

Mathew in those days, says, 'He was the most irreproachable man I ever knew, and the pink of a gentleman. No one ever lived more within his ministry than he did. He was then what he was to the last—a mild, kind, gentle, unassuming man—always the same.' 'There was,' says another clergyman, 'a quiet gravity in his manner, with an air of genuine sanctity—something of the altar and the sanctuary always about him.' No one was more thoroughly devoid of affectation, and no one was more truly what he appeared to be—religious without austerity, good without parade, charitable without ostentation; devoted to his church, and in every thought a priest, but free from the slightest taint of sectarian rancour or intolerance. And this with him was not the result of calculation, or even of reasoning; it was instinctive, and sprang from his very nature.

CHAPTER IV.

Father Mathew as a Preacher — Earnestness his chief Attraction — Cotemporary Sketch of his Pulpit Oratory — His Sermons free from sectarian Bitterness — His Charity Sermons — His Pictures of the sublime Charity of the Poor — Intensity of his Emotion — The Man and the Preacher one — Establishes a Cemetery — The Cholera of 1832 — His untiring Exertions — The Hospital — Saved! — Give! give! give!

FROM the year 1820, his reputation as a preacher had been steadily advancing; and at the time of which we now speak—six years after that date—he was admitted to be one of the most popular preachers of the day. This was at a period when the Cork pulpit was adorned by men whose powers were of the very highest order. Father Mathew was not a man of shining abilities, nor was he a profound or severely-trained scholar. Neither had he fashioned his style upon the best models, or improved his taste by a thorough acquaintance with those authors whose works are the classics of English literature. He was not then certainly an accomplished pulpit orator, if at any period of his life he could lay claim to that distinction; and in the earlier years of his ministry he was frequently guilty of errors of taste, and violations of those rules laid down by rhetoricians of ancient and modern schools. And his voice, which at first was shrill, weak, and puny to the last degree, still lacked that strength and volume which practice and confidence imparted to it in later years. But those who for the most part thronged to hear him, and crowded his little church with that object, were not either inclined to be critical, or very capable of criti

cism. They came, in an humble spirit, to hear the Gospel expounded—to be told of the mercy and goodness of God—of the beauty and holiness of charity—by one whose life was the living example of the precepts he taught. What was it to them, if a simile were false, or a metaphor out of place, or an image occasionally tawdry, or a sentence wanting in polish, or a chain of reasoning loose and inconclusive?—they crushed into that little temple to listen to the word of God preached by a man of God; and in that expectation they were never disappointed. Once within that church, they yielded themselves implicitly and unhesitatingly to his spiritual and moral guidance, and they went with him whither he led them. Ay, and even those few who ordinarily could sit coldly in judgement upon the excellencies or the defects, the style or manner of a preacher, and who, perhaps, came just to see something of the young priest of whom the ‘common people’ and the ‘old women’ talked so much—even they, cool critics and lofty judges, as they held themselves to be, found themselves suddenly surprised by strange dimness of vision and a choking sensation in the throat, at the unpretending pathos of the preacher. What was the charm that held spell-bound the close-packed hundreds beneath the pulpit, that riveted the attention of the crowded galleries, and moved the inmost hearts even of those who had come to criticise? The earnestness of the preacher. Not the earnestness of the actor, who simulates, with cunning declamation and by impassioned gesture, the ardour of nature. No; it was the earnestness of truth, of sincerity, of belief. Father Mathew practised what he preached, and believed what he so persuasively and urgently enforced. Then, the emotion, which his voice made manifest to the ear, and which his agitated features made visible to the eye, was real, genuine, springing from the heart, thrilling his nerves, warming his blood, quickening his pulse—felt in every fibre of his frame. There was established between the preacher and the audience the

most complete and perfect identity of feeling, the result of the sympathy which they mutually felt.

