

A HISTORY OF THE CHRISTIAN BROTHERS IN LIMERICK



In June, 1894, Cardinal Michael Logue, Bishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland, visited Limerick and was made an Honorary Freeman of the city by Mayor Bryan O'Donnell and the Town Council. Accompanied by Bishop Edward Thomas O'Dwyer, he visited many of the local schools. At Sexton Street he was welcomed by Brother J.B. Welsh and, in a lengthy address to the boys, repeatedly referred to '... the devotion and spirit of self-sacrifice of the good Christian Brothers'.

At about this time, O'Dwyer conceived the idea of taking all the children from the workhouses and placing them in one establishment where they would be looked after and educated. He had discussed his plan with the Local Government Board and his intention was to have the Brothers take charge of the boys and to put the girls into the care of the local Sisters of Mercy.

Br. Superior Richard A. Maxwell of Marino, Dublin, was well aware of the Bishop's dislike for the way his clergy did not have the same powers within, or freedom of access to, Christian Brothers schools particularly when



An early picture of Dr. Edward Thomas O'Dwyer.

by Richard Ahern

Part Two

compared to the National School system. With this in mind Richard Maxwell approached and dealt directly with the Local Government Board. Soon after, he sent four Brothers – O'Shea (the superior), Moran, O'Donnell and one other – to Glin to look after the boys.

R.A. Maxwell, prior to becoming a Brother, had been a lawyer with the Dublin legal firm of Maxwell & Weldon, a company which still acts as legal advisers to the Brothers. Maxwell's temperament was on a par with that of O'Dwyer's. He has been described as a tough man, and not a person who would have been referred to as a 'humble servant'.

The Cardinal, when he visited Sexton Street School, not only praised the Brothers but also spoke of how the bishops, priests and people of Ireland must help them in their work. But the Cardinal and Bishop O'Dwyer had been corresponding regularly with one another and some of these letters tell quite a different story.

For example, he wrote to O'Dwyer from Armagh, on 8th November, 1895:

"I think the notes you have sent me represent the managerial powers very well; it would, no doubt be useful to leave them with the authorities of Propaganda (in Rome).

The main things for the conservation of our present educational rights is that the clerical managers should be the intermediaries.

Were it otherwise the Brothers might snap their fingers at Bishops and priests.

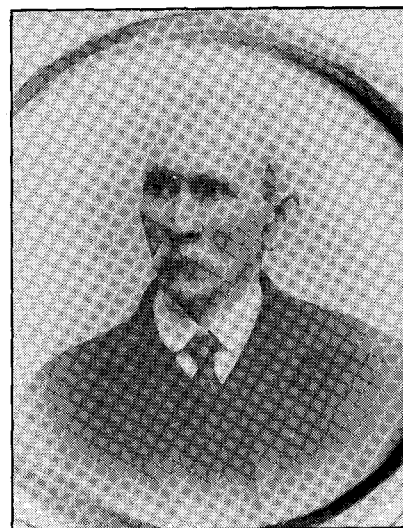
Michael Card. Logue".

A week later, he wrote again:

"I don't think it ever entered anyone's head to either appoint or dismiss teachers among the Brothers except through the Brothers' own superiors. This is what is done in the case of the French Christian Brothers, whose schools are everywhere under the management of the clergy.

Michael Card. Logue".

Two months later, from the Irish College in Rome, he advised O'Dwyer:



John Godsell, president of the Congregated Trades.

"At the request of Cardinal Mazzell and the Secretary of Propaganda I am preparing a statement on the Christian Brothers question. It is the only thing keeping me here now.

The Holy Father spoke to me of the matter and asked what the objection of the Bishops could be. I said ... a question of religious discipline. He said he did not see what religious discipline had to do with the schools, that the children belonged to the Bishops and priests not to the Brothers.

Of course my conversation with the Pope was confidential and should be mentioned only to the Bishops.

Michael Card. Logue".

And, on 8th May, 1896:

"If the Irish Education Bill depended on my opinion I would at once vote for blocking it by every means possible. It is the only lever we have for extorting a settlement to the Christian Brothers question; and if it is passed in its present form, the lever is gone ... and there is another consequence which may become very far reaching. It introduces a new class of schools altogether independent of

the Bishops and clergy ... I think your Lordship's recent experience of this would not predispose you in their favour as an educational authority.

Then, there being no conscience clause, there will be a universal subsidising of the proselytizing schools.

Michael Card, Logue".

As the Limerick diocesan archives were not available to the author, it is not possible to give a full picture of Dr. O'Dwyer's attitude but a fairly good guide, however, is to be found in the contents of the Cardinal's letter to the Bishop.

It was August, 1895, when the Bishop took the opportunity of expressing how he resented R.A. Maxwell's actions of the previous year. This occurred when he told J.B. Welsh of Sexton Street that Maxwell's work in the setting up of the Glin school was done without consultation with him (O'Dwyer) and that it was contrary to what he had wanted. He was upset because Br. Maxwell had excluded him from his dealings and had gone over his head. For this action the Brothers were going to be made to pay dearly. This was why the church collections were going to stop and also why the weekly contributions, paid directly to the Brothers from local industries, would also have to end. O'Dwyer did not have control over the latter as it had been set up and run by the Brothers for many years – but he was about to take that control.

