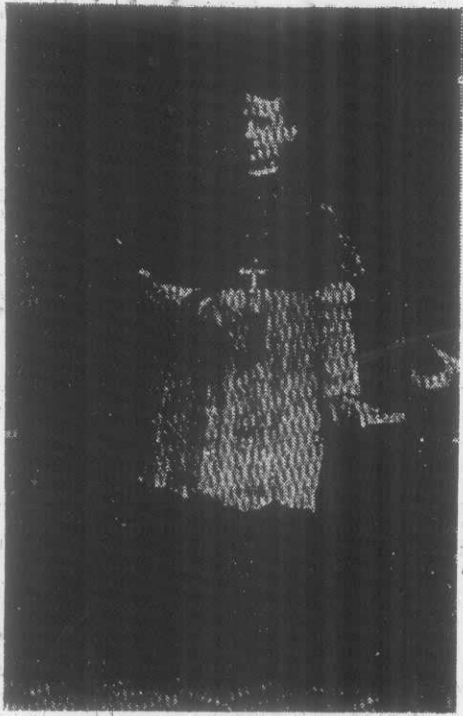


Edward Thomas O'Dwyer, Churchman and champion of liberty



AN EARLY PICTURE OF MOST REV. DR. O'DWYER

FIFTY years ago this week, Dr. Edward Thomas O'Dwyer, Bishop of Limerick, died. He was a brilliant Churchman and a man of outstanding ability and, in the thirty-one years during which he ruled his diocese he did remarkable work for the advancement of education and of the general betterment of the people. He will be remembered, too, as a fearless defender of the rights of Irishmen and as a champion of Irish liberty.

Bishop O'Dwyer was not a native of Limerick. He was the only son of Mr. John Keating O'Dwyer, of Cullen, Co. Tipperary, and was born at Lattin on January 22, 1842. The family moved to Limerick subsequently where the future bishop attended the Christian Brothers' Schools, Sexton Street.

In 1860 he entered Maynooth College. There he had among his class-fellows students who were to become notable clergymen—the Archbishop of Dublin (Dr. Walsh), the Archbishop of Tuam (Dr. Healy), Dr. Browne of Clonane, and others.

He was ordained priest in 1867, seven years after entering Maynooth. He had proved himself a student of much promise and mastered the courses he had read with ease and rapidity. On ordination he was attached to the Limerick diocese, and here his long life was spent as curate, as acting Administrator of a city parish and as Bishop.

He was curate successively at Rathkeale, Bruff, Shanagolden and Newcastle West, from where he was appointed to St. Michael's in the late seventies. Dr. O'Dwyer, while acting as curate in the various parishes to which he was attached, proved himself an earnest worker and was popular among the people for whom he ministered.

About the mid-1870's he took an active part in the County Limerick election when William Henry O'Sullivan was elected a Member of Parliament.

BISHOP

The then Bishop, Dr. Butler, died early in February of 1886, and the parish priests of the county and city met some time after to nominate three clergymen from whom the Pontiff would select Dr. Butler's successor.

Their deliberations resulted in Father O'Dwyer being placed dignissimus, or first, in the list of three nominated, Dean Hammond being dignior, and Rev. Joseph Bourke dignus.

The Holy See ratified the selection and on June 29, 1886, Father O'Dwyer was at St. John's Cathedral consecrated Bishop of Limerick by the Archbishop of Cashel, Dr. Croke. The preacher on the occasion was Dr. Carr, Bishop of Galway, afterwards Bishop of Melbourne.

WORK

When at St. Michael's, and later on as Bishop, Dr. O'Dwyer did much good and useful work for the people, and for their social and religious improvement.

He was a great temperance reformer, and took an active part in the Irish education question.

He established a Catholic Literary Institute; He secured a large share of the Leamy School endowments for the free instruction of Catholic city boys;

He obtained and provided funds for the erection of a teachers' training college; He founded and had erected a temperance hall, with reading rooms and recreation rooms attached;

He built a handsome new church—St. Joseph's; He took a zealous part as Bishop in promoting Catholic University education and gave important evidence on the subject before the Robertson Commission;

He contributed to the erection of artisans' dwellings in the city; He provided St. Munchin's College; He provided a new hospital, St. John's, for the sick.

It would be impossible in the scope of this article to measure his achievements; the foregoing are a few.

Dr. O'Dwyer's activities occasionally led him to act as arbitrator in local trades disputes. In recognition of his work for his people and his country, the Corporation of Limerick bestowed on him its highest honour by making him a Freeman of the City.