From one of a remarkable series of papers, entitled ‘Sketches of the Cork Catholic Pulpit,’ published about the year 1826, and which were written by a clergyman, whose fame as a pulpit orator is equalled by his reputation as a profound scholar,* a passage or two may be aptly quoted, so as to afford the reader a clearer impression of the Father Mathew of that day. The writer, after paying an eloquent tribute to the character of the preacher, to whom, he says, the reverence of all classes of the community was spontaneously and unreservedly tendered, thus describes the effect produced by his preaching on the mind of one who rather came to judge than to sympathise:—

We have ourselves more than once gone to hear this preacher, with the express intent of duly and fairly estimating his powers as a speaker, and have summoned to our aid as much of our critical bitterness as we conceived sufficient to preserve our judgement uninfluenced by the previous charm of his character. We were not listening to his affectionate, earnest, and pathetic exhortation more than ten minutes, when our criticism—our bitterness—our self-importance, left us; all within us of unkind and harsh was softened down—our heart beat only to kindlier emotions—we sympathised with our fellow-christians around us. We defy the sternness and severity of criticism to stand unmoved, though it may remain unawakened, while Mr. Mathew is preaching; and this surely is no mean criterion of the excellence of his character, and the efficiency of his ministry in the pulpit.

His personal appearance is thus minutely sketched:—

He has the advantage (though he appears to make little use of the advantage) of possessing a finely formed middle sized person, of exquisite symmetry; the head, of admirable contour, and from which a finished model of the antique could be cast; the countenance intelligent, animated, and benevolent; its complexion rather sallow, inclining to paleness; eyes of dark lustre, beaming with internal peace, and rich in concentrated sensibility, rather than speaking or kindling

* The Very Rev. M. B. O’Shea, Archdeacon and Pastor of St. Patrick’s, Cork.

with a superabundant fire ; the line of his mouth, harmonising so completely with his nose and chin, is of peculiar grace ; the brow, open, pale, broad and polished, bears upon it the impress not merely of dignified thought, but of nobility itself.

The concluding passage is at once a description and a testimony :

His principal talent lies in the disposal of the persuasive topics. He is fond of appealing—and in truth he does it with success—to the warm devotional feelings that have their fixed and natural seat in the Catholic bosom ; to the devotional recollections and associations that alternately soothe and alarm the Catholic mind. To all these he appeals ; matters so full of thrilling interest, and of inherent eloquence, that they burst on the soul with an all-subduing, instantaneous and electric force, purifying and ennobling the commonest phraseology that happens to be selected as their vehicle. Thus has this excellent young man gone on, notwithstanding many imperfections, which may yet be removed by ordinary study and attention, preaching earnestly and successfully, and enforcing truth and illustrating the beauty of the doctrine of his religion, by the noblest, the fairest, the most convincing comment—the undeviating rectitude, the unspotted purity, the extensive and indefatigable beneficence of his life. *O, si sic omnes!*

His Passion sermon, which he preached generally twice on Good Friday, was a marvellous success. The subject is of itself sufficient to inspire the human heart with the profoundest emotions of sympathy and compassion, and to fill the soul of the Christian with reverential awe. But as the preacher led his breathless audience, step by step, through each stage of that tremendous tragedy, that sublime agony, they were themselves the horror-stricken spectators of those memorable scenes. They glowed and shuddered, they sighed and wept, until, in the supreme moment, when the Great Atonement is consummated, they were so overwhelmed with sorrow, that sobs and cries testified to the depth of their emotion, and the triumph of the preacher. But is 'triumph' the right word, where there was neither art nor artifice—no deliberate attempt to work upon the feelings of susceptible

piety? The preacher was as much moved as were those whom he moved. He was present in spirit with the beloved ones at the foot of the Cross, his features, as his soul, convulsed with the liveliest grief and horror ; and those who saw that working countenance and that heaving breast, and heard those thrilling accents, could not but feel the keenest sympathy with his almost terrible emotion.