And so, when on their weekly subscribers collections, in January, 1896, the Brothers told the people that they would no longer be able to continue to call for contributions. They did not say that it was on the Bishop's instructions, but a good many subscribers knew that it was and continued to contribute anyway. In practically every instance, the monies continued from the usual sources.

There was no priest to conduct their annual Holy Week during March. In July, they had their annual summer holiday at Arran View, Kilkee, and, in December, three Brothers left Sexton Street and sailed for Calcutta.

On 6th April, 1897, Br. J.B. Welsh again called on Dr. O'Dwyer to request his permission to hold a church collection in May. He was asked if the collections were still going on and the superior said: "We no longer call on the people". He was then asked if contributions were still being given: "They were in some places", he replied. At this juncture he was told that they must be stopped, and the Bishop reiterated his earlier opposition to the half-yearly church collections and said: "Tell them I stopped the collections". A letter was then sent to Br. Maxwell in Marino and the reply was "... to stop collections at once".

It is not necessary to dwell too much on newspaper coverage, of which there was a considerable amount during this period, as it is covered in detail by Der-

mot McEvoy in issues 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8, (Scandal at Bruff) of *The Old Limerick Journal* and in issue II (The Bruff Agitation) by Pius J.A. Browne.

In June, 1897, the superior went to the Waterford and Limerick Railway Co. and to Messrs. E. O'Callaghan & Son Ltd., Leather Merchants, Cornwallis Street (later Gerald Griffin Street) and told them "... collections were to stop in obedience to his Lordship the Bishop"; he also went on to thank them for their support in the past.

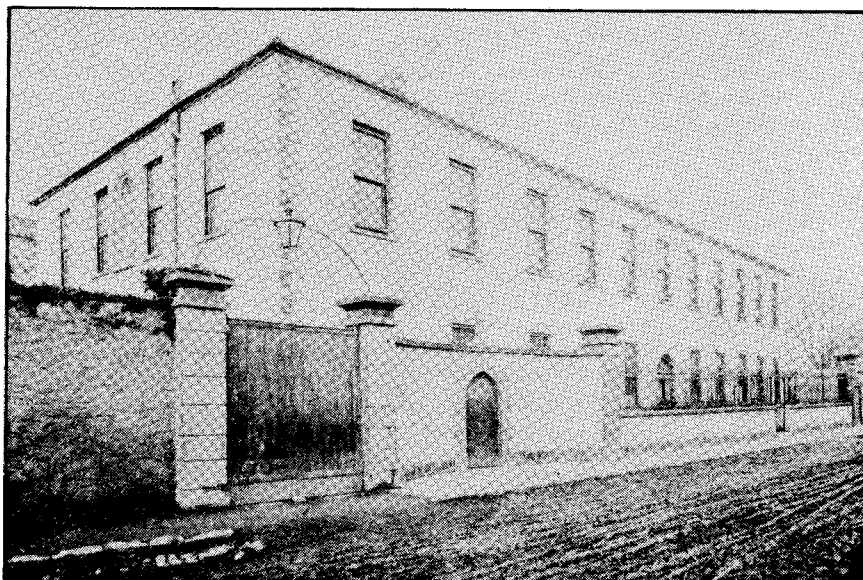
By now, the working class in Limerick were becoming more and more involved in the affair. In the same month, a general meeting of the Pork Butchers' Society was held and Br. Welsh was asked to attend. The meeting was thronged and he was received enthusiastically. He addressed the men in a similar vein to that of his meetings with the Waterford and Limerick Railway and E. O'Callaghan & Son. Mr. Nash of the Pork Butchers' Society said he could not understand why the collections were stopped.

stated: "... no further evidence is needed to show that the Christian Brothers have met with treatment at the hands of the clergy at Bruff which is the reverse of what might be expected from those whose duty it is to preach Christian charity".

At this time, a French order of monks declined to come to Bruff to take over the school. In December, the Bishop brought in a national teacher. He found the streets of Bruff lined with members of the Royal Irish Constabulary and he was given a special police guard. No pupils turned up for school.

On Sunday, 7th January, 1898, Dean McNamara, at first Mass, spoke in a forceful manner to the congregation. He said that were it not for his intervention the chapel would have been closed and the people excommunicated. He advised them to stop the agitation and stated: "Your actions will not change his Lordship's determination – you do not know with whom you have to deal".

Dr. O'Dwyer wrote to Mayor Michael



Sexton Street C.B.S., circa 1900.

