

ARCHBISHOP MACHALE'S CENTENARY.

Two weeks ago in Ireland and in many places out of Ireland where Irishmen have found homes, was celebrated in a spirit of deep pride in a great name and profound reverence for a great character, the centenary of the birth of one of the most illustrious prelates of the Irish race—John MacHale, Archbishop of Tuam, born March 6, 1791. We reprint from the *Irish World* the following extracts, many of which are from the pen of Rev. Dr. O'Reilly:

It is only ten years since John MacHale, Arch bishop of Tuam died: and yet he was a smart boy at school while George Washington was still president of the United States. To realize the full significance of this fact one would require to review the history of the two hemispheres for a century. Archbishop MacHale saw the establishment of the American Republic under its founder and first Chief Magistrate, he saw it develop into the greatest, freest, and most prosperous nation on earth; he saw it the asylum and home of millions of his own persecuted race; he saw and lived through the official term of every President of the United States from Washington to Garfield. He was a priest many years before the death of George III., whose "repeated injuries and usurpations" in America are recited and denounced to the nations of the earth in the Declaration of Independence, and while John Carroll, the first Catholic prelate of the United States, was still living. He saw the church of which he was so mighty a champion increase and prosper in the great Republic from one bishopric to upwards of fifty, an increase largely due to the faith and piety of the exiled children of his beloved land. In Europe Archbishop MacHale's life covered a series of events the most momentous, humanly speaking, that the world had previously witnessed. He saw the rise, was an observer of all the tremendous achievements, and saw the fall of the great Napoleon and of his dynasty. He was a bishop long before the world knew anything of railways, telegraphs, or gas lighting. In his own country he saw Ireland's Parliament sitting in College Green. He was a sharp pupil at the "hedge school" (for in those days there dared be none other in Ireland for Catholics) when Pitt and Castlereagh perpetrated the iniquitous Act of Union. He saw the horrors of '98, which those unscrupulous ministers employed to carry their purpose of destroying Ireland's nationality. When we say "he saw," we do not merely mean that those horrors were enacted in his time, and that he heard of them or read about them. Some of the most terrible of them happened at his father's door and presented to him his first lessons in the history of his country's wrongs. At the age of seven years John MacHale, the future Archbishop, used to serve Mass in the thatched mountain chapel of Laherdane, in Glen Nephin, which was the chapel attended by his parents and family and neighbours for miles around. The priest who said Mass in this chapel was Father Andrew Conroy. On the charge of having given countenance and encouragement to the French, who invaded Ireland in 1798 Father Conroy was tried by court martial and hanged on a tree at Castlebar, where his body was left suspended as a gratifying spectacle for the soldiery. The "crime" of Father Conroy was that he had been merely civil to some French officers who made a call at his house on their passage through the district. In noticing this sanguinary act of lawless tyranny, Rev. Dr. O'Reilly, in his recently published "Life of Archbishop MacHale," thus describes the impression produced on the young mind of the future prelate:—"The arrest of the venerable pastor had filled his parishioners with grief and consternation. In the MacHale household in particular, where Father Conroy was worshipped for his goodness, the lamentations were loud. Little John wept unceasingly and could not be consoled. No terror could prevent the people of Glen Nephin from crowding into Castlebar to testify in favour of their loved spiritual guide. But their testimony, even if admitted, would have been unavailing. And to their horror and despair the man of God was hung like a dog before their eyes. Never to be forgotten was the spectacle which the boy of seven beheld when the bereaved and sorrowing parishioners brought home for burial in his own chapel the corpse of this martyr. And so did John MacHale as he kissed the cold hand of his reverend friend and pastor, and looked upon the countenance distorted by the shameful death agony, learn to know the tyranny exercised throughout his country."

John MacHale was born at Tubbernavine, County Mayo, on Sunday, March 6, 1791, just one hundred years ago. Tubbernavine is a small village or hamlet on the eastern slope of Mount Nephin, the second in height of the mountains of Connaught. His father's house, which Dr. O'Reilly describes as "a large, warm, hospitable, joyous, and happy home," was on the post road between Sligo and Castlebar, within a few miles of the latter town. Dr. MacHale's father was Patrick MacHale, or, as he was generally known, Padrig Mor MacHale, a designation having reference to his great stature and strength. He was over six feet high, straight as an arrow until his old age, and he had the happiness of living to see his son Archbishop of Tuam.

