by John Rushe

at least as far removed from the status of working farmers as they were from the rank of solid planter ascendancy. They were not allowed to have a country; if their creed was tolerated it was a condition that they kept it a family secret. And so the well-to-do Catholics of that era must not be judged too harshly if at times they developed the failings of the irresponsible, and drifted into that half- Picturesque, half-ridiculous herd of squireens that (parade) the pages of history. At their best they were attractive; wilful perhaps and quick-tempered, but generous and fearless too. These were the qualities that men saw in Dr. O'Dwyer, qualities raised to a new level by his personal distinction and nobility. (5)

Young O'Dwyer received his primary education in the Christian Brothers' Schools, Sexton Street, and part of his secondary education in Doon in the diocese of Cashel and Emly, where the future Bishop John Ryan of Limerick (1825-64) was then a Classics teacher. At a later date Dr. Ryan accepted O'Dwyer for his diocese. The future bishop spent his last secondary school year (1859-60) in the Jesuit Sacred Heart College, the Crescent, Limerick, which at the time had just opened its doors. In 1860, at the age of 18, he entered Maynooth College. Throughout his schooling at all levels he proved himself a diligent and able student; while with the Christian Brothers he won the highest award the school had on offer, the 'Gold Watch Prize', and in Maynooth he was consistently one of the leading trio in a class of extremely capable contemporaries, five of whom were later to occupy episcopal thrones. Also among his Maynooth classmates, although as a student he did not figure among the academic elite, was the distinguished scholar and writer in Irish, Tadhg Peadar O'Laoghaire.

O'Dwyer must have been impressed with the teaching in Sexton Street as all through his life - despite the celebrated ructions in Bruff in the late 1890s - he remained an ardent admirer of the Christian Brothers; on the other hand, although he admired their educational prowess, he fell foul of at least one section of his other school mentors, the Jesuits, against whom he conducted a long-standing feud over their modus operandi of
Mungret College. As an item of historical interest, the Bishop won the "Battle of Bruff" but lost the "Battle of Mungret" - both of which major issues were referred to, and were decided upon in the highest ecclesiastical forum in Rome.

To complete a summary of his education: his academic career was cut short when half way in his fourth year Theology he was called out for early ordination which took place in St. John's Cathedral, Limerick, on 10 February, 1867, one month before the Fenian Rising. The Fenian Rising is mentioned as an appendage here but without purpose, since it was an event that left its mark on O'Dwyer, a fact that commentators, who brand him - in all but his latest years - as a West British lackey of the Establishment, might bear in mind. Of O'Dwyer and the Fenians Monsignor Moloney wrote:

The Bishop kept all through life a kindly memory of the Fenian bands who had risen in hopeless daring in the Spring of his ordination year. Through all his years their generous gesture stirred a responsive chord in his own impetuous heart. (6)

In this assessment Mons. Moloney is in all probability correct: O'Dwyer was always a nationalist at heart, but he lived and died as a Anglican priest and a loyal subject of the British crown. His hidden nationalism erupted in his disadvantage, as both de Vere and Monsell were confirmed Protestants, even the Catholic aristocracy, was no passport to influential friends - had one thing in common: they were sterling advocates of denominational education at Primary, Secondary and University level - and O'Dwyer, when he was ordained a bishop, became perhaps the most denominationally-minded member of a conservative hierarchy, especially in the matter of education. All along he fought teeth and nail for Catholic schools for Catholic children at all levels, but here a distinction must be made between denominationalism and bigotry.

Although an ultra denominationalist, O'Dwyer was no bigot: what he fought for on behalf of Catholics he would willingly concede to Protestants as well, i.e. Protestant schools; as a matter of fact, although an ultramontane Catholic, he respected other non-Catholics who held deeply religious convictions of their own; this he proved in a most practical way when he and two of his priests attended the funeral of Dr. Graves, the Protestant bishop of Limerick - an unprecedented ecumenical gesture at the time on the part of a Roman Catholic prelate. (To be continued).

The author has been told that Quinlivan's grain stores were in Upper William Street, beyond the junction to Gerald Griffin Street, on the left hand side.

** The Keating(s) were of the same family as Geoffrey Keating, the noted 17th century historian.

ο His complete pastoral assignments, as a curate, were: St. Patrick's (Limerick City), Spring, 1867; Rathkeale, Summer, 1867; Cappagh, Autumn, 1867; Bruff, February, 1868; St. Patrick's (Limerick City), November, 1868; Adare, 1870; Newcastlewest, 1872; Shanagolden, 1874; St. Michael's (Limerick City), 1874-1886; Part-time Principal of the Diocesan College, Hartsonge Street, 1880-81.

Ο Butt's father served for some time in Adare, hence the Limerick connection. Butt himself was born and buried in Co. Donegal.

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(2) The O'Dwyer's of Kilnamanagh by Sir Michael O'Dwyer (John Murray, London).

(3) The Diocese of Limerick by John Archdeacon Begley, page 563.

(4) Limerick Reporter and Tipperary Vindicator, 20 Feb., 1872.

(5) Limerick Leader, 21 Nov., 1942.

(6) Ibid.