



DEVOTED TO TEMPERANCE, SCIENCE, EDUCATION, AND LITERATURE.

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FATHER MATHEW.

A hundred years ago, (on October 10th, 1790, in Thomastown), County Tipperary, was born Theobald Mathew, Ireland's second St. Patrick, the great Irish apostle of temperance. Theobald early earned the title of "the saint of the family" by his generous regard for his eight brothers and his sister and his devotion to his mother. His father, though poor, was a near relative of the Earl of Llandaff. Theobald's mother was very solicitous that at least one of her sons should become a priest, and on learning this Theobald immediately said, "I will be a priest." In accordance with this choice he was sent to Maynooth College in 1807, and narrowly escaped expulsion for attempting to give a feast in his room to his fellow theological students, almost every irregularity there entailing dismissal. Under this disgrace he withdrew from Maynooth, but, continuing his studies, joined the Franciscan Friars, and was consecrated a priest by the Archbishop of Dublin in 1814. The young friar's first sermon was delivered in the parish church at Kildfadé. His subject was the difficulty of a rich man gaining heaven. He showed that the misuse was alone culpable, not the mere possession of wealth. A wealthy but very stout member of the congregation thanked the young preacher for trying to squeeze him through the eye of the Gospel needle. The young preacher had a weak, shrill voice, but his earnestness more than overcame this, and he rapidly acquired renown as a powerful preacher.

Soon after his consecration he was stationed in Cork as assistant to an eminent priest named Father Donovan, and between them sprang up the strongest friendship. Father Mathew was an enthusiastic worker for the poor, and his ragged school soon had a roll of 500 children whom he taught at the "Little Friary." To perform his priestly functions and the self-imposed tasks he cheerfully rose not later than four o'clock in the morning. At that time total abstinence was generally regarded with disdain, and for a long time Father Mathew doubted the propriety of openly espousing so extreme a cause. His friend—for he was no bigot—honest John Martin—a Quaker, eventually persuaded him to espouse the movement, of which he immediately became the pre-eminent leader. Father Mathew's first temperance meeting was poorly attended. It was held in his parish school-room, and on the platform sat Friend Martin, who justly claimed in after years to be the grandfather of the movement. Father Mathew's address was very short, but eminently practical. He paid a tribute to "honest John Martin"

and taking pen in hand signed the temperance pledge, remarking, "here goes in the name of God." The news that Father Mathew had taken this step spread like wildfire and soon his open air temperance mass meetings in the Cork Horse Bazaar were thronged by 4,000 listeners at a time. His magnetism appeared to be, and was regarded by thousands, as miraculous, for no such scenes had ever been before witnessed. The crush to sign the pledge at the meeting, was overwhelming, and in three months 25,000 people had signed it and by the end of the year the number had rolled up to 156,000.

In December, 1839, Father Mathew visited Limerick, and the country for scores of miles around was deserted by the thousands who flocked in to see and hear the famous priest.

Maynooth College, in 1840, received the now illustrious friar as a conqueror, in striking contrast to the time when, under a school boy cloud, he left her walls. At this visit eight professors and two hundred and fifty students enrolled themselves under the temperance banner. In this year he paid a visit to the Protestant North and for a time Orange and Green blended and the Father spoke of the kind-

ness of those friends who displayed Orange flags in his honor, thus disarming the act if intended as an affront.

Father Mathew societies, with bands and banners, sprang up everywhere and were liberally supported by the founder, who gave every shilling that he had, including several legacies which fell to him, to the movement, leaving for himself only the barest necessities.

The "Liberator," O'Connell, was an eloquent disciple of Father Mathew, and walked in a temperance procession in Cork.

The "apostle's" fame spread to the United States and throughout Great Britain, and in August, 1842, he reversed the first St. Patrick's mission, by evangelizing Scotland to the extent of holding enormous meetings in the Glasgow cattle market, where he obtained 12,000 pledges. On his return a great demonstration in his honor was given in Dublin, the call for it being signed by two dukes, four barons, nineteen earls, ten viscounts, four bishops, forty baronets and scores of the clergy of all denominations.

In 1843 he visited England and was treated with marked consideration by many members of the nobility, but when in London the publicans of Bermondsey and Westminster incited mobs to assault him, and his platforms were attacked at those parts of London with great violence, but without harm to the devoted temperance leader. He was also slandered by liquor sellers, who spread the rumor that he was making money out of his medals, but as a matter of fact they were a serious loss to him as he gave away far more than he sold and his unselfishness was demonstrated by his being actually arrested for inability to pay a debt. When in England, Protestants, as a rule, were as enthusiastic admirers of Father Mathew's wonderful work as were his co-religionists, and he, in turn, was ever ready to co-operate without thought of differences of religion. One of his most eminent supporters in England was the Protestant Bishop of Norwich.

Father Mathew was unanimously nominated Bishop of Cork, in 1847, by the clergy of that diocese, but the Holy See decided otherwise. It was in this year that the British Government conferred upon him a pension of £300 pounds a year, and never was a pension more worthily bestowed or more honestly earned, for, as a result of the Father Mathew movement, trade made marvellous strides, while crime rapidly diminished. It was in 1847, that paralysis first afflicted the noble friar, and for a period he was laid aside from the work he so passionately loved. Partially recovering from the shock, however, he,



FATHER MATHEW,  
The Famous Irish Apostle of Temperance.

