughfares became almost blocked up, and it became necessary to have a detachment of police at the chapel door to prevent accident. After the corpse had remained part of two days in the Augustinian house and chapel, to content the wishes of the people it was deemed proper to transfer it to St. Audeon's Church. This design was not effected without considerable difficulty, owing to the tremendous crowd that filled the thoroughfares in the neighborhood. About a dozen men uplifted the bier supporting the corpse, and with difficulty conveyed it over the heads of the multitude that was pressing around from the smaller church to the larger one.— There the body of the deceased Missionary, vested in Clerical robes and covered with flowers by the pious simplicity of the people, was visible, and left exposed to satisfy their anxious devotion. It was here that he preached his first Irish mission, and here he was now again still speaking, in death, more powerfully to the hearts of all than he could have done in life, and riveting and rendering indelible the impression produced by his former words and labors."—(Pp. 11, 12.)

Let us now go from Dublin to a more Protestant capital of one of the four provinces. The Rev. Fathers Rinolfi and Lockhart, of the Order of Charity, are the Missioners, and they are preaching in Belfast. We will here let the Protestant journal speak for us:—

"The ardent eloquence, by which the daily discourses of both the gentlemen are distinguished, is of a character so attractive that a great many, not Roman Catholics, attend in St. Malachy's Chapel, at the specified hours, for the purpose of hearing them. Each morning, after an early Mass, one of the preachers addresses the people, and, each evening, both gentlemen deliver discourses. These are directed with a view to the full inculcation of the broad principles of charity and moral rectitude; but as the special object of the mission is to give an opportunity to the Roman Catholics to perform one of the Sacraments of that Church—the Sacrament of Penance—the exhortations of the Clergy are directed in a special manner to an explanation of the conditions laid down by the Church as necessary for the proper realisation of the Sacrament. The mere matter of preaching is a very subordinate portion of the duties of the Missioners. It is in the confessionals their labors are onerous—indeed remarkably severe. From so early an hour as six in the morning till ten at night they are engaged in them, except a very brief portion allotted for meals, and the period occupied by the lectures. The mission here is to be continued till the 26th Nov., and so far from there being reason to anticipate any abatement of the excitement among the Roman Catholics which it has created, there is rather reason on the other side to conclude that it will increase an intensity till the close of the proceedings. Long before the chapel doors are opened each morning (six o'clock), they are besieged by large numbers, who, when they get the opportunity, rush to the most desirable places in the chapel, in order to obtain an early turn at a confessional."—(Pp. 43, 44.)

The writer afterwards adds that there were 10,000 Communions during the mission, and had there been Confessors enough, the number would have swelled to between 20 and 30,000. We must not make extracts which sound like repetitions, though in each case the local papers are quoted among other evidence, showing that a similar success attended the Missionary efforts in each place. Accounts, therefore, tally only in the great particular that the missions were alike successful in the various districts where they took effect. In Galway we hear something of the Exeter Hall gentlemen and their efforts. It is on this side of Ireland that the most energetic pecuniary efforts of that section of the Protestant Society of England have been made. These are the kind of results, as evidenced during a trial so crucial as the presence of a mission:—

"It must not, however, be supposed that those men would stand with folded arms during a season so fatal to their system as this was. From the opening of the mission many efforts were made to darken, if possible, the brilliancy of truth; challenges to the Missioners and Clergy, handbills and placards most insulting to Catholic feeling were circulated and posted all over the city, inviting the inhabitants to controversial lectures, in answer, it was said, to the sermons of the Fathers. But whilst Protestants, as we have already observed, flocked to hear the sermons of the missions, the wretched proselytising Parsons could scarcely ever muster an audience surpassing fifty persons, whether Protestants, or what they call converts; one night they had only thirty-nine, just enough to represent, as a local paper wittily observed, the poor thirty-nine articles of their creed. They have, indeed, established schools in the town, and succeeding in inducing a few starving parents to send their children to them, and have also picked up some few orphan children; but their number was found to be very small; and it could not be matter of surprise that in the midst of such squalid poverty, as a very large proportion of the population must endure, some should be found willing to pretend to adhere to the proposals made to them, rather than starve.— The Missioners found that the vast majority of the poorest people, rather than defile their souls with that sin of hypocrisy, were enduring every sort of hardship. In one part of the parish, as they were informed, every effort had been made by the proselytisers to establish a school—a house was prepared for the purpose, schoolmaster and schoolmistress sent, large promises of support held out (amongst other things, two cwt. of meal offered to the first child in the locality that should go to the school); and yet, all in vain; not one child was found willing to attend, not one parent willing to send one child to that school, though there were hundreds in that very locality well nigh starving. One of the Parish Priests, well acquainted with the wretched condition of the poor assured the Missioners that the very day on which he was speaking, there were, in one locality alone, hundreds of persons who had scarcely had any food through the day, and would have to lie on the cold floor of their miserable cabins, without food, that very night. And though the proselytisers were there offering them food, and covering, and fuel for fire, if they would but attend or send their children to the Bible schools and chapels, those good Catholics preferred rather to die than accept the bribe.— Truly, numbers of them have evinced, and daily evince, the same spirit which actuated the martyrs in their sufferings and privations."—(Pp. 73, 74.)