The Brothers' annual Holy Week was presided over by Fr. Bannon, a Redemptorist. In November, Br. Mark McCarthy was sent to Australia. In the same month, the Brothers were withdrawn, without notice or explanation, from St. Patrick's Monastery, after their 37 years service in Bruff. The editor of the *Limerick Leader*, Andy McEvoy, went to Bruff to get at the truth of the matter. J.B. Welsh had told him: "The people of Bruff know three-fourths of the reasons why the Brothers had to leave". In the *Leader* the editor wrote "The P.P. (Dean McNamara) of Bruff knows why the Brothers were withdrawn ... the prolonged persecution to which the Brothers were subjected". Further enquiries showed that the crux of the matter was the standard of teaching by the Brothers – it was thought to exceed that of the diocesan seminary.

On 15th November, the *Leader*

Cusack on 18th January telling him:

"They left Bruff of their own accord ... If the Brothers had consulted me before they left, I should have advised them to remain. Things have now gone so far that I do not think the good of the people or the interests of religion would be served by their return".

On 18th February, Br. Welsh called on John O'Brien, secretary of the Mechanics' Institute, Limerick, at Gibson's Butter Store in Mulgrave Street, and told him of Br. Maxwell's intention of establishing an association to protect the interests of the Brothers in Limerick. O'Brien said that he had become involved with an association which was formed to request the Bishop to allow the weekly contributions in aid of the Brothers to be established again and to get grants from the government for their schools. He also



Executive and Amusements Committees of the Fairy Lawn Fete. The group includes the Mayor of Limerick, Mr. Stephen Quin, D.L.; Mr. T.S. Lawler, High Sheriff; Mr. Stephen O'Mara, and Mr. M. Nolan, Town Clerk.

said his movement had no connection with the Bruff agitation. On the same day, the superior went to Mr. Dalton of the **Limerick Leader** and his reply, in substance, was similar to that of John O'Brien's. Br. Welsh asked the two men not to proceed, with the movement, but it was already too late. A meeting had been arranged in the Engine Drivers' Room in Rutland Street and this was attended by members of every trade and labourers' society in the city, and was strictly private.

Meanwhile, there was another development at Bruff. On Sunday, 20th February, Dean McNamara, during second Mass, read a letter he had received from Dr. O'Dwyer: "The Bishop directs me to announce to you that I am to hold no stations (during Lent) as he considers it would only be a mockery to administer sacraments to you owing to the sinful conduct of which you have been guilty within the past few months". The letter went on to state that no ashes would be blessed and that morning masses and evening devotions would not be allowed in the church.

On 27th February, Br. Welsh received a deputation at the monastery. It consisted of John Godsell, John McKnight and James Kett (all of the Congregated Trades), Patrick Hogan (Pork Butchers' Society), Michael O'Connell (president of Limerick Corporation workers), John O'Brien, Patrick Keyes and Thomas Tracey. A lengthy discussion took place on the income of the Limerick schools and on the repairs which were urgently needed in some of them. Patrick Hogan

explained how the pork butchers had been asked to contribute to the building of a new church on the Military road and how they had refused to give any money because the Brothers' collections had been stopped. Michael O'Connell said that collections were still being made in the Corporation and he was waiting for an opportune moment to hand over the money to the Brothers.

On 20th June, a meeting was held in the rooms of the Limerick '98 Centenary Association in Sarsfield Street. In keeping with previous meetings, the building was crowded and the meeting went on late into the night. The chairman was John Godsell. Messrs John O'Brien, James Burke and Michael O'Connell spoke and expressed their sympathy and support for the people of Bruff at the loss of the Brothers from their town. They also pledged support to the **Limerick Leader** and its proprietor. The final word that night was: "It is better to have fought and lost than never to have fought at all".

On 30th September, John McCormack, (president of the Congregated Trades) and John O'Brien, called to see Br. Welsh. The main purpose of their visit was to ask for the use of one of the classrooms to hold their meetings. Welsh agreed to their request and they held a number of meetings in Sexton Street. O'Brien, as secretary of the Mechanics' Institute, Bank Place, wrote to the superior in late October thanking him for the use of the room and assured him that he would do all he could to help their cause.

McCormack and O'Brien had asked Limerick Corporation earlier in the year, for a room in the Town Hall in which to hold their meetings but the request, in the name of the Committee for the Defence of the Brothers, was refused by the Corporation.

By 1899, Lenten devotions were back to normal in Bruff and, in July, the curate, Fr. Robert Ambrose, in one of his Sunday sermons, called the leaders of the campaign for the return of the Brothers 'scandal-givers, cowards, hypocrites and idolators ... nothing short of amadauns'. Twenty people left the church. Fr. Ambrose had later to be given R.I.C. protection.

The children had not been attending school since November, 1897 and the Bishop wanted to give them a national school but the **Limerick Leader** insisted "No Brothers - No school".

On 6th October, 1899, the school reopened with two pupils under a national teacher and all required R.I.C. protection. There are reports of several baton-charges and chaotic scenes at Crawford's Lane. In one incident, three people were severely injured.

Bishop O'Dwyer was 'groaned at' in the streets of Limerick and, as a result, the Corporation were asked to condemn this type of activity.