There was another charm in Father Mathew's preaching—it was utterly divested of religious, or, more correctly speaking, sectarian bitterness. He was not a controversialist. Controversy, which too often stands for conflict, was not suited to his natural temperament ; neither, perhaps, was his mind sufficiently trained by theological study to enable him to wield with effect against an opponent, and with safety to himself, those sharp-pointed weapons which, while slaying one's antagonist in argument, too frequently penetrate beyond the robe, and wound the sacred side of Religion. He was not a deeply-read theologian, and with Canon Law he was but imperfectly acquainted ; indeed, so little so, that he occasionally committed himself by mistakes which, though of small importance in the esteem of laymen, assumed a grave aspect in the consideration of the severely-trained student of Maynooth or the Sorbonne. Few men, however, were better Biblical scholars than was Father Mathew. With the Sacred Scriptures he was intimately and profoundly conversant. There was not a line from Genesis to Revelation with which he was not familiar. Imbued with the purer spirit of the New Testament, his imagination was yet captivated by the grandeur and the beauty of the Old. In its sublimity, as in its sweetness, the Bible was thoroughly mastered by this Brother of the Capuchin Order. Thus he had at will, and ready for every occasion, as for any emergency, quotations from gospel and parable, from hymn and canticle, from prophecy and proverb ; and if he could not wrestle in tough argument, or flash logic in keen strife of intellect, he could

disarm with an apt quotation, or safely intrench himself behind a maxim which might not be disputed. His sermons were eminently scriptural, breathing certainly more of the meek spirit of Him who taught so lovingly on the Mount, than of those fierce kings and mighty captains of Judea, whose words sound like trumpet blasts, and whose deeds ring again with the clang of battle.

Of his charity sermons I may here make mention, although his reputation for these more ambitious efforts of pulpit oratory was of somewhat slow growth; and it was not until about the date of his adhesion to the temperance cause that he was eagerly sought after by those interested in the management of such charities as were either wholly or partly sustained through appeals of that nature. Here again, his earnestness, his character, his life, rendered his preaching not to say impressive, but irresistible. He pleaded with all the fervour of his soul for those whom, of all others, he loved the most—the poor, the afflicted, the suffering, those sunk in sorrow or lost in shame. The charity which glowed in his own breast he imparted, even if momentarily, to those whom he addressed. In these sermons there was not the least attempt at display—no elaborately prepared and carefully studied preface, in which the orator, in measured sentences of graceful cadence, might exhibit the range of his scholarship, and his acquaintance with the learning of the historian or the speculations of the philosopher. Father Mathew was too earnest, too direct and practical, for display of any kind. He gave out his text, and plunged right into the midst of his subject—telling his audience what were the commands and injunctions of God as revealed in the Old Law and taught in the New—what were the duties of the rich to their brethren the poor. He painted the poor lovingly and truthfully, in their sufferings and in their patience, in their profound misery and in their exalted charity; and while he touched the heart by pathetic descriptions, and stirred it by impassioned appeals,

he shamed the niggard alms-giving of the wealthy by narrating instances of the sublime generosity of the poor to the poor. A beautiful instance of this boundless charity, so frequently evinced by the humblest in the community, formed a striking feature in one of his most successful sermons, preached first in Cork, with great advantage to the cause for which he appealed, and afterwards preached in Dublin with a success almost unprecedented. It will afford the reader an idea of the happy manner in which he imparted a human interest to his religious exhortation:—

