

PART ONE

EDWARD THOMAS O'DWYER

by John Rushe



Bishop Edward Thomas O'Dwyer. From a painting by Sean Keating.

DR. Edward Thomas O'Dwyer was the Roman Catholic Bishop of Limerick from May 10, 1886, to August 19, 1917—an episcopacy which, stretching over thirty years, was one of the most controversial in Irish ecclesiastical history. The controversies stemmed mainly from the fiery and fearless elements in his temper welded to his uncompromising attachment to the Church of Rome. Anyone who wavered in his loyalty to, much less those who openly opposed the Catholic faith or any of the things it stood for, he attacked with a vigour all his own—a vigour backed by “great intellectual power”, “incomparable eloquence” and a “mastery of the stinging phrase”.

At an early stage of his episcopal career, following his denunciation of the Plan of Campaign (1887), he stood almost alone, the object of obloquy from all ‘patriotic’ sides, vilified from public platforms, notably by John Dillon and William O’Brien; threatened with assassination; isolated even from almost all of his fellow bishops. Yet in the summer of 1916, when, as an old, deaf man he visited Maynooth College, he received such a tumultuous welcome that “it may well be said that the Aula never heard such cheering”. (1) Around this time—a year or two before his death—the historical fates were kind to him and the former ‘Castle’ bishop went out “in a blaze of glory”.

Although but a curate at the time of his consecration, his unique combination of abilities, and his readiness to use them in a highly individualistic way, ensured his rapid rise to prominence. And this position of prominence he maintained all along, to such effect that his utterances and writings were noted at the highest level—political, educational, and ecclesiastical—in Dublin, London and Rome.

Indeed, there is little doubt but that from around 1887—the year of his sudden rise to fame (and infamy) —apart from Archbishop Walsh of Dublin, whose reign was roughly coterminous with his—Bishop O'Dwyer was the best-known member of the Irish Hierarchy. As stated, O'Dwyer's prominence was largely due to his penchant for open controversy in defence of tenets upon which he felt a deep conviction. He took on some of the ablest men of his day, and, as a result, his stature grew, not alone amid the ranks of the Hierarchy but with such influential agencies as the *Times of London*, which treated him with the utmost respect, publishing his numerous letters and giving his views—mainly on education—wide editorial coverage.

Among those with whom O'Dwyer engaged in public combat were W.H. Lecky, renowned historian; the brothers, Arthur J., and Gerald Balfour, both Chief Secretaries for Ireland; John Dillon, M.P.; the Judicial

Commissioners under the Educational Endowment Act; W.T. Starkie, Resident Commissioner for Education; Rev. Dr. Walter McDonald, prefect of the Dunboyne Establishment, Maynooth; Anthony Traill, Provost of Trinity College, Dublin; Michael Davitt; Sir Horace Plunkett; Wilfred Ward, Editor of *Dublin Review*; together with, at various times, such weighty organs as the *Freeman's Journal*; *Daily Express*; *Irish Times*; *Evening Mail*; *London Times*; *Spectator* and *Pall Mall Gazette*. In the majority of cases the bone of contention was education, in so far as, in the judgement of O'Dwyer, its content was defective in Catholic eyes and its administration unjust to Catholic interests.

When in May, 1886, at the age of 44, O'Dwyer became Bishop of Limerick, the Irish Hierarchy was dominated by the two archbishops, Thomas William Croke of Cashel and William Walsh of Dublin. Walsh had been promoted to Dublin from the Presidency of Maynooth College in 1885, and so outstanding was his ability, enhanced by the importance of his See, that he overshadowed all of the other bishops, including Archbishops Michael Logue of Armagh and John McEvilly of Tuam. And Croke, who held political views very similar to Walsh... "worked closely with the Archbishop of Dublin in his efforts to formulate episcopal policy". Meanwhile, in the uneasy atmosphere of the time, with the land and education questions in ferment, not to speak of the agitation for Home Rule,

the average bishop, in his own diocese looked to a few able and/or influential prelates to give central direction to the Church's relations with the Nation and the State. (2)

But O'Dwyer was no average bishop and had no intention of burying his independence in the pack. To highlight this aspect of his personality it is necessary to stress the closeness and dominance of the Cashel-Dublin Metropolitans. For years Walsh had been a great admirer of Croke's magnetic personality and his manly support for tenant farmers, whilst Walsh's nationalist leanings and intellectual brilliance attracted him to Croke, who had strenuously fought against British intrigue at the Vatican to have Walsh elected to Dublin. These two men wrote to each other as brothers and their mutual understanding and talents—ideally complementary—made for a powerful alliance to which the Hierarchy as a body could trustfully look for leadership.