A letter dated 6th October from Rev. Andrew Murphy, St. Munchin's College, Limerick, to Br. Welsh read as follows: "The Bishop said you may have a collection on the first Sunday in November, but does not see his way to change his decision on the matter of a special collection (for repairs) to Saint

The superior called to see Fr. Murphy at the college in Henry Street, on 11th December, and was told that their annual cheque for £10 would not be given by the Bishop this year. He called again to see Fr. Murphy, a few months later, on 14th April, 1900. Murphy complained of misconduct by C.B.S. pupils at a football match between Sexton Street and St. Munchin's College, held a short time before. One of the accusations was that stones and mud were thrown at the clergy on the field. Though Murphy did not recognise any of the pupils as those of the Brothers, he clearly heard the cry 'Up Monks' (Brothers) used. He went on to state that the previous year (1899) when Sexton Street won the cup the team went to St. Munchin's in Henry Street and cheered nonstop; one of the college boys was 'seized and maltreated', and cries of 'Bruff, Bruff' were heard. The superior was then advised to see the Bishop about the matter, but he asked himself "... if our boys used the cry ('Bruff') what crime was there in it?" His next port of call was to see Dr. O'Dwyer that evening at his palace in Corbally. The Bishop's initial remarks were almost identical to those made earlier in the day by Fr. Murphy and he also believed that the Brothers had incited the boys '... to make hostile demonstration toward the clergy'. He had, he said, in his possession letters written by the Brothers in connection with the Bruff dispute and would take these letters to Rome with him. He also said that proof of the C.B.S. pupils' misconduct on the day of the match could be confirmed by Frs. Lee and Fitzgerald of St. John's, Mr. Joyce, the principal of Leamy's School, and the shopkeepers in William Street. He finished by saying that he wanted him (Welsh) to publicly make amends for the pupils' display of disrespect towards him and his clergy. The superior replied by saying that he did not approve of the boys' conduct outside the college and that he had sent a Brother to restrain them but their excitement was such that he was unable to control them.

With this evidence, Br. Welsh set off for Marino, Dublin, to discuss the situa-

'Limerick Chronicle' advertisement of 20th July, 1916, for the Fairy Lawn Fete.

In reference to the visit I paid to your Lordship on tuesday last, the 17th inst., I have to say that I regret extremely having allowed my excited feelings to overcome me so far as to forget the respect due to your exalted position, and to speak in a manner quite unbecoming. For both my words and my manner on the occasion I earnestly beg your Lordship to accept my very humble and sincere

John O'Brien of Garryowen and Andy McEvoy played an active part in helping the Brothers fight their cause; they and many others, through their letters, meetings and actions, showed

that they had minds of their own and that they wished to use them.

Whatever the wrongs or rights of the issue, it is only fair to say that it was the Bruff children who suffered educationally and many were to emerge from the affair with little or no formal schooling. Meanwhile, moves were in train to replace the Christian Brothers in Bruff.

In a letter of 8th July, 1907, Br. Anthony of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, De La Salle Retreat, Castletown, Mountrath, Queen's County (Co. Laois), wrote as follows to Dr. O'Dwyer:

"Your kind enquiry under date July 6, to hand... I thank your Lordship for inviting the children of St. De La Salle to take up the work ... I shall hold three thoroughly well trained and qualified Brothers in readiness, for the work. They would be able to take up duty on September 2nd of this year ... I take the liberty of submitting items to form the basis of An Agreement between the Revd. Manager and the Superior General (of the De La Salle Brothers).

I most respectfully suggest the local P.P. as manager of the school. Your Lordship's approval would be sought for the "Agreement". Having the P.P. manager, would, I think, secure his interest in visiting the school ... begging your Lordship's blessing, I am, with profound respect,
Your most humble servant.
Brother Anthony".

And so, on 3rd September, 1907, the De La Salle Brothers (ironically, the order on which Edmund Rice based his foundation in Waterford in 1802) came to Bruff. This closed the last chapter of perhaps the most remarkable school case of the century in Ireland. The end result was that the Christian Brothers were banished forever from Bruff.