If I were to pause to enumerate but the hundredth part of the many generous deeds of mercy performed by the poorest of the poor, of which I myself have been witness, I would occupy the whole of the time which this discourse should last. Permit me, however, to state one simple case of facts:—A poor woman found in the streets a male infant, which she brought to me, and asked imploringly what she was to do with it? Influenced, unhappily, by cold caution, I advised her to give it to the churchwardens. It was then evening. On the ensuing morning, early, I found this poor woman at my door; she was a poor water-carrier; she cried bitterly, and said—'I have not slept one wink all night for parting with that child which God had put in my way, and if you will give me leave, I will take him back again.' I was filled with confusion at the pious tenderness of this poor creature, and I went with her to the parish nurse for the infant, which she brought to her home with joy, exclaiming in the very words of the prophet—'Poor child, though thy mother has forgotten thee, I will not forget thee.' Eight years have elapsed since she brought to her humble home that exposed infant, and she is now blind from the constant exposure to wet and cold; and ten times a-day may be seen that poor water-carrier passing with her weary load, led by this little foundling boy. Oh! merciful Jesus, I would gladly sacrifice the wealth and power of this wide world to secure to myself the glorious welcome that awaits this poor blind water-carrier on the great accounting day! Oh! what, compared to charity like this, the ermined robe, the ivory sceptre, the golden throne, the jewelled diadem!

Father Mathew was not content with reaping his present harvest; he sowed in the richest soil of the human heart seeds

of compassion and tenderness, which afterwards brought forth good fruit, in many a holy work and charitable undertaking. For the orphan especially he appealed with resistless pathos. At times, his words produced an electrical effect, and haunted the memory with unfading freshness. To this day, the writer remembers, as vividly as if they were spoken but yesterday, though they were heard by him more than twenty years since, these words, delivered with all the force of the sincerest conviction: 'I never meet in the street a ragged child, asking me for charity in the name of God, that I do not think I see the infant Jesus, with outstretched hands, and hear the petition for human mercy emanating from the lips of the Divinity.'

Answering those who allege they would wish to do good, but that they are afraid of imposition, he thus answered: 'Wretched excuse! It is safer to be imposed upon by nineteen, than to allow one deserving object to depart unrelieved. Many, says the Sacred Text, imagining they received weary hungry travellers, entertained angels.'

His pictures of the hospital, the garret, the sick and the dying poor, the expiring father of the destitute family, were as full of pathos as his pictures of the heartless rich man, breathing his last in the midst of gorgeous luxury, which his eye then loathed, were striking and terrible to the imagination. The preacher prayed and implored, and his wailing tones called forth the responsive tear; but he likewise thundered against the selfish, the hard-hearted, the cruel, the grinder of the faces of the poor and the betrayer of innocence, in the language of immortal wrath, and denounced their guilt with the awful anathemas of the Sacred Word.

Occasionally, his emotion completely overpowered him; as an instance will show. It was while he was preaching the annual charity sermon for the Magdalen Asylum. He drew a captivating picture of one whom he had personally known—a pure and sinless girl, happy in her unconscious innocence,

gay as the lark in the morning sky, the spring of the fawn in her step, the light of gladness in her eye, and prayers of thankfulness to God on her virgin lip. Then bringing the dark figure of the seducer into this Eden of innocence, he depicted him marking out his prey, lying stealthily in wait for her, haunting her footsteps, flattering her artless vanity, encompassing her with snare and pitfall, never relinquishing his hellish pursuit, till, by foul and devilish perfidy, he had accomplished his fatal purpose, by the ruin of his victim. The preacher described the struggles, the prayers, the weaknesses, the helplessness of the poor young creature, thus lost to honour and to virtue. And then he told how, after he had missed her from her accustomed place before the altar, he met her one wild night in the public street, and how, covered with shame, she sought to elude his grasp. She was not yet hardened in her hateful life; but her beauty was gone, her light extinguished in a night of horror; and as he pictured the defilement of that poor human heart, once the tabernacle of the living God; he burst into a passionate flood of tears, overpowered by the emotion which his own words excited. There was not a dry eye in the congregation; but the charity gained largely by this irrepressible outburst of feeling.

No man was more thoroughly represented by his own words than Father Mathew; and a single passage from one of his charity sermons offers, as it were, a key to his whole life. 'Mercy! heavenly mercy! Had the Deity never spoken—had He never revealed, by prophet or apostle, that mercy was His will—its innate excellence, the high honour it confers upon us, *the delicious, the ineffable pleasure we enjoy in its exercise*, would be sufficient to point out to us the necessity of this indispensable duty.'