When, therefore, the newly-promoted curate in Limerick, a bare few months after his elevation, began to tread an independent path, winning wide publicity for his bold pronouncements on education and pressing Walsh on the university question, even implying that the bishops and he, Walsh, as their leader, could be more active in this vital matter, the Cashel-Dublin axis showed annoyance. When, a little late, O'Dwyer openly defied them by refusing to resign from the Senate of the Royal University, the annoyance grew to hostility. Later still, when he again broke ranks and publicly condemned the Plan of Campaign and boycotting the result was utter dismay. And when he yet went further and published the contents of the Roman Rescript (which condemned the Plan and boycotting) against the low-key policy "agreed unanimously" by the Hierarchy, it was as if Vesuvius had finally erupted, leaving the "maverick" (3) Bishop of Limerick ostracised from practically all of his fellows—a victim of his own wilful impetuosity, or, as he saw it, the champion of his own conscience.

This was a crucial period in Irish Church history with O'Dwyer's "outrageous" conduct, abetted by Dr. Healy, Co-adjutor of Clonfert, ushering the Irish Hierarchy into an ugly confrontation with the Vatican. O'Dwyer's standing with his fellow bishops may be gauged from contemporary comments:-

12 January, 1887, (Croke to Walsh, on O'Dwyer's refusal to resign as Senator of the Royal University): **I knew well ever since the display at the Consecration dinner**

that E.T. (4) would give trouble.....He must be put down, and will not, I apprehend, except by.....the Propaganda.....How practically had we better approach + E.T. 'Frappez, frappez vite' (5) should be our word.

13 January, 1887, (Bishop Gillooly of Elphin to Walsh): **I saw with no small pain and surprise the letter from Dr. O'Dwyer in the 'Freeman'. Such a departure from what I may call his promise to the Standing Committee very regrettable and I fear suggestive of singularity of action in the future. If a timely preventative to such an evil can be devised it would be charity to apply it at once.**

June 14, 1888, (Croke to Walsh who was about to arrive home): **The general impression is that he (O'Dwyer) has lost his head. How else account for his eccentricity and audacious egotism? 'Tis hard to hold one's tongue under the circumstances.**

But O'Dwyer had not lost his head. It was his style, and was to remain his style throughout his life.

The Plan of Campaign—which was in essence a refusal by the tenants to pay rents unless the landlord offered a fair reduction—was a testing time for the Irish Catholic Hierarchy. The two leading archbishops, Croke and Walsh, supported it, while O'Dwyer opposed it. And the climax came when Rome in a special Rescript sided with the Bishop of Limerick and condemned the Plan and boycotting.

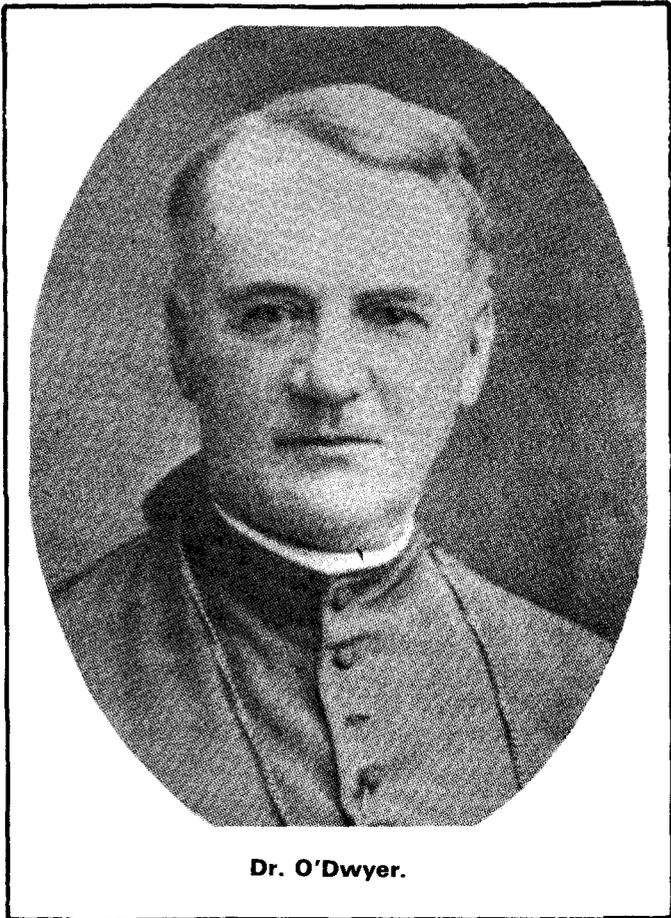
Caught between the Holy See on one side and, on the other, the harassed tenantry backed by the Irish Catholic M.P.s (who deeply resented Rome's intrusion into what they considered their political affairs), the dilemma of the bishops was unenviable. If ever a united Hierarchy, stamped by tact and solidarity, was called for, it was now; but with O'Dwyer openly and defiantly stepping out of line, with the backing of Bishop Healy of Clonfert and the Tory press (Catholic and Protestant), this dilemma was gravely compounded. Seldom has the unity of the Catholic Church in Ireland faced such peril, with the Hierarchy in overt dissension and with the credibility of the Holy See being openly questioned for its alleged collusion with Ireland's enemies. On the gravity of the crisis Dr. Walsh, in great relief, remarked in retrospect:-