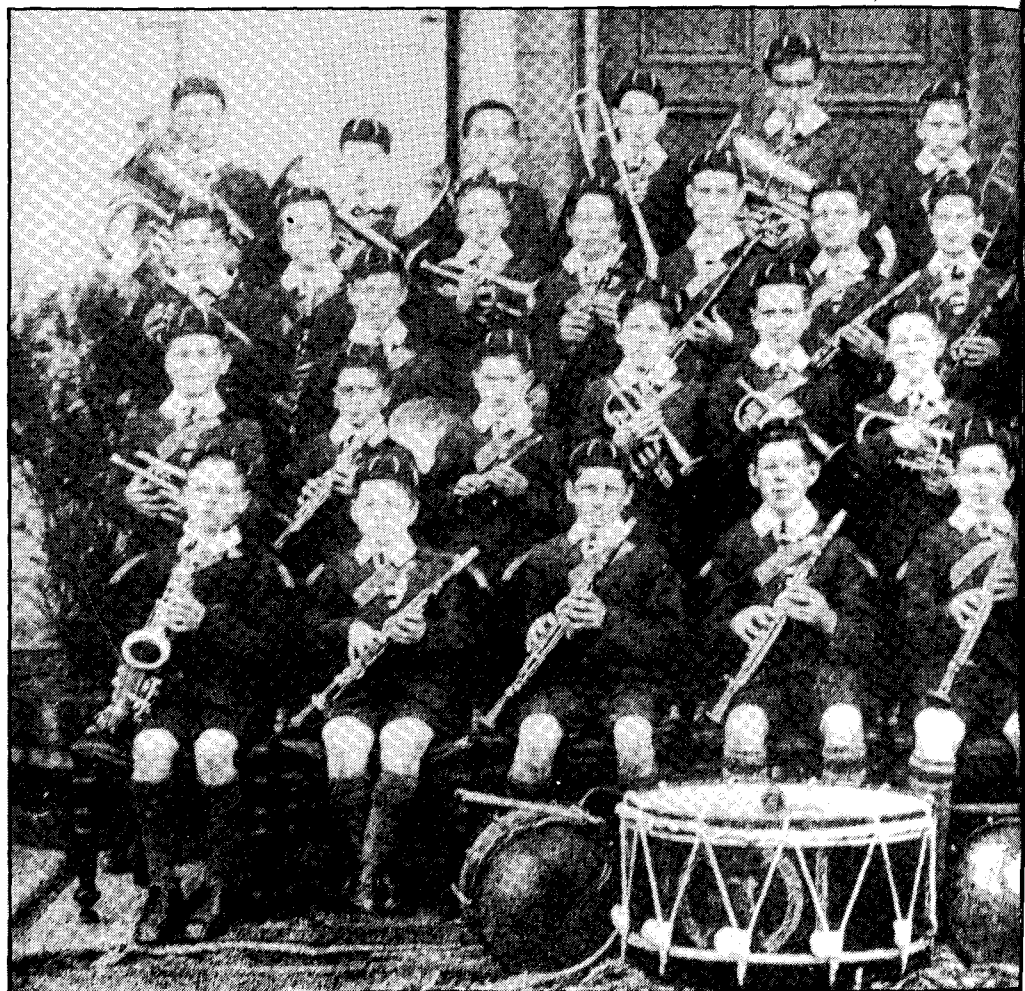
On 28th August, 1911, Br. Superior Adrian Burgess, went to see Bishop O'Dwyer. They had a cordial conversation and the 'great work' of the Brothers was once again mentioned, as was the 'great need' for the priests and the brothers to work together in the future. The meeting ended with the Bishop saying: "Be kind to the priests whenever they call on the schools and I am sure you will always find them kind and friendly".

On 8th September, 1914, the first issue of *Our Boys* was published under the editorship of Br. Xavier Weston (born 1869, died 1943), who spent some time at Sexton Street. It is recorded that he was "... a born editor for boys. He could spin yarns on the spur of the moment - reel off adventures that would set up a writer, in long tales and short, for years to come'. He had a special way with boys and their love of imaginary tales - the type of story that most youngsters live for. "On the instant he could make up a story and tell it with all the solemnity of one who had experienced some dire catas-

trophe and more often than not there would not be one iota of truth in the whole yarn". He was also a noted Shakespearean and Dickensian scholar.

There was an unusual disruption on Monday, 8th February, 1915, when Fr. D. O'Driscoll, P.P. of Saint Munchin's arrived at the Brothers' school in Sexton Street North, Thomondgate. He addressed, in a heated manner, all the boys. He had had complaints of mis-

boys who were responsible; all were from St. Munchin's parish but none came from St. Munchin's C.B.S. Soon after, he met Fr. O'Driscoll and told him of the pain caused by his remarks and the injustice suffered by the pupils and the Brothers. The priest at once said he would make amends by going to the school to express his regret at having blamed the innocent boys. Br. Stapleton did not deem it prudent to allow him to do so, and the memory faded



St. Joseph's Orphanage Brass and Reed Band, circa 1927.

conduct by the pupils during Sunday Mass at his church. He said that he had intended to denounce them from the pulpit but instead choose to warn them first, saying that any repetition would be dealt with by debarring all C.B.S. pupils from attending church. He went on to say that he was appalled by their lack of faith, if they had any, and especially in boys who were also members of the arch-Confraternity of the Holy Family. The boys were accused of bringing pebbles into the church and dropping them from the galleries on the congregation seated below. Fr. O'Driscoll left as quickly as he had arrived, leaving the pupils frightened and flabbergasted.

A surprised Br. Stapleton made an immediate investigation of all the classes in St. Munchin's School in his efforts to find the culprits. Eventually, he established the names of all the

away.