HOME RULE

For some years previous to his election as Bishop, the Land League was in full swing, and before the year was spent the no-rent manifesto was followed by the Plan of Campaign. The Bishop was a Home Ruler, but a Home Ruler after the methods of his exemplar, Isaac Butt, with whom he had stood on a Home Rule platform when a curate. But he took exception to the Plan of Campaign and the methods with which it was to be put into operation.

Recriminations followed and Dr. O'Dwyer was, about 1887, charged by some of the Nationalist leaders with being a landlord Bishop. He was never the man to lie low to what he considered unmerited attack, and accordingly this attack drew forth a spirited reply. He justified his opposition for conscientious reasons, boycotting and the Plan of Campaign being opposed by him on moral grounds. He was the friend, not the enemy of the people.

He was no intriguer; what he did he did in the light of day, and nothing would make him false to himself and to his sacred office.

This was practically the view Dr. O'Dwyer took all through those stormy years. He believed the course he adopted, no matter what others thought, was the right one, and he never failed in telling rejoinder when he made ready with his pen to repel the attack. He was impetuous and strong-willed but kindly. He admired those who stood up bravely for what they honestly believed right and just. But their beliefs should have the sanction of religion, and on this ground he stood immovable.

PLAN OF CAMPAIGN

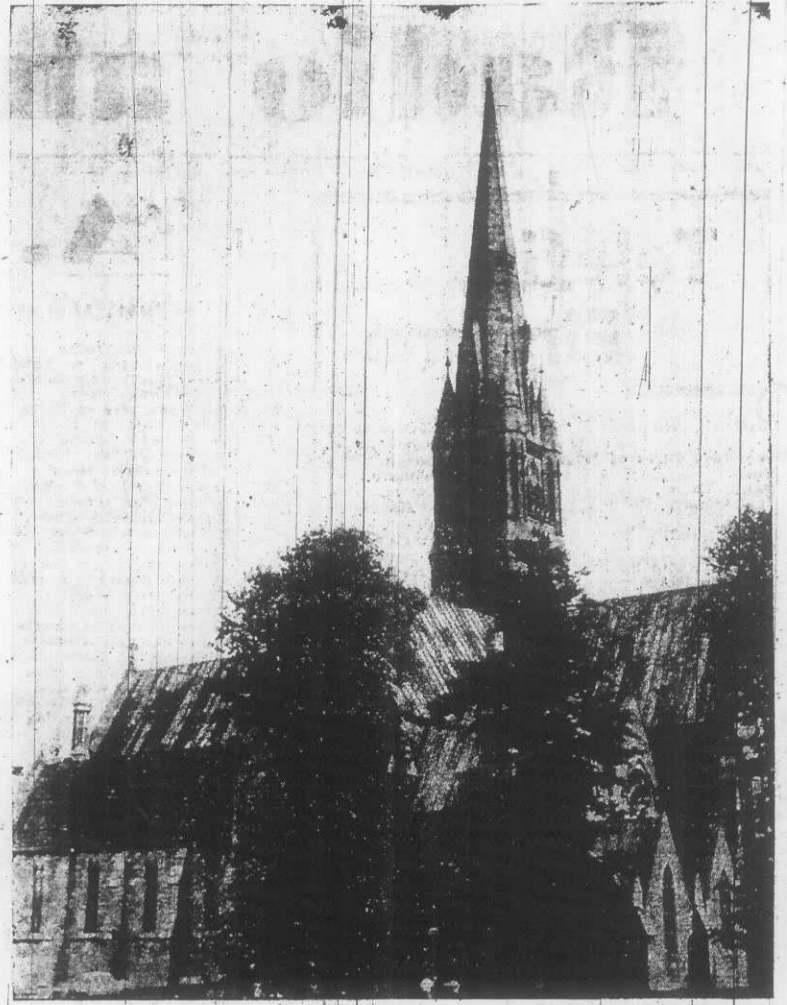
When the Plan of Campaign was launched he fell foul of the Nationalist Parliamentary Party by opposing their method of conducting the struggle. He took his stand on the Papal Rescript in opposition to the Plan and forbade the priests and people of the diocese to take part in a meeting announced to be held in Limerick in support of it.

On that occasion he wrote to the Mayor of Limerick, Fr. O'Keefe, pointing out that it would be a sin for Catholics to disobey the Pope's Rescript. Notwithstanding his hostile attitude, the meeting was held and addressed by William O'Brien and others who criticised severely the Bishop's attitude.