Men's minds were sorely troubled. It seemed almost to be the opinion of some that all the ancient moorings of our Irish Catholicity had been disturbed, and that our nation was in danger of drifting away upon these shoals where other nations, once as Catholic as ours, thank God, still is, had made shipwreck, if not of the faith, at all events of that hearty loyalty to the Holy See, the loss of which the faith of no Catholic nation could long survive. It is only since my return to Ireland that I have been able to realise the painful intensity of the crisis through which our people had, thank God, safely passed. (6)

Judged strictly within the limits of the Irish Church-Rome relations, the formal Rescript; condemning the Plan was a signal victory for O'Dwyer and a severe rebuke for Walsh and Croke. It was also an enormous bonus to O'Dwyer's prestige, watched as this controversy was by tens of thousands of partisan spectators at home and in Britain.

Be it said to the credit of the two Archbishops that both of them obediently bowed to Papal authority, but it took all of Walsh's superb diplomacy—a skilful amalgam of respectful obedience to Rome, deferential admonition to the Catholic M.P.s and expressed sympathy with the tenants—to steer the Irish Catholic Church unharmed through these critical days.

But O'Dwyer's crisis was far from over. The "conse-



Dr. O'Dwyer.

quences.....most tragic and mortifying" of his actions long outlived the reconciliation of the Hierarchy with Rome. The Catholic M.P.'s and their supporters remained unappeased and continued to hurl fulminations at the temporal arm of the Papacy, but since the Papacy was some distance away, they vented their most bitter anger on its most vocal Irish agent, the Bishop of Limerick, who, in May, 1888, on the eve of a meeting organised for Limerick by the National League to further the Plan of Campaign, "authoratively" addressed a letter to the Mayor (at the same time ensuring that the press got copies) forbidding his priests to attend and ruling that it was "a grievous sin for any Catholic to disobey the Decree", and "a much more grievous sin under any pretext to deny the Pope's authority to issue it". (7) The letter caught everybody—not least his colleagues in the Hierarchy—unawares; it was "the sensation of the hour", and O'Dwyer's public ordeal had begun.

As regards the attendance at the Limerick meeting, apart from ensuring the absence of the priests, the Bishop's letter was of little avail. William O'Brien, M.P., got a hero's welcome from 20,000 people gathered from Counties Limerick, Clare and Tipperary, and in a speech, modelled on that of Mark Antony over Caesar's body, drew jeers from the crowd at every mention of O'Dwyer's name.

Having paid his respects to the Bishop's high office and having asked the people to do likewise, O'Brien lashed out:-

.....never was Catholic Limerick called upon to strike a better blow, either for the old faith or for the old land.....(prolonged cheering).....aye, and in defence of the civil liberties of the Irish priests as well as of the Irish people (cheers).....from that duty I will not be deterred by threats (prolonged cheering).....threats, the rashest, the most unjust, aye, and I will say, the most disgraceful, that ever came from an Irish ecclesiastic (cheers, and a voice.....'and a—')

In a blunt reference to O'Dwyer's isolation within the Hierarchy, O'Brien continued:-

He (O'Dwyer) must excuse us if we do not feel altogether overwhelmed by his thunders when we remember that Archbishop Croke (cheers) and Archbishop Walsh (cheers) are included in the sweep of his censures.....

And Mr. J.R. Cox, M.P., took up where O'Brien left off:-

According to (O'Dwyer) they were committing a mortal sin by coming to the meeting (laughter).....The Papal Rescript was not binding on them for they knew it was based on error (cheers), and, if by attending the meeting he (Cox) was 'crushed into powder', he would be crushed under the protection of the great Rock of Cashel (cheers)". (8)

This extraordinary spectacle—the public humiliation of a bishop—was repeated at several other meetings that day (and subsequently), and was lavishly reported in the Irish and British press. Michael Davitt (at Bray) and John Dillon (at Dalkey and Kildare) were particularly bitter, using language which O'Dwyer termed "schismatical". Davitt branded O'Dwyer's action as:-

the worst possible form of clerical dictatorship.....which has worked such manifest injury to the Church on the Continent.....and which, if shared by any large number of bishops and priests, would shatter to its very foundations the Catholic Church of this country.

Dillon lambasted Rome:-

I believe that the authorities in Rome are learning.....that it is one of the greatest scandals recorded in the history of our faithful people that now in the hour of our trial the authority of Rome should be quoted by every rack-renting landlord in Ireland. (9)

On the Thursday following the Limerick meeting, William O'Brien travelled to Rathkeale (where O'Dwyer was on visitation) to receive an address of welcome from the local branch of the League and Town Commissioners. Later he was escorted to Ardagh where he was met by the parish priest and thence to the troubled Glensharrold Estate where he lauded the "silenced" Father Ambrose.