Stories like the following are one of the weapons of the "proselytising party." A certain Protestant journal asserted as follows:— "He informed his readers that Father Lockhart had publicly said, in the Catholic chapel, during the mission, that his father and mother were both damned, and in hell, because they had died Protestants, and that he was glad of their fate. It was, indeed, useless for Father Lockhart, when made acquainted with such foul calumny, to declare, as he did, even through the columns of the very paper in which the article had first appeared, that he had never, in the whole course of the mission, mentioned his father or mother; it was useless for him to say that even if he had been represented to have said, his father having died some years before, and, as he hoped, in invincible ignorance, and his mother not being yet dead at all, but being even herself a convert to the Catholic faith, and, moreover, a Nun in a convent at Greenwich."—(P. 90.)

On the other hand, we have a significant morceau in— "A Catholic of Clifden, being in conversation with a Protestant, who boasted of the many conversions from Popery effected by proselytisers in Ireland, stopped him at once by saying, 'Show me a man possessed of a cow, a pig, sheep, or horse, that has turned to your religion, and then I shall believe your pretended converts sincere.'"—(P. 91.)

In Lisburn, during a mission preached by Fathers Rinolfi and Vilas, the following incident (not a singular instance) takes place. We quote the present one for the great beauty and interest of the description:— "After the conclusion of the Forty Hours' devotion, and after the Irish sermon, Father Rinolfi ascended the altar and amidst breathless silence called aloud upon any or all of those present who had the misfortune, for any cause whatsoever, to have joined the ranks of proselytism, to come forward publicly to the foot of God's altar, and there beg pardon of the Almighty for the great scandal they had given, and seek reconciliation with the Church which they had so grievously disedified, saying that they would be received back with open arms. Upon this there was an indescribable commotion among the entire congregation, making way here and there through the chapel for the several persons who were anxious to avail themselves of his paternal invitation, and thirty-five of those, now we trust, happy people were in a short time seen ranged round the altar, to the universal consolation of the flock, who were offering prayers of thanksgiving to Heaven for the happy return of so many prodigal children. Father Rinolfi then, after their making a public profession of faith, absolved them from all censures incurred by their apostasy, received them back, and admitted them to partake of the consolations and Sacraments of their tender and loving mother, the Church. The sight of those poor creatures before him, who appeared now so humbled and broken-hearted for having, though only outwardly, apostatised from the faith of their fathers, called forth the most scathing denunciations of those unscrupulous, conscienceless, and unprincipled emissaries of hell, who make a merchandise of the souls of the poor, and who go about like 'ravening wolves in sheep's clothing,' and 'roaring lions seeking whom they may devour'—denunciations not easily, we hope, to be forgotten."—(Pp. 219, 220.)

We will conclude with the description of a pilgrimage to the colony of Bunleinch:— "A proselytising company having obtained a long lease of a large plot of land, built small cottages upon it and a little Protestant church, schools, and parsonage, and thither they bribe as many poor families as they can find willing to barter their immortal souls for a worldly consideration. Though some of these poor creatures had already been reclaimed, there were still a few families in that wretched den, who had not been allowed or had not dared yet to attend the mission. The Fathers were therefore determined to bring the words of salvation within the hearing even of those outcasts, and said to the people that they must all go, and they would preach in the colony itself to those that were kept slaves there, if necessary even through the keyholes.