Dr. MacHale's first education in Latin and Greek was at the school of Patrick Staunton, in Castlebar, "a remarkable man," as we are told, and "one of the survivors of the old, persecuted generation of Catholic instructors in the classics who had ventured to open a school for boys preparing for college." The "venture" or boldness of the act may be judged from the fact that the penal law which made it

felony for Irish Catholics to teach or to be taught was still in force. At sixteen years of age (1807, only four years after the execution of Emmet) young MacHale was sent to Maynooth College by Dr. Dominick Bellow, Bishop of Killala.

For seven years John MacHale was a student in Maynooth, and how he acquitted himself may be inferred from the fact that from the student's desk he was transferred directly to the chair of Professor of Theology in 1815, the year of his ordination and the twenty-fourth of his age.

As an example of Dr. MacHale's views, even in the early days of his career, on Ireland and Catholicity as related to each other, we give the following portion of an address to his students in Maynooth in 1822:

"The Irish mission has its difficulties, but it has its advantages, too. Ireland exhibits to her missionaries the monuments of their religion. Our people are Catholic, their habits are Catholic, nay, the Protestant churches in our cities as well as in the solitudes of our mountains still breathe the living spirit of the Catholic religion. Yes, gentleman, Ireland seems destined to be Catholic. The Catholic religion is inscribed upon the soil. It is intertwined with her society, it lives in the memory of the present, it loiters among the monuments of past times. The very language of Ireland's topography shall ever preserve the ancient piety of her people."

Doctor MacHale was made Coadjutor Bishop of his native diocese of Killala at the age of thirty four, while he was yet Professor at Maynooth College, in which he had spent eighteen years of his life as student and professor. In his new sphere Bishop MacHale found that besides his religious duties other and numerous cares were forced upon his attention. The Catholics of Ireland had not yet been emancipated, the mass of the people were in poverty, and then, even worse than now, periodical famine was the condition amongst a population with a system of landlordism unrestrained by any law to protect the rights of the toiling tenantry. Bishop MacHale was not idle nor silent in the face of the suffering or oppression he saw everywhere around him. In letters to the press and in letters addressed directly to the responsible Ministers of Government he impeached and denounced landlordism, and, later on, the whole system of British rule in Ireland.

In a letter to Earl Grey, then Prime Minister of England, Bishop MacHale went to the root of the matter as follows:

"While I am writing this letter, the town of Ballina, in which 801 families are crying out for food, is busy with the bustle of corn-traders and the public roads are crowded with conveyances bearing away their exports. It may then excite your wonder that the people should be starving while the markets are stocked with provisions. This is the very anomaly of which we complain. What avails it to the poor whose crops and cattle are seized, if potatoes are sold at three or four pence a stone where he cannot bring one article to market or find either work or wages to purchase them?"

Amongst the many British press charges against the Catholic clergy of Ireland were that "they were ignorant—they were hostile to the institutions of the country." Here is how Bishop MacHale, in a letter to a London paper, dealt with the accusations:—

"For a knowledge of their (the priests') duty, I solemnly pledge myself that I shall find twenty Catholic curates in Ireland, whose annual stipend exceeds not thirty pounds, who, in the judgment of any impartial jury, will display more classical information, more mathematical science, more extensive biblical knowledge, a more profound acquaintance with moral theology as well as the canons and history of the church than the whole bench of Protestant bishops of the country put together. . . . What are the institutions to which the Catholic clergy are hostile? Enormous taxes for erecting (Protestant) churches where there are no Protestants to attend them, tithes and vestry cesses and grand jury jobbing with the long train of local tyranny and paltry litigation by which these exactions are imposed. If these be called 'the institutions of the country' I hope the clergy of Ireland will always remain hostile to them."

Doctor MacHale was made Archbishop of Tuam in 1834. The English Government did all in its power to prevent the appointment, just as in our time like influence was put forth to prevent the appointment of the present illustrious prelate of Dublin. Lord Palmerston, who in 1834 was British Secretary for Foreign Affairs, wrote to his brother as follows:—"I am sending off a messenger suddenly to Florence and Rome to try and get the Pope not to appoint any agitating prelate Archbishop of Tuam."

Prime Minister Lord Melbourne was more urgent and to the point. He addressed a letter direct to the Pontiff, Pope Gregory XVI., asking that His Holiness "would not appoint MacHale to the vacant see—anybody but him." But the efforts of the British Government were in vain. Recognizing the conspicuous merit of Doctor MacHale and the universal sentiment of Catholic Ireland in his favour, Pope Gregory not only appointed the popular favourite but marked him with special honour.

Bishop MacHale was on a visit to his father when the intimation of his elevation to the see of Tuam was communicated to him. The news quickly spread far and wide and occasioned enthusiastic rejoicing all over Mayo and the West. As the time came for his