In the newspapers of the time, notably *United Ireland* of which William O'Brien was editor, accounts were printed of dozens of resolutions from public bodies all over the country in support of the anti-Rescript resolution of the Irish Catholic M.P.'s and explicitly or implicitly denouncing O'Dwyer.

It was around this time, too, that O'Dwyer was threatened with assassination; the letter, undated and unsigned, for all its brutal imagery, had shades of the seething anger which O'Dwyer had drawn upon himself:-

Don't go out.....you will be done away with if you go into the chapel to say Mass you will be shot for there is (sic) men going from Dublin to send you to eternity (sic) for your conduct you are not a Catholic.....how much (sic) money did Balfour give you. The next thing we will here (sic) is your turning a protestant.....you Rotton (sic) Orange Man.

This threat of assassination—if genuine—would scarcely have surprised O'Dwyer, much less have deterred him from his "fearless championship of truth as he saw it", for early in his episcopate the Nationalist M.P.'s had sent him a warning through his priest friends to be careful of his public utterances or they would "retaliate

with a heavy hand". (10)

But "Dr. O'Dwyer, while the storm was blowing in all its fury, devoted his time and attention to the diocese". He did this, but with his cause under attack and his capacity for work prodigious, he did a lot more. Undeterred, and with ceaseless energy, he persisted in publicly defending his stand against all adversaries; and from conviction, and presumably at times for strategic reasons, he ranged his battle lines as often as he could under the banner of the Holy See.

His polemical letters were always formidable and, at times, devastating, fluently written in a "trenchant style" and with the uncanny "gift of hitting the nail fiercely and accurately on the head", his wide learning affording him an easy source of reference. The tone varied with the subject, from deep piety to bitter scorn; from burning passion to humorous anecdote; from open accusation to subtle innuendo. Depending on the mood, he would soften with praise only to hurt the more with a stinging taunt. Like all big men, Bishop O'Dwyer had big faults. On occasions, his "too great enthusiasm to exercise restraint" (11) would lead him to extremes and to the use of language "neither select nor dignified". (12)

When O'Dwyer was appointed bishop he adopted as his motto: *Virtuti non armis fido* - I trust in virtue not in force - but this peaceful approach placed him in a not uncommon difficulty: that when one condemns the means employed to attain an end one is often accused of condemning the end itself. Thus, for example, O'Dwyer was accused of siding with the landlords and of opposing Home Rule; indeed, his role in the aftermath of the 1916 Rising—a subject we will discuss in Part 2—is sometimes erroneously attributed to a sudden conversion to nationalism. It is therefore important to record his attitude to some of the leading questions of his early episcopate:

On boycotting:

I held that with an excitable people like ours that you cannot mark a man out to be "boycotted" without a terrible risk of crime, the crime of murder.....What was I to do? Was I to stifle my conscience for popularity? Is the applause of the people the highest object in life? (13)

And in a thinly veiled swipe at Archbishops Croke and Walsh he asked:-

Am I a Catholic bishop allowed to form my own opinions, or must I suppress my own judgement as if I were the paid creature of a political organisation? (14)

On Home Rule:-

When the Home Rule question was thrust aside in the early days of the Land League I wrote a letter of protest in your paper (Freeman's Journal) and I have never withdrawn from that position. Why then am I denounced as an anti-Nationalist?.....As for the epithet, Unionist, as applied to me, it ought to be enough that since the day I stood on the hustings with Isaac Butt in 1870 until the present moment I have never wavered in my conviction and my assertion of the right of the country to self-government. (15)

On the land question:

I am a land reformer. I detest as earnestly as any man the opposition of heartless landlords and would go to any length, sanctioned by religion, to restrain them. I believe there will never be peace in Ireland or prosperity until every farmer is the owner of his farm. (16)

Here it may be added that O'Dwyer was deeply dis-

trustful of Parnell and as a priest had fully supported the Roman Instruction of 1883 prohibiting clerics from contributing to the Parnell Testimonial Fund. Then in November, 1888, Captain O'Shea, M.P., wrote to O'Dwyer informing him of the great "social wrong" and "scandal" that had arisen from Parnell's liaison with Mrs. O'Shea. And this same Mr. Parnell was the leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party, upon whose efforts in Westminster the future hopes of Ireland rested—the hopes of the Hierarchy, as well as the hopes of the Irish people, not alone for a solution of the land question and Home Rule, but for the provision of a university acceptable to Catholics. Since O'Dwyer demanded the utmost in integrity from men in public life, it is not surprising that his feelings for the Irish Party were less than warm, led by such a man and flirting, as they were as a political group, with English Liberals. To O'Dwyer, the Liberals' secularist attitude towards education was their most important character and of their influence on affairs in Ireland he held a profound distrust. Of them he said:-