An idea of the good sense of the man and the simplicity of his style, may be gathered from a reply which he made to a brother clergyman of eminent ability, and most remarkable for his gifts as a preacher, who observed to Father Mathew

how difficult it was at times to select a subject, and to know what would please a cultivated congregation. 'My dear sir,' said Father Mathew, 'preach for the poor, and your preaching will always serve for the rich.'

Amongst the many useful and indeed necessary works with which, in a religious and social point of view, his name is indissolubly linked, was the establishment of a new cemetery—that which has been for more than thirty years known as the 'Botanic Graveyard,' or 'Father Mathew's Cemetery.' It derived its former name from the fact, that the ground purchased by Father Mathew, and leased to him in January 1830, had been for several years known as the Botanic Gardens, attached to the Royal Cork Institution. These grounds had long been remarkable for their beauty, the admirable manner in which they were laid out, and the variety and rarity of the trees, shrubs, and other botanical treasures with which they were adorned. Even at this day it is no uncommon thing to hear it said that such a person had been buried in the 'Botanic Gardens.' Father Mathew was impelled to take this important step by two considerations,—the desire to relieve the poorer classes from the heavy and oppressive burial-fees then exacted in the established graveyards of the city, and the necessity of putting an end to a condition of dependence which Catholic pride felt to be alike galling and degrading. This state of things sprang out of the religious condition of the country, and the lingering pressure of the still unrepealed Penal Laws. He had a keen remembrance of a circumstance which excited intense feeling at the time, and which may be mentioned, as it tends to illustrate the grievance for which a practical remedy was now sought to be obtained. It occurred shortly after the passing of the Burial Act in 1825, when Dean Magee—determining to enforce the authority acquired by the new law, which, while professing to be a measure of relief, in reality perpetuated exceptional and unjust legislation—gave orders that no

clergyman should be allowed to pray in the churchyard of St. Finn Barr's without permission from him. The first message to that effect was delivered by a subordinate on the occasion of the burial of a respectable Catholic in that graveyard. The deceased gentleman had been much esteemed for his charitable disposition, and his many good works; and a large concourse of persons, of all classes, testified by their presence the respect in which they held his memory. The venerable Dean Collins, whose name has been previously mentioned, as one of Father Mathew's best friends, attended the funeral, accompanied by several clergymen, of whom Father Mathew was one; and as the Dean was in the act of reciting the solemn service for the dead, he was most indecently interrupted, to the grievous indignation of the excited multitude. He was imperiously commanded, by the express directions of Dr. Magee, to desist from the performance of the Catholic service over the remains of a Catholic parishioner. Dr. Collins raised his tall figure to its fullest height, and, turning to the bearer of the unchristian mandate, which had been rudely and even insolently conveyed, said, in a voice which was heard by all present: 'Go, sir! tell your superior that I will not comply with his indecent and untimely command. No law, civil or ecclesiastical, that I know of, prohibits any man, clergyman or other, from offering up a few prayers for the dead, within the precincts of a churchyard or on the high road, when there is no introduction, or, if he please, obstruction, of the peculiar ceremonial of the Catholic Church. Go, sir, and tell your master he will not find me, or my brother priests, obedient to his command. Go and tell Dean Magee that I will pray to God when, where, and in what manner I please, without asking permission of Dean Magee.' A deep murmur of sympathy rose from the very heart of that insulted assembly; and were it not for the nature of the occasion, and the chastened feeling which it naturally induced, a wild cheer would have rung through that graveyard, scaring the

rooks in the old trees that cast their solemn shadows upon the quiet graves beneath, and perhaps startling those who were on the watch, to witness how the Dean's rash conduct had been borne by the 'bondsmen' of that day. It is sufficient to say that the spirited and becoming resistance of Dean Collins put an end to scandals of the kind; for we do not find in the records of Cork that any similar attempt was made by the dignitary who became, in some years after the incident referred to, Archbishop of Dublin. The occurrence, nevertheless, made a deep and lasting impression upon the local community, and in no small degree influenced Father Mathew in the important undertaking which was so soon to be crowned with the most complete success.