By 1916, there were twenty three Brothers and 1,500 pupils in the four C.B.S. schools' (Sexton Street, St. Mary's, Munchin's and John's) in the city. It was in this year that the Brothers celebrated the centenary of their coming to Limerick. In January, the superior called to the Bishop's palace in Corbally and told of their proposed plan for a centenary celebration. Bishop O'Dwyer said "... it was proper ... to have such a celebration ... yet owing to the unfortunate Bruff dispute ... he could take no part' in the rejoicings.

By now, the First World War was in full, bloody spate. Superior J. Stapleton spoke with the Brothers and the boys about how the war had affected their foundations in England. The main talking point was the thousands of Belgian families who fled to England and how, for the greater part, their children

were being educated by the C.B.S. there.

Notwithstanding the Bishop's attitude, a centenary committee was formed and its members included High Sheriff Thomas Lawlor, Stephen O'Mara (past-pupils) and Mayor Stephen Quin. The committee decided to hold the 'Fairy Lawn Fete' – the title came from the house of the same name which had been occupied by Gerald Griffin's family. The committee also



received subscriptions from many businesses in the city, including O'Mara's Ltd., Cannock & Co. Ltd., Spaight & Sons Ltd., James McMahon Ltd., J. Bannatyne & Sons Ltd., Cleeve Brothers Ltd., the Redemptorists, J. & G. Boyd Ltd., J. Matterson & Sons, W.J. Shaw & Sons, the Limerick Steamship Co., Todd & Co., the harbour employees, S. Tubridy and the **Limerick Leader**. Many other firms and individuals gave financial support towards the fete.

In April, 1916, the centenary committee held two meetings in the Town Hall to plan the celebrations. But an event was about to happen in Dublin that was to bring changes to many aspects of Irish and Limerick life.

Towards the end of April, 'an unfortunate rebellion broke out in Dublin and a few other places ... This foolish attempt was soon extinguished by the

execution of the leaders to the number of 14 or 15'. During these events, which commenced on Easter Monday 24th April, when public buildings were seized in an attempt to proclaim a Republic, it was felt that the country tasted all the horrors of the Great European War. "There was great excitement in Limerick. Principle approaches to the city were barricaded. There were machine-guns in commanding positions – the Railway the Post Office and other public buildings were guarded by soldiers. Every preparation was made to repel a dreaded invasion by a German force". Happily, these precautions were not necessary. Martial law, which forbade the holding of meetings and similar assemblies, was imposed. This law remained in force until the middle of May and soon after life in Limerick returned to normal.

As a result of the Dublin Rising and its aftermath, the centenary celebration had to be postponed. Final preparations for the fete were completed and it was held from Thursday 20th to Saturday 22nd July at Sexton Street grounds. It was officially opened by the Mayor and the proceeds came to £938-19-5. Many other events were organised for the benefit of the Brothers, such as hurling tournaments in the Markets Field. Four counties entered – Limerick, Clare, Tipperary and Cork. The final took place on 23rd July, and Tipperary, led by the famous Wedger Maher, beat Cork. Flower days were arranged, as was an excursion to Dublin. The Shannon Rowing Club gave an 'At Home'; Athlunkard Boat Club held a regatta; the people of Thomondgate organised a sports' day and the Limerick Choral Society gave two concerts in the Athenaeum, with Joseph O'Mara in fine voice.

As the years went by, lack of space for the pupils in Sexton Street became an ever-increasing problem and the only solution was to take over the adjoining orphanage building. The 160 boys who resided in the orphanage were transferred to Glin, Co. Limerick, in 1928. The re-conditioning of the building was a long and costly (£12,000) project. In January, 1932, it re-opened as a primary school and, in later years, became a secondary school. The long building in the present primary playground, which had been used as a workshop for the boys of the orphanage, was converted into classrooms.

Hurling in Sexton Street will always be associated with the Harty Cup, named in honour of Dr. Harty, Archbishop of Cashel. The team's entry into this competition was in 1920 and they qualified for the final at the first attempt. After an exciting game, played on 5th June at the Markets' Field, the team beat St. Coleman's of Fermoy. The trainers were Bob McConkey and Denny Lanigan.

The second title was won in 1925 when they beat Rockwell 4-0 to 1-1 at

the Markets Field. In 1926, the team beat Rockwell, again in Thurles. It was to be three-in-a-row in 1927, when St. Flannan's were beaten. The team withdrew from the Harty Cup in 1928 and competed in the Munster Colleges' Cup, which they won at the first attempt, again against St. Flannan's.

The Munster Schools' Senior Rugby Cup was annexed by Sexton Street four times in 1926, '30/31, '32/33 and '35. The 1930/31 team was an outstanding one and in the final that season they beat Rockwell by one try to nil at the Markets Field. The scorer was Owen O'Brien; Dr. Neville of U.C.G. refereed the game, and Jack Quilligan trained the team.

Sexton Street returned to the Harty scene in 1932 and defeated their old rivals Rockwell at Thurles on St. Patrick's Day in the semi-final, and went on to beat Thurles C.B.S. in the final, on 24th April, at Mitchelstown.

1934 saw the building of the handball alleys at the rear of the monastery and, two years later, in 1936, Sexton Street had become the largest secondary school in Munster, with 615 pupils.