.....it is utterly unjust and utterly tyrannical for any people to try and starve us educationally because we are true to our country and to our Faith. These men, these doctrinaires—and I am sorry to say that they are among your leading Liberal doctrinaires in England—these men object to giving a fair share of the educational endowments of the country to places like this (i.e. Christian Brothers' Schools) on educational grounds. They pretend that they simply want to promote secular education. Not at all. They don't love education so much as they hate the Catholic faith. If they could secularise us, if they could undermine our faith, get us to forget our country, then they would be happy indeed. (17)

Twenty years later (1906) he had not changed his mind:-

Complete popular control is the watchword of the Liberals on the school question. They make no secret of it.....That means complete Protestant control of Catholic schools. (18)

Nor was O'Dwyer's distrust of the Liberals in anyway mollified by the public harassment vented on him by their allies, the Irish Parliamentary Party. At the end of May, 1890, O'Dwyer, in a public letter renewed his condemnation of the Plan of Campaign and boycotting from his diocese, which letter drew an angry reply from John Dillon, speaking in the House of Commons:-

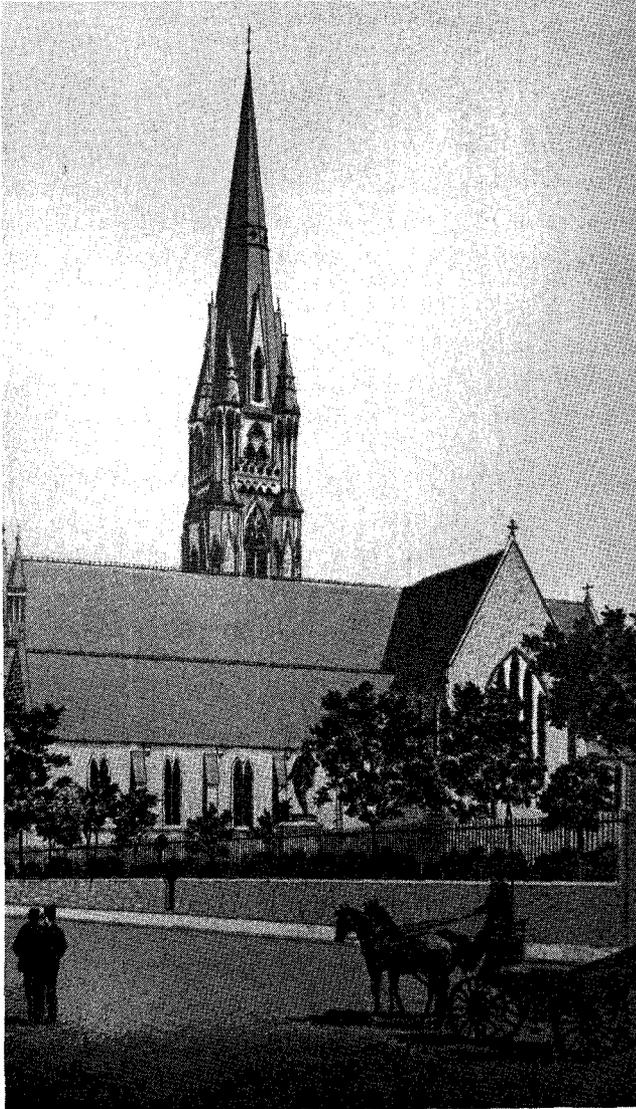
The Right Reverend Dr. O'Dwyer, Bishop of Limerick, has gone so far as to write one of the most infamous, cowardly, dastardly letters ever printed by ecclesiastical hand, and he does this as the servant of the Government of Ireland. (19)

Once again O'Dwyer leaped for his sword and in a stinging reply poured scorn on

this poor young member of Parliament" who "boasting of his Catholicity, the friend of bishops and archbishops" (uses) "the privilege of the faith in order to get near the Father of the Faithful to stab him in the back."

Piling on the scorn, O'Dwyer branded Dillon's collecting of money to help the evicted tenants as "profitable employment" and lampooned his imprisonment:-

But I will tell him this, that if at any time I should be put into prison for a cause that I professed to believe just, I would rot there before I allowed my friends to



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send up a miserable whine for my release from every end of the country on the plea of health, and that if I sneaked out thus and then went off to the Antipodes until the storm blew over and my vows to defy the Act of Parliament under which I had been imprisoned were forgotten, he might call me a dastard without fear of contradiction." (20)

Having read this letter, Dillon wrote in his diary, "I think that gentleman is finished"—an erroneous prophecy.

O'Dwyer's aspersions on the integrity of John Dillon proved too much for Dillon's friends. Deeply hurt and with his final humiliation their patent aim, National League branches from "half a dozen counties" organised yet another monster gathering in O'Dwyer's own city.