It required very little, either in arrangement or outlay, to adapt the beautiful grounds to the purpose for which they were now destined. The cypress and the willow, the cedar and the palm-tree, were there in blended beauty; and fragrant shrubs and bright evergreens delighted the eye at every step. Soon, the modest mound, with its simple cross, marking the last resting-place of the lowly dead, dotted the space liberally reserved for free burials; and soon, too, the headstone, elaborately carved, and the tomb and monument, simple and elegant, or costly and ambitious, afforded their evidence of the want that had been experienced, and of the grateful readiness with which this most useful and benevolent undertaking had been availed of by the wealthier classes of the Catholic community. On January the 25th, the lease was perfected; and in the following month there was erected, in the central avenue, a great stone cross, which is overshadowed by a veritable cedar of Lebanon, and beneath which, according to his living intention and dying injunction, now rests all that is mortal of the good man by whom the cemetery was founded and the cross was erected.

In seven or eight years after the conversion of these grounds into a cemetery, there was a motion made, in the

Irish Court of Chancery, to restrain Father Mathew from using portions of the adjoining ground for the same purpose. The circumstance is only of this value, that it affords an opportunity of quoting the testimony of the opposing counsel, as to the disposition made by Father Mathew of the revenue derived from burials. Mr. Sergeant Warren, who appeared for the plaintiff, used these words:—'It is quite true, my lord, that the defendant here has been actuated, in the course he has taken, by the purest and most benevolent motives—these I give him the fullest credit for. I doubt not that he has bestowed (as stated in his answer and in his proofs) the profits arising from the cemetery in works of charity, and that, so far from deriving any personal benefit, he is rather a loser, by the payment of part of the rents of the lands out of his own resources.' It is not always that such testimony is borne to a defendant by the counsel of the plaintiff.

Very soon, indeed, was the necessity for this additional receptacle for the dead terribly manifested. In 1832, the cholera, the dread of which had been haunting the minds of those who daily noted its eccentric but fatal track, burst out in Cork with fearful malignity. It had for its fitting birth-place and cradle one of the filthiest dens in one of the most crowded and worst-ventilated districts of the city. There it appeared in its most awful aspect, appalling the community by the rapidity of its stroke, the brief struggle of its victim, and the wild dread of contagion which its very name evoked. The people were filled with dismay, as each hour brought with it new tidings of its spreading from house to house, from lane to lane, from street to street, from district to district. The calamity, severe and terrible as it was, had this much of good in it—it called forth the courage, the devotedness, and the generosity of the principal inhabitants, whom it united together, even as one man, irrespective of all political or religious distinctions whatever. Many instances of the greatest heroism and of the most extraordinary munificence could here

be mentioned ; but allusions to individuals might seem invidious and unfair ; and, besides, those who distinguished themselves most by their fearless exertions and by their unstinted generosity, are now numbered with the dead, and are, we humbly trust, enjoying, in a happier world than that which they adorned by their virtues, the reward promised to those who walk in the way of the Lord.

This was just the occasion to call into their fullest activity the qualities of a man like Father Mathew. At this time we can only faintly remember the confidence which he inspired, and the blessings which followed his footsteps, as he rapidly passed through the streets on some mission of charity ; but we have been favoured with a communication from one who bears a grateful memory the generous aid which he, the pastor of the parish in which the plague first broke out, received from his brother priest. The writer is the Catholic Archdeacon of Cork, the Venerable M. B. O'Shea, now pastor of St. Patrick's, then pastor of SS. Peter and Paul :—