Ard Scoil Ris, on the North Circular Road, opened in 1940 in the former home of the Cleeve family.

Although the daily routine of the school remained relatively untroubled, there was one aspect of the teachers' working lives which gave them much cause for concern. This was the regular visits of 'an cigaire' (the school inspector). The pupils never fully realised the tension generated by the appearance of this powerful and influential caller and how much his inspections and their (the pupils) absences from school made life intolerable for the unfortunate teachers. Thus a visit from the 'cigaire' was apprehensively awaited by most teachers.

The story is told of a well known local teacher who lived just outside the city. The prospect of the school inspector's visit weighed heavily on his thoughts. As he cycled slowly up O'Connell Street, he caught a glimpse of his particular port in the storm. It was by far the lesser of the two evils. The bike was quickly 'planted' in William Street Garda Station and a mad dash was made to Burton's Billiard Saloon in O'Connell Street. In the company of the caretaker 'Baw' Sullivan and others, the morning passed away nicely. He returned home to his wife for lunch and then off with him to 'school' for a repeat performance in 'sinking the black'. His wife was none the wiser. Neither was 'an Cigaire', for he noted the names of the boys who were absent but neglected to ask about the reason for the non-appearance of the teacher. Quick thinking and inventiveness had won that round with the ogre.

School life during the Second World War (or the 'Emergency') was uneventful enough at Sexton Street. But teachers and pupils found time to



The cast of 'The Bohemian Girl', 1942.

entertain themselves and their fellow-citizens. At that time, opera held pride of place in the school.

On 4th December, 1940, the school presented a spectacular production of 'Marintana' at St. Michael's Hall. In the following years, many other colourful and lively arrangements of other operas were much appreciated by pupils, parents and public.

In September, 1941, selections from 'La Traviata', 'Il Trovatore' and an interpretation of the 'Tannhauser' chorus were performed at the Savoy, the Lyric Cinema was packed to capacity in January 1943 for Gilbert and Sullivan's comic opera 'The Mikado'. The pupils were accompanied by what was then considered unusual – a stringed orchestra. The local newspapers congratulated Lionel Cranfield, Bro. Murray, Jim Scallan, F.J. Crilley and young Michael Power, an 'experienced amateur' who played in the part of 'Co-Co' in this particularly lavish production. In 1944, came 'The Gondoliers', while the following year 'The Yeoman of the Guard' was yet another triumph for the students and conductor Stanley Bowyer.

In 1944, the centenary of the death of Br. Edmund Ignatius Rice was commemorated. The Rev. Br. Rice Memorial Committee, Limerick Branch, took advantage of the demand for the operas and set about arranging a varied programme. A year later, on 18th December, they proudly presented their special show. It was opened by the Boherbuoy Brass Band and followed with excerpts, sung by the pupils, from 'The Mikado', 'I Dream of Jeannie' and 'The Last Rose of Sum-

mer'. Then came Michael O'Higgins with a number of traditional airs. Tadhg Smalle, played 'Ave Maria' and the intermezzo from 'Cavalleira Rusticana' on his violin. The accompanists were Miss P. O'Neill and Miss N. Penny.

The operas continued to provide many entertaining nights in Limerick up to the late 1940s and many people, especially past-pupils, will recall these musical memories of more than 40 years ago.

But not all the comedy was confined to the stage. there was, at least, one amusing classroom incident in the early 1950s. A teacher, who was justly proud of his extensive knowledge of the life and works of William Shakespeare, was in the habit, during the last few minutes of each class, of preparing in advance for the next one. While preparing, he would instruct the boys to "read up" on their notes on Shakespeare. At this time, the father of one of the pupils had been checking on his son and by coincidence usually found the teacher and students with their heads stuck in their books and apparently no teaching being done. After two weeks of watching this tranquil scene, the boy's father could no longer restrain himself. He called the teacher aside to have a word in his ear, expressed his concern at the absence of any visible sign of teaching and gently ventured that the teacher might consider expounding a little further on the Bard's works. Not one who was used to being taken to task, the teacher wiped the chalk-dust from the shoulders of his black gown, peered over the rim of his spectacles, and said: "My dear Mr. Murphy, even I cannot improve on

Shakespeare".

The old school at Sexton Street North, Thomondgate, was closed in 1955 and the new school at Hassett's Cross was opened, having been built by E. & J. Doran (a firm which went into liquidation earlier this year). The superior from 1949 to '54, Br. Richard Tatton set up Colaiste Mhuire in Parnell Square, Dublin.

On 25th March, 1956, the C.B.S. Past-Pupils Union was formed. The meeting was held in the City Theatre and was attended by more than 400 past-pupils, with John Moloney as chairman. The P.P.U. was responsible for the formation of, among other things, the Tops of the Town Competition, the Silver Circle Draw and played a major part in the establishment of the Limerick University Project Committee.

Thirty four Hungarian refugees were given school accommodation in Sexton Street in 1957. At this time, Br. Dunne, a linguist in Eastern European languages, visited the families of these pupils at Knocklisheen Camp, to teach them English.