Present, with thousands of nationalist supporters, were twelve M.P.'s, fourteen Town Councillors, the Town Clerk, the Chairman and his Board of Guardians, the City High Sheriff and others of important rank. It was as if the civic leaders of Limerick had risen in mutiny to disown their bishop. And the agenda was a short one: to extol Dillon and condemn O'Dwyer. It was August, 1890, and over two years had passed since the first hostile rally had publicly condemned "this strong-minded cleric". In the meantime, Dillon had been to jail, had been released on account of ill-health and had been to Australia to collect funds for the cause.

Even though it was Horse Show Week in Dublin, the press of the succeeding days—at home and overseas—overflowed with reports and commentaries on the Limerick meeting, with O'Dwyer, the villain of the hour, in the vortex of a storm of recrimination. Little need be said about the Limerick demonstration. It was an intensified version of that of May, 1888, with this addition: that Dr. O'Dwyer was now proclaimed a liar, to the cheers of the throng. The city's two leading Catholic citizens—the Mayor and the Chairman of the Board of Guardians—proposed and seconded the resolution and their words mirrored the prevailing mood:-

The proposer (Stephen O'Mara):

Did they believe that any one of the aspersions contained in his Lordship's letter was true? (No, No). Was John Dillon not an unselfish, untiring and patriotic servant of their cause? (Yes, Yes). Did he ever go to the Antipodes to beg for himself? (Cries of No.) Then he Mr. O'Mara said that the vast meeting had branded that letter and these accusations as a deliberate lie. (Loud cheers).

The seconder (J. McInerney):

He was the first man who told Dr. O'Dwyer that the odious charges he preferred against Mr. Dillon and the Irish Party were lies (cheers)..... They would tell the Bishop, and even the Pope of Rome if necessary, that while they would be led by them in religious matters, in politics they knew their own duty and were determined to follow it. (Applause). (21)

The hero of the day, John Dillon, and William O'Brien—two gifted orators—both mauled O'Dwyer to the great delight of the crowd.

A few days later it was announced that O'Brien, his wife and Dillon were received at the Palace, Thurles, as guests of Archbishop Croke. But by now, after more than two years of this grueling charge and countercharge, signs were appearing that the tide was turning in O'Dwyer's favour.

All along he had the support of the Irish and English Tory press, but since the Tories were English of the English, it is difficult to assess the significance of their support to the ultimate outcome. At the same time, it must be recalled that among the English Catholics were men of standing and influence; among them the Duke of Norfolk, the Marquis of Ripon, Earl Denbigh, Baron Howard and Sir Alfred Trevelyn. Of the English Hierarchy, the leading prelate, Cardinal Manning of Westminster, was a sterling Home Ruler and an intimate friend and counsellor to Croke and Walsh, but at least two of the remainder, Dr. Herbert Vaughan of Salford and Dr. James Laird Patterson, Bishop of Emmaus, strongly supported O'Dwyer. Vaughan's support was certainly of consequence, since he was proprietor of *The Tablet*, an influential Catholic, but anti-Home Rule organ.

Presumably it was an English Catholic who, signing himself "Romanus", wrote a letter to the *Times* of London expressing his feelings on the grave issues exemplified by the ostracism of O'Dwyer—the probable feelings of most English, and, indeed, of many Irish Catholics

as well, feelings tinged with anxiety that things were getting out of hand, to the peril of the Church.

Headed 'Parnellites or Catholics', 'Romanus's' letter reads, in part, as follows:-

.....the Limerick orators were not...content to justify their action by abstract reasoning of their own; they sought to crush their opponent by authority. 'There is not one Bishop in Ireland who will take his stand beside Dr. O'Dwyer and adopt his sentiments', said Mr. Dillon, 'he stands alone today and I thank God for it'. Mr. O'Brien went further and contrasted Dr. O'Dwyer's conduct with 'the highest and most illustrious of the Bishops and Archbishops of Ireland'. O'Brien boasted that his crowd contained nine-tenths of the 'beloved Bishops and Archbishops of Ireland' and he pointed to the 'illustrious figures' of Drs. Croke and Walsh, 'shining in the forefront of the Parnellite battle'. To this challenge Dr. O'Dwyer has replied in a letter the doctrinal position of which no Catholic will care to controvert.....Dr. O'Dwyer meets O'Brien's boast that Croke and Walsh are on his side by saying they are not, and even if they were, he would prefer to range himself with the Vicar of Christ, and O'Dwyer makes clear that his authority does not come from politician's, nor from the clergy.

"Romanus" calls it "a momentous controversy" and slams the Freeman's Journal and United Ireland which charges O'Dwyer with "crying out" about a "schism" in the Irish Church and (United Ireland) sums up the situation "in words pregnant with menace to the Holy See".

It is well to make it plain even as far as Rome that in that schism it is His Lordship of Limerick on one side and the Irish people with their priests on the other.