This course provoked Dr. O'Dwyer's hostility to the Irish Parliamentary Party generally. He held aloof from the popular movement, but did not cease from comment on the activities of individual members of the Nationalist Party in letters to the Press, which showed that he was a critic not tightly to be brushed aside.

MAXWELL

He did not hesitate to use strong language on his criticism of the action of the authorities, and perhaps here the classic instance is his devastating reply to General Sir J. G. Maxwell in May, 1916.



St. John's Cathedral, where Dr. O'Dwyer was consecrated Bishop of Limerick on June 29, 1886.

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The circumstances are generally known. Maxwell, who was Commander in Chief of the British Forces in Ireland requested the Bishop to remove two of his priests, Fr. Tom Wall and Fr. Hayes because they were "a dangerous menace to the peace and safety of the realm."

Dr. O'Dwyer in the course of a brilliant reply, declined to help Maxwell "in the furtherance of your work as the Military Dictator of Ireland", and described his regime as "one of the worst and blackest chapters in the history of the misgovernment of the country". The Bishop was widely congratulated on his courageous stand.

FRIEND

On his elevation to the Episcopacy, Dr. O'Dwyer retired to the episcopal residence at Corbally, which he purchased for the diocese, and there he spent a more or less retired life. He was a studious observer however of public matters and passing events, and his letters to the Press on such subjects, social or political, never failed to engage attention. In private life he was a great friend of the poor and to charitable institutions, and he invariably proved himself a man who valued money only for the good that could be done with it in bringing relief to suffering, or socially or mentally improving the conditions of the people whose welfare he sought.

NOT FAULT OF R.T.E.

The break in transmission during the vital stages of Sunday's big game at Croke Park was caused by a failure in the E.S.B. power supply to the stadium. "It was not our fault at all," said an RTE spokesman last night.

SHARKS

A dying shark netted by the trawler "Cape Seal," which docked at East London, South Africa, yesterday, gave birth to two young—a 42-inch male and a 29-inch female—which were given to the local aquarium. Both sharks were said to be "doing well."

EDUCATION IN 19th CENTURY LIMERICK

IN the early fifties of the 19th century there were no Catholic schools in Limerick, other than the few schools recently established under the National Education Board, and what was popularly referred to as the "Monks' school."

IN 1852 the Christian Brothers opened a school under the management of Brother Walsh, a man of considerable ability and a very successful teacher, for sons of the professional and mercantile classes. Here Edward Thomas O'Dwyer received his elementary education.

ABOUT 1856 the Bishop, Dr. Ryan, established a Diocesan Seminary and day school in the corner house in the Crescent adjoining Hartstonge Street, and presided over by Fathers Fitzgerald and Malone. Young O'Dwyer received his classical education in this school.

ON the advent of the Jesuit Fathers in 1858 to Limerick this school was closed and the Jesuits opened a day school in the house in Bedford Row, now a hospital. In this school young O'Dwyer finished his classical course and went from there to Maynooth in 1860.

DURING the seventies of the last century the then Bishop, Dr. Butler, re-opened the Diocesan Seminary and Day School in the Crescent under the Presidency of the Rev. Joseph Bourke, who had as his assistant the Rev. Edward Thomas O'Dwyer.

IN 1879 Father Bourke removed the Seminary to Mungret, but this venture did not prove a success, and in 1882 the Jesuit Fathers got possession of Mungret, opening a Boarding School and retaining the Diocesan students.

ON the accession of Dr. O'Dwyer to the Episcopate one of his first acts was the purchase of the fine residence of the Earls of Limerick in Henry Street, and the establishment there of St. Munchin's Seminary and Diocesan School.

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DGESHIRE KE CLOSES SEPT 15

Cyclist was 'hurtled eight feet into air'

A jury at the Limerick inquest held by Dr. Michael O'Connor, deputy coroner for East Limerick, was told yesterday how a cyclist struck by a car was hurled eight feet into the air after the impact.

The inquest was on 18 years old Timothy Barron of Kibballyowen, Co. Limerick, and the jury returned the verdict in accordance with the medical evidence that death was due to brain damage associated with fracture of the skull.

Herman Teskie, in evidence, said he saw deceased cycling towards the main road fairly fast. When the deceased turned to the right at the junction he heard a bang and saw the deceased being "hurtled eight feet into the air."

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t won't wash out...

these fabulous prizes!

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PRIZES

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"A pint for me" I said....
"and take one down the course
to a little man in a jockey's cap....
You can't miss him—
he'll be carrying my horse!"