I have at this moment (Feb. 11th, 1863) the most vivid and grateful recollection of the generous and heroic zeal displayed by my revered and beloved friend, Father Mathew, when, with the unselfish devotedness of a martyr and an apostle, he threw himself into the midst of the peril, when the terrible *reality* of Asiatic cholera smote my parish first of any locality in Ireland, in April 1832. When the first stunning effect of the blow had subsided, as it speedily did, a noble spectacle was exhibited by the union of all ranks, professions, and creeds, while resolutely and fearlessly confronting the calamity, and aiming at its mitigation by all the resources which humanity, religion, and science are sure to bring into play, in the presence of a fearful crisis. Amongst those who at that awful period took a conspicuous part, not only in unwearied attendance by the bed-side of the plague-stricken sufferers, but also in suggesting and practically carrying out sanitary and remedial measures for the relief of the sick in private houses and in the public hospitals, Father Mathew was ever foremost, and always indefatigable. What most deeply affected me *then*, and which the memory even now, at the distance of more than

thirty years, fills me with the mingled emotions of gratitude and of reverential regard, was the visit he paid me in the very early stage of this dire calamity, when my hard-worked curates and myself were overwhelmed with incessant calls by day and night, before there was time for the erection of a temporary hospital, and before the pestilence had spread over other and distant districts of the city and suburbs—the centre and focus of the disease being a block of narrow ill-ventilated streets and lanes in the immediate neighbourhood of my residence, where the cholera raged with peculiar virulence. Two or three days after the first terrific outburst of the pest, and as soon as the awful tidings reached Father Mathew's ears, he hastened to my house, and, with open heart and arms, embraced me ; and, while offering his consolation and sympathy, tendered me his valuable services and the offices of his sacred ministry, for the comfort and spiritual aid of my poor afflicted parishioners, at every hour by night or day that I should refer to him. This offer, unexpected and unsolicited on my part, was, of course, promptly and gratefully accepted ; and nothing could equal the noble untiring efficiency of the support he then gave me until the benefit and blessing of his ministrations to the sick were required away from my central district, in the southern quarter of the city, which, in less than a fortnight after, was doomed to undergo its own share in the prevailing scourge.

Quitting the district in which he had laboured so zealously as a volunteer, Father Mathew devoted himself, almost exclusively for a time, to the more legitimate sphere of his duties, his own parish. Here the plague raged in all its horrors, and at every hour of the day the brave priest might be seen going from house to house, performing the duties of his ministry amidst sights and sounds that appalled the stoutest heart, and shook the strongest nerves. But this was not all he did in that trying time.

One of the largest hospitals in the city was established at a little distance from his dwelling in Cove Street, and was attended by a full staff of clergymen, who spared no labour in that trying moment. In order to ensure the presence of a clergyman at every hour of the day and night, it was arranged that the duty should be taken in turn ; and Father Mathew

requested, 'as a favour,' that he should be apportioned the hours from midnight to six in the morning—the very hours which even the most zealous might be excused from selecting. But Father Mathew knew how little reliance could be placed on mere mercenaries, gathered together for the occasion, and performing duties of a depressing and even revolting nature. In whatever part of the city he might have been during the day,—in the garret or the hovel in the remotest suburbs, or by the bed-side of a friend who had been suddenly struck down,—he was unfailingly punctual in his attendance in the hospital during the long and weary hours of night. Gentle and mild as he was, still there was not a nurse or an assistant in the hospital that did not stand in awe of the vigilance of Father Mathew, or who would willingly have incurred his rebuke. If the nurses watched the patients, Father Mathew watched both nurses and patients; and while he was present, there was no such thing heard of as a nurse or attendant nodding at her post, or relaxing in her attention to the sick. An incident, to which he oftentimes referred in after life, and which was soon known through the city, exhibited the value and necessity of his vigilance and supervision.