"Romanus" goes on to ask:-

Will the Bishops maintain their conspiracy of silence in the face of utterances such as these? That silence is now being openly interpreted by Parliament speakers.....as approval of condemned methods. If the Bishops do not promptly deny the interpretation the common sense of mankind will infer that it is correct. It is idle to treat the controversy as Dr. Walsh does as a mere 'angry dispute' and 'unhappy wrangling', 'a dispute which in any of its aspects—political, personal, etc., he would not like to get involved.' (22)

Nor was "Romanus" the only supporter of O'Dwyer. True, they did not express themselves openly but in private correspondence they assured him that in his crusade he was not alone:-

Aubrey de Vere, in one of several letters, informed him:- I have had a letter from Father Ryder of the Birmingham oratory speaking in euphemistic terms of your published letter, and I have no doubt that he speaks Cardinal Newman's opinion no less than his own. Lord Tennyson's son writes of it in similar terms and speaks, I am certain, for his father, the Poet, as well as for himself.

And Bishop (later Cardinal) Herbert Vaughan of Salford asked O'Dwyer:

Are there really no Irish bishops besides yourself who have the courage to speak out boldly with the Pope?

and he added:

You alone have redeemed the honour of the Episcopate in Ireland; that is what one hears in England on all

sides.

Wrote Fr. J.S. Flanagan, P.P., Adare:

It seems to me that having done your duty and acted on the dictates of your conscience you will have to undergo a certain amount of humiliation for a time, owing to your isolated position and your open rejection by Croke and Walsh, if not indeed all the Bishops—but the day will come when your conduct will be justified before the world.

Father Flanagan was right. Two months after this letter was written, in November, 1890, Captain O'Shea was granted a Decree Nisi in the London Divorce Court in an undefended action, and in June, 1891, Parnell married Mrs. O'Shea. The trend of events had rapidly changed and by this time

The Irish bishops had arrived at the conclusion, some of them reluctantly, that, as Cardinal Logue put it to Walsh, Bishop O'Dwyer's analysis of the conflict between politics and religion was correct, 'however intemperate he may be, he is right at bottom'. (23)

And as the Irish Parliamentary Party split in disarray after the "disgrace of recent events" and the Hierarchy, mortified and worried, repudiated Parnell, O'Dwyer's stand was vindicated from the viewpoint of the Church, and his stature and prestige enormously enhanced. He was now one of the most influential bishops in the contemporary Hierarchy, indeed second in influence only to Archbishop Walsh of Dublin, whose powerful politically-minded liaison with Dr. Croke of Cashel, the suffragan of Limerick, through his highly individualistic behaviour, had well and truly broken.

1. Vexilla Regis (1966), p. 32: Maynooth in Revolution by Very Rev. W. Lillis, P.P.
2. Miller, Dr. David W:- Church, State and Nation in Ireland, 1898-1921, pp. 12/13.
3. Term used by Dr. David W. Miller in letter, dated 18 June, 1974, to author.
4. Edward Thomas (O'Dwyer).
5. Strike, strike quickly.
6. Walsh, Rev. Patrick J.: William J. Walsh, Archbishop of Dublin, p. 369.
7. Limerick Reporter and Tipperary Vindicator, 26 May, 1888, The Mayor was A.L. O'Keefe, Nationalist Catholic M.P.
8. Limerick Chronicle, 29 May, 1888; the "Great Rock of Cashel" was, of course, Archbishop Croke.
9. United Ireland, 2 June, 1888.
10. Begley, John Canon, The Diocese of Limerick, Vol II, p.570.
11. Cork Examiner, 20 August, 1917, Obituary.
11. Irish Monthly, 1917-18, series of four articles, The Most Rev. E.T. O'Dwyer, by Richard Canon O'Kennedy, P.P. (Vol. 1918, p.29)
13. Freeman's Journal, 13 June, 1888.
14. Ibid.
15. Freeman's Journal, 19 Dec., 1887.
16. Limerick Reporter and Tipperary Vindicator, 12 June, 1888.17. Ibid, 12 Oct. 1886.
18. Freeman's Journal, 12 Jan. 1906.
19. Irish Historical Studies Vol. XIV, No. 56, Sept., 1965, p. 339.
20. Ibid. p. 340.
21. Limerick Chronicle, 26 Aug., 1890.
22. The Times, 28 Aug., 1890.
23. O'Farrell, Patrick, Ireland's English Question, p. 198.

(Part 2 of this article will include a condensed biography of Bishop O'Dwyer and an account of some of his celebrated controversies in Limerick).

