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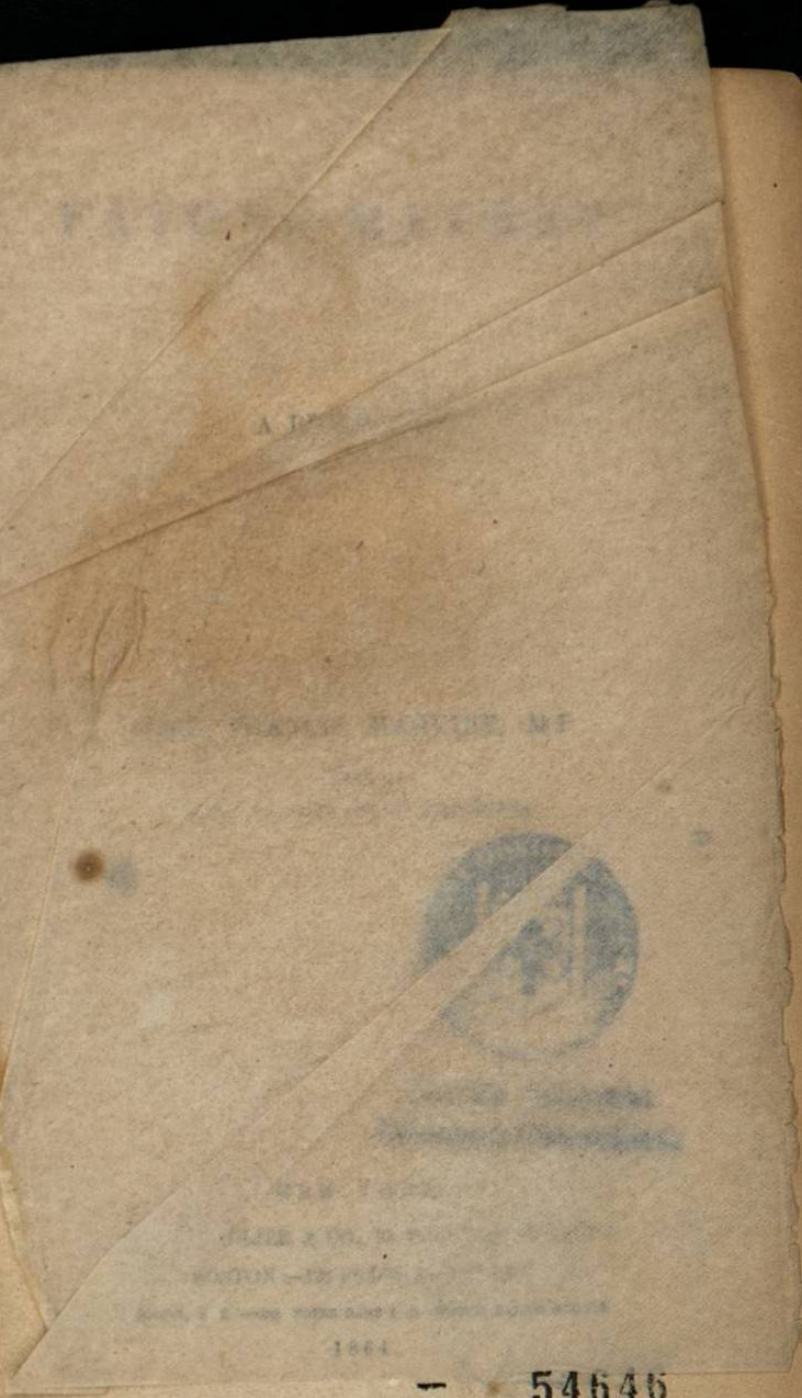
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Engraved by H. B. Hall, from a Portrait by E. J. Hasting, painted in 1846.

Yours affectionately
Theobald Mathew

New York: D. B. & Co. 1846.



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FATHER MATHEW:

A BIOGRAPHY.

BY

JOHN FRANCIS MAGUIRE, M.P.

AUTHOR OF

'ROME: ITS RULER AND ITS INSTITUTIONS.'



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PREFACE.

IT would be a reproach to the country which he served, no less than to the age which he adorned, were there no record of the life of Theobald Mathew. To allow such a man to pass away, without more notice than a paragraph in a newspaper, an article in a magazine, or a panegyric from the pulpit, would be a stain upon the honour of Ireland. But although I felt this as strongly as anyone could feel it, I did not venture to attempt the task of becoming his biographer until I saw that no other person had intimated an intention of so doing.* Not having found anyone undertaking a duty which more especially belonged to one of his own countrymen to undertake, I resolved on attempting it, notwithstanding that I had to discharge many and varied duties, which involved constant claims upon my time and attention. Setting aside that literary aptitude for the task, in which I but too keenly felt

* The sketch by the late Daniel Owen Madden, though brilliant and spirited, was but a sketch, not a biography; and the interesting and well-written memoir from the accomplished pen of Miss Hill—which formed one of the 'Our Exemplars,' in a little work published in 1861 by Cassell, Petter, & Galpin—did not extend beyond fifty pages. Sketches and brief memoirs of Father Mathew there have been, but no biography.

my deficiency, I had some circumstances in my favour—the principal of which was, my intimate knowledge of the subject of the contemplated memoir. I had known Father Mathew from my childhood; and the feeling which I entertained towards him at that early period of my life, ripened into the strongest and the truest friendship as I grew to manhood. From that time, and up to the year 1849, when he left Ireland for America, I was more or less intimately associated with him, in private as well as in public. He thus became known to me in almost every phase of his career and character—in his weakness as in his strength, in his moments of despondency and gloom as in his hours of happiness and exultation. I beheld him under every circumstance, and in every position—now on the platform, and now in his own home; now in the presence of his equals, and now surrounded by the poorest, the humblest, even the most abject in society. The intimate knowledge of Father Mathew which I was enabled to acquire, was of advantage to my undertaking in many respects; but the more I dwelt upon the memory of his goodness, which was in reality his greatness, the more I despaired of faithfully representing his character in my pages. Of one thing the reader may be sure—that if I have failed in my intended likeness, the failure cannot be attributed to flattery or exaggeration. The qualities of a great heart, throbbing with none but tender, generous, and holy emotions, cannot be exaggerated,—the difficulty is to depict them with anything like a fair approach to their reality. The task—rashly and presumptuously undertaken it may be—is accomplished; and the result of no small labour, but of much greater

anxiety, is now placed before the public. And now that it is accomplished, I feel that I have omitted many things which I ought to have done, in order to render the portrait life-like, and in some degree worthy of the original. I also feel that I may have failed in giving an adequate idea of that wondrous movement so providentially originated and so wisely guided by the Apostle of Temperance; but with respect to this portion of my task, there was the danger of imparting an air of dulness to that which I desired to render interesting to the general reader. In one respect, at least, I have been faithful to the life and character of Father Mathew,—in guarding against the voluntary introduction of any topic which would clash with the prevailing tone and temper of one who, devoted Catholic Priest as he was, might be truly said to belong to mankind rather than to party or to sect. If by recording the life I have helped to perpetuate the memory of a great and good man, I have achieved a task of which I may feel some pride; but if the perusal of these pages should inspire others to imitate the virtues of Theobald Mathew, then indeed will his biographer have much reason to rejoice.

CORK: *September 1863.*

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