Sexton Street boys had an exciting Gaelic football season in 1957, when, under trainer Br. Tynan, they won the Frewen Cup. The Munster Senior Cup was won in 1956 and again in 1960. During this decade, Cyril Walsh and Tom McGarry, two pupils, won the All-Ireland Colleges Senior Handball Championship, and the rowing team triumphed over a Northern Ireland crew in the rowing championship.

There were twelve Brothers and eleven lay-teachers in Sexton Street in 1959. Three years later, the first Panto Frolics show was staged, and, a year

later, in '63, the C.B.S. Pipe Band was established by Bro. M.D. Murray.

On 7th June, 1963, the remains of thirty seven Brothers and two benefactors were transferred from the old graveyard (which had been opened in 1835), to the garden. The new cemetery was blessed by the Brothers' chaplin, Fr. Sadlier of St. Munchin's College.

The hurling team had not won the Harty Cup since 1932, but, 32 years later, on 15th March, 1964, at the Gaelic Grounds, they beat St. Flannan's in the final. Three more victories followed in 1965, '66 and '67, with the versatile Br. Michael Burke as trainer. He also directed Panto Frolics during these years.

The Brothers took over the renovated St. John the Baptist primary school in 1965 and, the next year, celebrated the 150th anniversary of their coming to Limerick when their new primary school in Sexton Street, Scoil Iosagain, was opened by President Eamon de Valera. The Brothers moved to a new school in St. Mary's parish in 1970, when they vacated the old courthouse building in Bridge Street.

There are now, in 1987, six Brothers, forty eight lay-teachers and 865 pupils in the Sexton Street Secondary School and two Brothers, twenty six lay-teachers and 650 pupils in the primary school.

In the Brothers 171 years in Limerick, they had a total of 26 superiors. (There is a discrepancy in the information available on the first two superiors, Austin Dunphy and F. Grace, but from the information available the list is as follows):

1816-1832 Austin Dunphy
1832-'42 F. Grace
1842-'82 J.P. Welsh
1882-'84 R. Ryan
1884-'92 J.P. Slattery
1892-'1901 J.B. Welsh
1901-'11 A. Nolan
1911-'13 A. Burgess
1913-'19 J. Stapleton
1919-'22 P. Ryan
1922-'24 J. Ryan
1924-'30 F. Donnelly
1930-'32 P. Duggan
1932-'38 B. O'Neill
1938-'43 I. Cummins
1943-'49 J. Murray
1949-'54 R. Tattan
1954-'57 N. McDonagh
1957-'58 P. O'Keefe
1958-'64 S. White
1964-'70 I. Scully
1970-'76 M.D. Murray
1976-'78 P.K. Skehan
1978-'82 J.E. Collins
1982-'84 P.K. Murray
1984-' J.A. Finnegan

It might be considered appropriate, at this stage, that I should also give a list of the Brothers and distinguished past-pupils of the school but such a list would be endless, and I would find it difficult to know where to stop, for Sex-

ton Street 'boys' (distinguished and otherwise) are to be found in the records of almost every form of Irish life, including business, politics, religion, education, sport and the media.

Edmund Ignatius Rice opened his first school in New Street, Waterford, in 1802 and there are now approximately 80 foundations in Ireland. His mission has spread to 25 countries with 3,000 Brothers and 7,000 teachers instructing

Street past-pupil, in his article 'School-days', published in this *Journal*, wrote about his '... happy memories of carefree, childhood days by the Shannon'. Many other past-pupils will echo his sentiments and there are some, with good reasons, I am sure, who will not.

I attended Sexton Street in the 1960s unaware of its chequered history. Like Michael Kenevane, I can honestly say that I enjoyed my schooldays there.



Some of the cast of Gilbert and Sullivan's 'Iolanthe', January 1948. BACK ROW: Brendan McMahon, Noel Cantrell, Patrick Ring, Michael Power, Phil Madden, Sean Buckley and Michael Mulcahy. FRONT ROW: Thomas Farrell, Denis Egan, Anthony Bromell, Harry Beegan, Patrick Colleran and Francis Prendergast.

over 212,000 boys in 560 schools. The Brothers run orphanages, primary, secondary, and technical schools as well as schools for the poor, the deaf and the blind, and university and agricultural colleges. Here is a list of the countries where the order is established and the dates of their foundations:

1802 Ireland
1825 Great Britain
1869 Australia
1876 Canada
1876 New Zealand
1890 India
1895 South Africa
1900 Rome ✓
1906 U.S.A.
1947 Grenada
1947 St. Lucia
1948 Argentina
1948 Trinidad
1950 Papua New Guinea
1954 Zimbabwe
1955 Uruguay
1956 Dominica
1958 Antigua
1961 Barbados
1964 Zambia
1967 Peru
1968 Ghana
1969 Liberia
1976 Cook Islands
1981 Fiji Islands.

Michael Kenevane, another Sexton

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