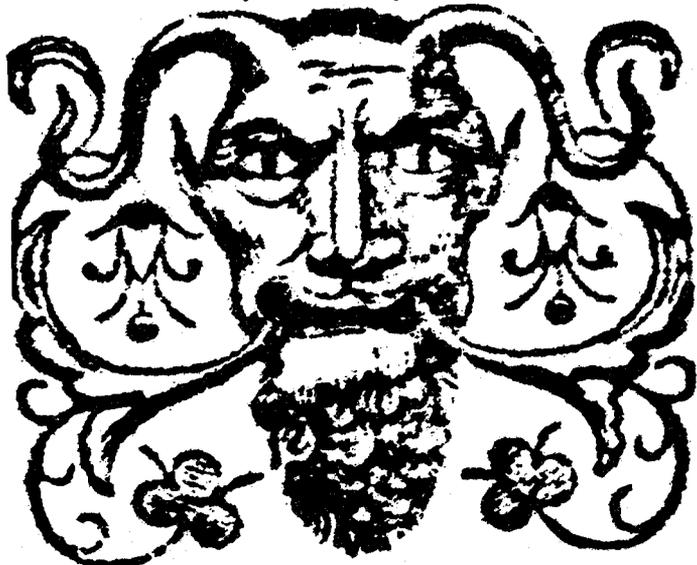
The Curse of Saint Munchin

The workmen employed on the building of the ancient church of St. Munchin were one day striving to raise a very heavy block of stone to a certain part of the work. The saint who, at that time, was standing by, called on some of the citizens to help the men to put the stone in its desired position. These, having refused to lend their aid, the saint appealed to some strangers who were passing, who readily lent their assistance, whereupon St. Munchin fervently thanked them and prayed that the strangers may always prosper in Limerick and the natives be unfortunate and unsuccessful. This story has been well confirmed from time to time by the fact of affairs turning out as the saint devoutly wished. (Michael Hogan, *Shawn-a-Scob*, 1868).

When Saint Munchin was building his Church –
Sure he was the first that began one –
With its steeple, and windows, and porch,
Looking down on the waves of the Shannon.
The good Saint in temper was rank,
Such a stock of devotion he'd got in;
But he kept no account at the Bank,
So his workmen were working for nothing;
Sure 'twas well to get something to do.

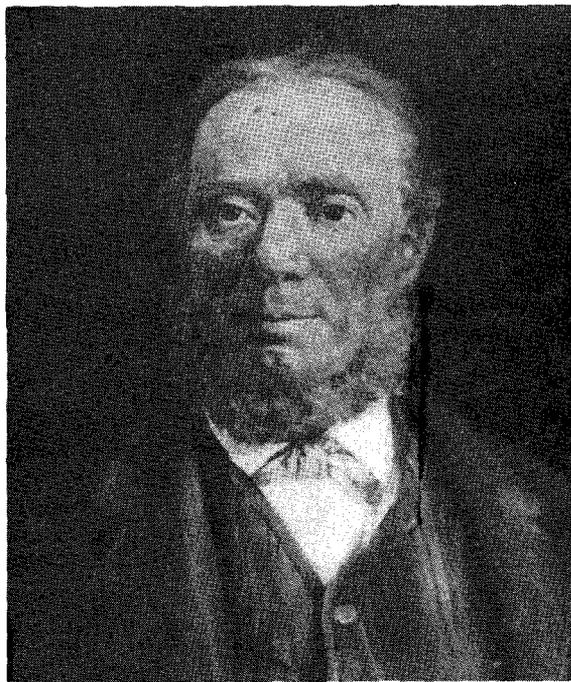
Yet he kept a few masons on hire –
They were not *Free Masons*, I'll warrant,
But true ones, who'd toss up a spire,
Or fling a bridge over a torrent.
In those times good builders were few,
By reason their guild was diminished;
Because they had nothing to do,
For all the Round Towers were just finished,
And mortar and stones were damn scarce.

There was a large quoin-stone, one day,
To be rolled to the top of the building;
And the Saint always took his own way
With his stone-work, and painting, and gilding;
So he called on his neighbours to come,
And give help where 'twas instantly needed;
But they all stared as if they were dumb,
And his call or his cry was not heeded,
For they were too lazy to hear him.



An angry St. Munchin. From an early edition of the poem.

by Michael Hogan



Michael Hogan. From a painting by Dermot O'Brien.

“Oh, ye worthless and weak herd of rogues!”
Roared the Saint, in a wild fit of passion;
“Ye are graceless and *lazy Caubogues* –
May ye never leave off ye're bad fashion!
And I solemnly pray!” says the Saint,
With his hands and eyes raised in aversion;
“May ye're trade, like an *ould* woman, faint,
And ye're commerce become an abortion,
To smother ye all with *meyah!*”

May ye always want something to wear,
And always want something to buy it;
And always have nothing to share,
And always have ways to supply it!
And may every pound of ye're bread
Have the flavour of sawdust and clinkers;
While ye gang, like poor gipsies, to bed,
And get up in the morning, like tinkers,
With fleas dancing round ye, like goats.

And the devil will send ye a pest,
In shape of a Thief-Corporation;
Who from striking big rates will not rest,
Till they *murder* ye dead with taxation.
No other good works will they do,
But robbery, ruction, and jobbery;
Pandemonium can't show such a crew
For base, brutal bombast and snobbery,
To damn ye're unfortunate town.