He had administered the last rites of religion to a young man, in whom he had a special interest, and having received a summons to another part of the hospital, he hurriedly quitted the ward, from which he was absent but for a short time. On his return, he approached the bed in which he had left the young man alive; but the bed was now unoccupied. 'Nurse, nurse! what has become of the young man who lay in this bed?' asked Father Mathew. 'Dead, sir,' was the laconic answer. 'Dead!—it cannot be—where is he?' 'The corpse is taken to the dead-house, sir.' 'I can't believe he is dead—I must go myself and see,' said Father Mathew; and he at once proceeded to the ghastly chamber to which the dead were borne, previous to being

taken out for interment. It presented an awful spectacle indeed. At one end was a pile of miserable coffins, the merest shells, made of thin boards, and knocked together with a few nails. Some of these wretched receptacles were on the floor, either with their lids fastened down, or open and awaiting their future occupants. On tables, and also on the floor, lay a number of bodies, in each of which a heart throbbed and a soul dwelt a few hours before. Some lay, blue and distorted, in the sheet in which they had been snatched from the bed on which they died; more were wrapped, like mummies, in similar sheets, which had been covered with pitch or tar, liberally laid on to prevent contagion. Amidst that scene of death in its most appalling aspect, there was a horrid bustle of life; coffins being nailed down with noisy clatter—sheets being rapidly covered over with a black and seething substance—bodies being moved from place to place, and tumbled into their last receptacle with the haste and indifference which a terrible familiarity with death engenders in the minds of a certain class—orders hoarsely given—figures moving or reeling to and fro; for it was necessary that those who performed the horrid and revolting duties of that chamber should be well plied with whisky: it was the custom of the time and the necessity of the moment. Into this scene of horrors, partly lighted by a few coarse flickering candles, Father Mathew hurriedly entered. Even the strongest might have recoiled at the spectacle which met his sight; but he only thought of the object of his mission. There lay the body, and near it were two men preparing the tarred sheet in which they were to wrap it. 'Stop, stop!' said Father Mathew, 'surely the young man can't be dead!' 'Dead, your reverence! God forbid you or me would be as dead as that poor fellow—The Lord have mercy on his soul!' said one of the men. 'No, no, I can't believe it—I was speaking to him a moment before I left the ward—let me try.' 'Wisha, try, if you plaze, your reverence; but he's as

dead as a door-nail ; and shure it does n't take long to carry a man off in those times—God be between us and harm !' There was a momentary suspension of the loathsome work as Fathew Mathew knelt down beside the body, and pressed his hand lightly over the region of the heart. A group, such as few, save perhaps those who loved to paint the terrible and the hideous, would desire to see near them, clustered round the devoted priest ; and not a sound was heard for a time in that chamber of death. There was a suspense of a moment—it seemed an age—when Father Mathew cried out exultingly—' Thank God ! he is alive !—I feel his heart beat—thank God, thank God !' It was quite true—life was not extinct ; and restoratives having been applied, the young man was removed to another part of the hospital—and in a few days after he was able to pour forth his gratitude to him who, through God's mercy, had rescued him from inevitable death ; for had but another minute elapsed, he was lost to this world for ever. As may be supposed, this incident had a salutary effect in the hospital, though it was little wanted to render as untiring as ever the sleepless vigilance of Father Mathew.

The physicians who were associated with him in that fearful time spoke ever after with enthusiasm of his zeal, his utter disregard of self, and his munificent generosity ; for, from his own resources, he constantly sent the most costly wines and spirits to the hospitals, as stimulants to be used by the patients, and also for the staff, who, as he then believed, required their use after the discharge of their arduous and exhausting duties.

The reputation of Father Mathew was much enhanced by his marvellous labours at this period—which labours never ceased until the temporary hospitals were closed, and confidence was fully restored to the public mind. Nor indeed were his labours over even then, though they assumed another form ; for there were widows to assist, and orphans

to educate and provide for ; and to this holy duty he applied his utmost energy, and devoted every shilling he could spare from the other objects of his seemingly exhaustless bounty. 'Give ! give ! give !'—so he preached, and so he practised ; and when he gave his last shilling, he gave it in the name of God, confident that God would send him more to give.