"On Thursday, June 29th, the glorious Festival of SS. Peter and Paul—the day fixed for the campaign to the colony—a scene was witnessed in this part of the west such as never could be surpassed—we doubt if ever equalled—in its imposing grandeur and religious display. It was literally indescribable. "Early in the morning Masses were celebrated in the chapel at Louisburg, and it was announced that there would be no Mass there at twelve o'clock; but in the West Chapel, immediately after the nine o'clock Mass, the people—some on cars and carts, others on horseback, but the vast majority on foot—proceeded in batches of twenties and fifties towards the west, each batch as they had been directed, reciting aloud the Rosary of the Ever-Blessed Virgin Mary, as they moved orderly along. At about two miles west of Louisburg, from a height, there, when looking before and then behind, and seeing the

crowds in each direction as far as the eye could reach, eagerly pressing on their course, and reinforced as they went on by the inhabitants of the villages from every side for miles around, the most gratifying spectacle presented itself—a moving, living mass of fervent, pious, and devoted Catholics, with beads in their hands, and heads uncovered, and hearts raised on high to Heaven, imploring the King of Kings, through the intercession of the Glorious and Immaculate Mother of God—the destroyer of all heresies—to uproot every poisonous plant of heresy, sown in an evil hour, from this purely Catholic land, on which no Protestant foot was known to have trod before the last seven or eight years, and to banish from amongst them for ever all the baneful influences of this noxious weed.

"As the Missioners with other Clergymen, and a great body of people, were just starting on their journey, cars laden with police from Westport and Murrisk arrived, which created some sensation, and not a little astonishment, each one inquiring his neighbor what was the cause or meaning of all this; but in a short time those men were joined by some of the party stationed there, and put into marching order and having got the word of command, they wended their way to the Bunleinch camp, the supposed scene of action for the day.

"On passing through the colony the people conducted themselves in the most orderly manner; the only offence that could possibly be alleged at all against them was the pious fervor with which they prayed to Almighty God for the immediate conversion of the poor deluded people, who were there kept in bondage against their consciences by the Devil and his agents.

"On reaching the chapel, which is situate about two miles west of the colony, the congregation from north, east, west, and south was immense. After twelve o'clock Mass a temporary platform was erected in the open field, from which Father Rinolfi preached to the vast assemblage. After reading for them the portion of the Acts appointed for that great Festival of SS. Peter and Paul, he applied the persecutions of the infant Church in the person of St. Peter, and the chains in which he was bound, and the miraculous breaking of those chains and Peter's delivery from a prison obtained by the prayers of the Church, which were made to God without ceasing in his behalf, to the state of bondage in which those unhappy creatures were enchained in that prison of Satan, the Bunleinch colony, and to the chains, which kept them bound there; and observed that those chains, though not of iron, not so strong as the chains of Peter, were still not to be broken by the arm of flesh and blood, but only by the invisible and omnipotent arm of the Lord of Hosts. He, therefore, earnestly recommended all present to offer up their fervent and unceasing prayers to Him in whose hands are all the ends of the earth, that He would send His Angels from on high to break asunder the spiritual chain which bound those misguided poor creatures, and deliver them out of the hands of the Herods of our own time and from all the expectation of those modern Jews, who were only seeking the destruction of their immortal souls.

"Several horsemen, headed by Father Vilas on horseback, who with his beads raised aloft, announced the mysteries and the first part of each prayer, and was responded to by hundreds of voices in turn, proceeded in most regular order. Father Rinolfi and other Clergymen, together with several respectable inhabitants on cars, followed themselves preceded and followed by hundreds of footmen, and another body of horsemen closed the rear, all saying the Rosary, each group having its head to announce the prayers, and all the rest responding.

"It really was a most delightful, heavenly sight.— The road, without exaggeration, for at least one mile, was crowded with human beings as close as they could ride, drive, or walk, arranged as described above, and proceeding along slowly, observing the most perfect order and devotion. As they were going the mountain side, and descending to the low ground on which the colony is situate, they presented to the view of the people at the colony a most formidable and imposing sight of a powerful Christian army.

"At the close of his sermon, which was listened to by the overjoyed multitude with breathless silence, Father Rinolfi called upon the people to join him in saying aloud three 'Hail Marys' for the poor people in the colony who had turned their backs upon their God and their Church, though not their hearts, which call was most heartily responded to; and immediately the enthusiasm of the assembled multitude was excited to the highest pitch when one shouted here, another there—'Here is one.' 'Here is another who is coming back,' and in a few minutes, in the face of steward, Bible-readers, Parsons, and magistrates, ten of the so-called 'Jumpers' presented themselves at the platform, were received and

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