

Bishop Charles Graves

by Aideen Ireland

Mention has already been made of the Monsell collection of correspondence in the Public Record Office of Ireland in the pages of the *Limerick Journal* for Spring 1983. Readers of this volume of the *Journal* may be interested in the five letters from the Bishop of Limerick, Ardfert and Aghadoe (1866-'99), the Rev. Charles Graves (1812-'99), to Monsell which date from 1858 to 1893. Three of the letters are quoted from here.

Included in the scholarly research of this bishop is his interest in Patrician matters; it suffices to mention 'Acts of St. Patrick, some notices contained in the Book of Armagh', published in the *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* in volume 8 for 1863. It is fitting therefore that one of the letters is devoted entirely to research on St. Patrick. On 26 November 1858, Graves wrote defending the British background of the saint which he deduced from evidence contained in the *Confessio*: expressions used by the saint left Graves in no doubt as to the country of origin of Patrick. Graves also discounted the visit of the saint to Rome on account of the lack of mention of this journey either by Patrick himself or by Secundinus. He comments on the number of bishops in Ireland at the time of Patrick and has no difficulty in believing the number to be between 300 and 350. After some comment on the date of *The Book of Armagh*, Graves concludes:

"I am sorry to say Mrs. Graves is far from well. She had been obliged to come up to Dublin for advice and is now in lodgings No. 18 Upper Merrion St." (1075/8/1).

Mrs. Graves was born Selina Cheyne, daughter of John Cheyne M.D. Physician General to H.M. Forces in Ireland. She and Graves were married in 1840.

Further family matters are dealt with in the letter of 19 February 1873 sent from The Palace, Henry St., Limerick. It concerns Arnold (1847-1930), one of his five sons.

"Your very kind letter announcing the result of your interview with The Marquis of Ripon (Sir George F.S. Robinson) has just come to hand. Arnold and I owe you our best thanks. It will be a great satisfaction to him to find himself employed in a vocation, the duties of which will provide some exercise for his intellect, at the same time that the discharge of them will benefit society.



The grave of Charles Graves at St. Mary's Cathedral.

Mrs. Graves has been better for the last week or so. If the improvement continues, I shall probably go over to London in the beginning of March..." (1075/8/2).

Unfortunately Mrs. Graves died in 1873.

Religious concerns dominate the letter of 15 November 1880, sent again from the Palace in Henry Street and marked *private*.

"I turn to you for advice, and perhaps assistance, in a very delicate matter.

"I have induced my people in general to begin Divine Service on Sunday Mornings at 11.30 instead of 12 o'clock, which was the old fashioned and objectionable practice. To have Morning prayer in the afternoon was absurd and wrong.

"There is however, a parish in which difficulty has arisen in carrying my wishes into effect. Several of the members of the congregation have contracted mixed marriages: and these persons, with a few others, complain that they could not manage to get to church at 11.30 because their Roman Catholic coachmen do not return from Mass early enough to admit of their driving to Church at that time. These are persons who live at a distance of 2 or 3 miles from the Church. Now I got a hint that if the Parish Priest

were to hold his service $\frac{1}{4}$ of an hour, or $\frac{1}{2}$ an hour sooner, the difficulty which I have just mentioned would be removed. But, as I said before, this is a delicate matter for me to meddle in. You understand the circumstances and feelings of all the persons who would be concerned and you would be able to tell me would it be safe or right for me to approach the Bishop (the Rev. George Butler) or the Parish Priest with a direct but private request, or should I seek to obtain the intervention of some influential Roman Catholic friend, or should I give up the attempt altogether. If we were all Christians, as we pretend to be, there would be no difficulty or delicacy in this matter at all. But, as matters stand, I see that such an interference as is proposed, unless it were managed with the greatest discretion and privacy, might lead to unpleasant consequences, both in the present instance, and in the way of a precedent for the future ..."

It is certainly a tribute to the friendship between the two men and to the high regard which Graves obviously had for Monsell that he would seek his advice in such a delicate matter. It can only be regretted that further correspondence in this matter is not forthcoming.