

THE ABSTAINER.

ORGAN OF THE GRAND DIVISION OF THE
SONS OF TEMPERANCE OF NOVA SCOTIA.

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Essays, &c.

FATHER MATHEW.

The brief memoir now presented to our readers is chiefly compiled from materials furnished by the *Boston Pilot*. Should any additional particulars reach us, they will be inserted in our next number.

Rev. Theobald Mathew was descended from a very ancient Welsh family, whose pedigree is carried in the records of the principality to Gwaythoed, King of Cardigan, in direct descent from whom was Sir David Mathew, standard bearer to Edward IV., whose monument is to be seen in the cathedral of Llandaff. Edmund Mathew, his descendant in the sixth generation, High-Sheriff of Glamorgan, in 1592, had two sons, who went to Ireland in the reign of James the First. The elder son, George, married Lady Thurles, mother of "the great" Duke of Ormonde. From him was descended Francis Mathew, of Annfield, a gentleman of large estates, who was eventually raised to the peerage as Earl of Llandaff. Though at his death in 1806, his estates are said to have amounted to £10,000 a-year, they were greatly encumbered by his successor, on whose death in 1833, they devolved upon his only surviving sister, the late Elizabeth Mathew, who, at her death in 1812, bequeathed them to a French nobleman in no way related to her, the Viscount de Cabot, leaving her only near relative unprovided for, and singularly enough, appointing him executor to the very will by which she stripped her family of their ancestral property. Mr. Mathew very naturally declined to act, and the magnificent family estates of the House of Llandaff have passed into the hands of strangers.

Father Mathew was born at Thomastown near Cashel, in the county of Tipperary, on the 10th of October, 1790: and had thus completed his 66th year at the time of his death. He was the son of Mr. James Mathew, of Borris, near Thurles; and his mother was daughter of George White, Esq., of Cappawhite in the same county. Having lost his parents while yet a child, he was taken under the patronage of the above named Lady Elizabeth Mathew, Thomastown, and, at the age of thirteen, was placed for his education at the Catholic College, Kilkenny. Here he continued for seven years, and then passed to Maynooth, to pursue his theological studies.—He was ordained in Dublin on Easter-Sunday 1814, by the Late Most Rev. Dr. Murray, R. C. Archbishop of Dublin. He then joined the Capuchin order, in Kilkenny, and that city was the first theatre of his labors as a priest.

From Kilkenny he was transferred to the house of the same order in Cork, about the year 1820. The events which gave him a world-wide reputation were apparently rather accidental than of his own seeking. About the year 1830, some Protestant gentlemen of this city, chiefly Presbyterians and members of the Society of Friends, got up "Temperance Societies," with the design of drawing as many of the working classes as they could from habitual drunkenness to total abstinence from intoxicating drinks. They had suffered in their business and in their peace of mind from drunkenness in their laborers and servants, and they sought to apply a remedy to the evil in this manner. Other gentlemen lent their assistance on principle, as "social reformers." After labouring some years with varying success, they solicited and obtained the assistance of Rev. Theobald Mathew, to whom they addressed themselves as having more influence with the people than any other priest in Cork. This was the origin of "Father Mathew's" connexion with the "Temperance movement"—as it was called in the political dialect of the day.

On the 10th of April, 1835, he established "The Irish Temperance Society," composed of persons to whom he had administered the following pledge.—

"I PROMISE WITH THE DIVINE ASSISTANCE TO ABSTAIN FROM ALL INTOXICATING LIQUORS, AND TO PREVENT AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE, BY ADVICE AND EXAMPLE, INTemperance IN OTHERS."

With this pledge, he took the field, visiting the principal cities and towns in Ireland, and in the course of a few weeks administered it to about half a million of persons of both sexes. His progress from place to place was a triumphal march, and even many who were engaged in the manufacture or the sale of intoxicating liquors were carried away by the enthusiasm he evoked, took the pledge, and abandoned the trade. He also visited England and Scotland, and with equally great success, and in the course of eleven years his roll bore the names of more than five millions. In 1849, he came to the United States to look after the children of his own Israel, as he himself said on one occasion while here. He commenced his American Temperance mission on the Fourth of July, 1849, and remained in the country till 1851. Wherever he went, he was welcomed by public processions, headed by the civic functionaries, and in nearly all the American cities which he visited he was hospitably entertained by the friends of temperance, although his ways were not their ways of conducting the reformation so desirable in the estimation of all right minded men. He was a moral suasionist—not a denouncer.

No bitterness, no virulence, no vituperation ever fell from his lips whether he addressed very large multitudes, or single individuals, upon the evils of intemperance, or the advantage of total abstinence from the intoxicating cup. In all he said on the subject there was an earnest simplicity which was over to his standard thousands upon thousands, to the amazement of others who had been labouring for years without producing any effect upon the class which yielded so readily to Father Mathew's brief parental exhortations and admonitions. The secret lay in this: he understood those whom he addressed, and they understood him. He did not, in his character of a special philanthropist, forget that he was a Christian clergyman, and speak of intemperance as the only sin of the age, or one by the side of which all other sins sank into insignificance. He did not affect eloquence, nor seek to excite feeling by narrating startling incidents, but was measured in his language and guarded in the sentiments he expressed. Every word he uttered, therefore, told upon his hearers. He reached the religious element in their natures, and by that he led them along to the point of resolving to profit by his advice. He took it for granted, that they knew something about the evil as well as himself, and that they only needed to be reminded in a judicious manner of the natural consequences of continuing in the practice of it. We heard him deliver several addresses in this city and in other places in this State, and never heard from his lips a single harsh sentence, and it was the same with him in private. At all times and in all places, when the subject of the temperance reformation was under discussion, his mildness, unaffected benevolence and steady perseverance of purpose were displayed. The public honors lavished upon him did not for a moment move him from the level view of his mission, which he seems always to have taken. The clamor of applause which greeted him wherever he proceeded never elicited from him a remark or look of vain glory. The crowd might cheer, and the band strike up—"See, the conquering hero comes" (as was the case more than once)—he only looked round and saw in the multitude a host of beloved brethren, whose temporal and eternal happiness he was equally anxious to secure; and glad was he, when the set forms and popular demonstrations of a public reception were brought to a close, leaving him at liberty to proceed in his vocation.

His labors in America were considerably abridged through ill-health. In fact, he had not wholly recovered from a stroke of paralysis when he landed here. Nevertheless, he at once set out on his work, and probably added nearly a quarter of a million to the roll he