

idea of the important work achieved by these zealous and devoted men, and the difficulties they had to encounter, I shall say a few words on the state of bondage to which the Catholics of Great Britain and Ireland were reduced in the last century, at which time "they were actually considered monsters of iniquity, as being outside the pale of salvation, and their souls after death condemned to everlasting perdition." They were in consequence oppressed, persecuted, and despised, and shut out from every position of "honour, emolument or trust under the crown." In fact, so crushed and despised were the Catholics of the last century, that the saying passed into a proverb that "Catholics had no rights that Protestants were bound to respect." Such was their state during the whole of the terrible period when they lay prostrate under that "refinement of cruelty," the "Penal Code," of which the great Edmund Burke has said—"That the Penal Laws were an elaborate contrivance, as well fitted for the oppression of a people and the debasement in them of human nature itself as ever proceeded from the ingenuity of man." In connection with the early part of that gloomy period it must be borne in mind that a Catholic dare not write over his own name anything in defence of his religion or country, no matter how atrocious the calumny might be; any defence of Catholics by themselves in Ireland had to be anonymous, by stealth as it were; for although, thanks to the success of the American Revolution, and its influence on the policy of England towards the close of the last century, the penal laws were somewhat relaxed, still public opinion was so deeply prejudiced against Catholics, and people were so intolerant that few dared face the *indirect* persecution which was sure to follow, and liberal Protestants such as the immortal Grattan, Edmund Burke, John Philpot Curran, and other large-minded and enlightened men of the time, were almost the only defenders the Catholics had during much of that gloomy period of Ireland's history, and we cannot be too grateful to them for the courage with which they defended us in our hour of need, surrounded as they were by anti-Irish and anti-Catholic prejudices and influences, which at that epoch were of the most powerful kind. To dispel the false idea, so industriously and persistently promulgated against the Catholic religion, a number of Catholic clergymen (and even laymen) in the beginning of this century, entered the lists and engaged in religious controversies with some of the leading Protestant divines of the time. I shall only refer to a couple of names, Dr. Doyle, Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin, (the celebrated J. K. L.) and Father Thomas Maguire, as types of the class of confessors to whom this lecture refers. These devoted men were *real confessors* of the faith; speaking out boldly and fearlessly, they suffered greatly and risked much in defence of Ireland's faith.

On reading about these great men one is struck by the splendid genius of the illustrious Dr. Doyle, acknowledged to have been one of the most powerful and vigorous writers of his day. His profound knowledge of theology, his deep research and universal information, his great logical powers, philosophic mind and originality of thought, not only delighted his co-religionists, but even astonished the statesmen of the day. The impression he made by his powerful writings and statesmanlike views had much to do in assisting O'Connell in his great work of emancipating the Catholics. An eloquent writer has said of Dr. Doyle that he exhibited the learning, charity and toleration of Fenelon, combined with the heroic independence of St. Thomas A'Becket.\*

He was our greatest Irish bishop since the days of the illustrious and patriotic St. Lawrence O'Toole, Archbishop of Dublin in the twelfth century, the last of our canonized saints, but not the last Irish saint in heaven.

One is also impressed by the wonderful powers of Father Maguire, or Father Tom, as he was familiarly called. His extensive knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, theology and the Fathers; his great memory, quoting off hand long passages from them; his wit, tact and ready replies to the questions of his adversaries, surprised Protestants, and made him the glory and admiration of the Catholics, who looked upon him with pride, and regarded him as their valiant apologist. I remember

reading nearly fifty years ago, with the greatest avidity and interest, some of Dr. Doyle's letters brought from Ireland by my father, and the report of the oral controversy of Father Maguire and Rev. Mr. Pope in 1827, and was so fascinated with them that the impression they have left, even after half a century, is still fresh to my mind.

Before leaving this part of my subject I may say that many Catholics, when they heard Father Maguire had accepted the challenge of Rev. Mr. Pope, a skilful and veteran controversialist, to an oral controversy, they were dismayed that a young Irish priest, from an obscure parish in the West of Ireland, should have had the rashness to accept a challenge from such an able and experienced man as was the Rev. Mr. Pope, but the young priest, inexperienced as he was supposed to have been, was able for him, and in the great controversy that followed, held in the Rotunda in Dublin, and which lasted several days, Father Tom came off triumphantly victorious. These controversies were often warm, sometimes bitter, and from our standpoint appear very acrimonious, tending to keep alive religious animosities. They had this effect to a certain extent, but, per contra, they did immense good, by attracting the attention of Protestants, and proving to them that Catholics had a solid basis for their faith. Previous to the epoch of these controversies, the generality of Protestants had no idea that Catholics had any better grounds for their religious belief than Mahometans, Buddhists, or Hindoos. In fact they believed that the Catholic religion was unscriptural in its nature and teachings, unfit for intelligent, rational beings to follow. But these controversies wrought a great change in public opinion in Ireland and England, the first fruits of which was the passing of Catholic emancipation in 1829, which was followed after a few years by those remarkable conversions to the Catholic faith in England that attracted so much attention 30 or 40 years ago. The controversies referred to had a much greater influence on these conversions than they now get credit for in that country.

It must not be forgotten that Irish bishops and priests in the United States did corresponding good work there in enlightening the American people, the fruits of which are seen to-day in the high position the Catholic Church has attained and the wonderful progress she has made in that country.

As illustrations, I shall refer only to a couple of names, viz.: Bishop England, of Charleston, S.C., who by his eloquence and the vigor of his writings did so much for Catholicity in the United States. It is worthy of note that he established the first Catholic paper published in the United States, *The Catholic Miscellany*. He published numerous works on religion and controversy, which are still held in high repute; he died in 1842. And Bishop Hughes, of New York, one of the greatest if not the greatest Irish priests of his day. His far-famed controversy, in 1836, with the Rev. Dr. Brackenridge, stamped him as a controversialist of the first order; and, with his numerous controversial letters and other writings, did a vast amount of good in dispelling the prejudices of Americans against Catholics. These prejudices they inherited from their English forefathers, and to their credit be it said, for the Americans are a liberal minded people, open to conviction, they profited by these lessons, with the remarkable results witnessed to-day all over the United States. The ability of Bishop Hughes and his versatile talents as a divine, a statesman, and a controversialist, and also his wonderful endurance were fully displayed during the memorable discussion in 1840, before the City Council of New York and a committee composed of a dozen Protestant ministers, editors and leading citizens, brought against him by the Trustees of the "School Board," specially to defend the then existing common school system of New York, when for three days he sustained against them all the claims of the Catholics of that city for their share of the common school fund. But he was equal to the occasion, and by his prompt and logical answers to their subtle questions and arguments, silenced and defeated them. After some time he carried the previously hostile council with him and succeeded in getting it to admit the claims of the Catholics of New York to their fair share of the "Public School Fund." This they have enjoyed ever since. Bishop Hughes was a true soldier of the Church militant, able, learned and vigorous—always ready to protect the rights of Catholics. Bishop Hughes was appointed by the Almighty, at that particular time, to do His work in the United States; for it is admitted by all that the

\*There were many others who took an active part in these controversies, viz., Archbishop McHale (then a young priest), Fathers Maher, McSweeney, Clowry, Nolan, Kinsella, England (afterwards Bishop of Charleston, U. S.), Dr. Cahill, and others. Among the laymen were O'Connell, Thomas Moore ("Travels of an Irish Gentleman in Search of a Religion"), and Richard Lalor Shiel.