

hearted as to take the life of a harmless duck, merely to satisfy your hunger. She exhorted him against the commission of so great a sin, and begged him not to stain his soul with her innocent blood. When the fox could stand her cant no longer, he said—Out upon you, madam, with all your fine feathers; you are a pretty thing to lecture me about taking life to satisfy my hunger—is not your own crop now full of worms? You destroy more lives in one day, to satisfy your hunger, than I do in a whole month!

CHAPTER XXV.

His Speech on Capital Punishment—The Oriental's Question—His distinguished Visitors—Innocent Festivities—Protestant Sympathy—Sacredness of the Pledge.

AT a meeting held in Cork, in 1845, Father Mathew expressed his views on the question of Capital Punishment, which the promoters of the meeting sought to abolish. It will be seen that he availed himself of the opportunity thus afforded him to urge upon his fellow-citizens the wisdom and humanity of arresting crime by the protection and reformation of the young. In proposing the resolution which he had been solicited to propose, he said :—

I deemed it my duty to take part in your proceedings this day; and if my humble advocacy can in any way tend to ameliorate the condition of the most degraded member of the human family, I consider the violence which I offer to my feelings in thus presenting myself before you to be amply compensated. The resolution handed to me requires no preface; it is simply the enunciation of a great principle, agreed to by all persons—that the prevention of crime and the reformation of the criminal, not vindictive justice, should be the object of all governments. The ministry to which I have been called, and to which I have devoted myself so many years, has given me great knowledge and experience of human nature. I have been for nearly thirty years a calm observer of passing events. Guilt in all its various gradations has appeared before me; and I have very seldom found a case where, by kindness and winning his confidence, I did not succeed in the reformation of the criminal, by holding out to him a pardon through Christ.

Indeed such were the numbers of persons of that description that came to me, that often the finger of scorn was pointed at me, as the

sinner's reproach. But I was proud to be calumniated in such a way, for my Divine Master was similarly reproached. I speak not for the purpose of magnifying myself, but to prove that I came not here for the purpose of propounding a beautiful theory, but to give you the result of my own experience. I have seen vindictive justice grasping the lash, and exhibiting the gibbet, in vain. Such exhibition may tend to make juvenile culprits more cautious, but the old offender smiles at the threats of the law; and I have found such to be the case invariably. Threats of vengeance and punishment I ever have found to be most inefficient; nothing but a religious education can be an effective remedy. The law may hold back the ruffian's hand, but it is religion alone that can heal the cankered heart. It is my conviction, and I have long studied the subject, that even the crime of murder should not be punished with death. I do not now wish to enter into the discussion of the permission given by the Almighty in the words that 'he who sheds man's blood by man shall his blood be shed;' but from the consequences that have followed the punishment of murder by death, I am convinced that the amount of crime is increased, because the public mind becomes brutalised by the frequent repetition of executions; and I am further convinced that if the punishment of death were done away with, we would have no murders at all. I never found that the apprehension of punishment by death held back the murderer's hand; and it has often occurred that the person punished was considered the person murdered, and his punishment therefore produced the contrary effect to that intended. I have strayed from the subject of the resolution, to implore your sympathy and compassion for the juvenile offenders of this city. I do it with all my heart, for I mourn over them; and I should say that it is your own neglect of the youthful culprits that is the unhappy cause of the frequency of the perpetration of such crime. They are wretched beings, the offspring of poverty, who learned nothing save the low artifices of thieves: they are sent to jail and confined; but so far from being reformed, they become worse, and as they grow up they advance from the petty thief to the blood-stained murderer. I would therefore suggest the necessity of having moral and spiritual training for the juvenile classes, instead of jails and prisons. It is not my wish that murderers should escape with impunity. I think they should be confined, and brought up to useful trades, and kept in prison until, by their labour, they paid not alone for their own maintenance, but also repaid those to the last farthing whom they robbed or injured. I would not give the culprit a *bonus*, and send him back upon the world; I would make him pay the penalty to the last

farthing. I call on the mayor, and those present, to turn their attention to the number of poor creatures I see daily about the streets, and crowding the quays and markets, led on by their wretched parents, serving, as I might say, an apprenticeship to robbery. These are the parties that should be looked to, as they are likely to become inmates of a prison, or to fill the harlot's shameful grave. There should be something done to compel the parents to give them instruction and education; and if they have not parents, the law should interfere to protect them. I am aware that the whole subject is encompassed with difficulty. I have never been able to bring myself to the full conviction, nor could I discover, that the Almighty has given any power over the life of man. He has reserved vengeance for himself, for—'Vengeance is mine,' said the Lord. From all I have observed and read, I am convinced that the infliction of capital punishment has been a fatal source of the frequent murders that disgrace and stain the land. It is a difficult subject; but the object you have in view is a glorious one—the good of society, and the amelioration of the condition of the people. Stopping the shedding of human blood is an object worth contending for, no matter what the difficulties are. We have the good fortune to be born in a glorious era; floods of light and life are pouring on us; and I am sanguine that I shall live to see the day when capital punishment will be done away with, and abolished from the code of these realms.

Among the visitors attracted to Cove Street by the fame of the Apostle of Temperance, was a genuine oriental, rejoicing in the name of Meer Shamet Alli, a descendant of the original Mogul race. He was a grand-looking Mussulman, highly accomplished, and spoke more than one European language with facility. Father Mathew, to whom he had a letter of introduction, invited him to breakfast, and—that the stranger might have the pleasure of hearing his own language spoken in a place so far from his own country, he also asked his friend Captain (now Colonel) Gamble to join the party. Father Mathew took the illustrious stranger to various places, and showed him several institutions—among others, the Ursuline Convent at Blackrock, within some two miles of Cork. The institution is a very noble one, and eminent for its success as a school for young ladies of the

middle and higher classes. Meer Alli was received with distinction by the ladies of the community, and shown everything of interest. Father Mathew's presence acted as an 'open sesame,' and every door flew open before the approach of the stranger, who examined and admired with a quiet gravity peculiar to his race. While Father Mathew's attention was otherwise engaged, the Meer asked confidentially of a gentleman near him, who formed one of the party—'Are all these ladies his wives?' The rather Eastern idea had arisen in his mind, chiefly from the air of mingled respect and affection with which the good nuns treated their Spiritual Superior, which office Father Mathew then held. When Father Mathew was afterwards told of the oriental's query, he was considerably amused at its strange proposition.

Meer Shamet Alli was not the only distinguished oriental who made the acquaintance of the Apostle of Temperance. Dwarkanauth Tagore, the great Calcutta Merchant, expressed in the following letter the admiration and esteem in which he held him :—

Brighton.

MY DEAR FATHER MATHEW.—Do not think, from my silence, that I for one moment forget my promise of writing to you. But on my arrival here I had so many visitors, to give them an account of my travels, and afterwards obliged to go to Southampton and the Isle of Wight, on a visit to some friends, that I have had no time until now to write. I avail myself of a leisure moment, free from all interruptions from visitors, to dictate this from Brighton; in the first place, to thank you for all the kindness and attention I received from you during our too short acquaintance, and which I shall never forget as long as I live; secondly, to express my congratulations in having fallen into your society, which has enabled me to judge of the real character of the lower classes of Irish, and to remove those prejudices which I formerly held; and through your efforts this wonderful improvement in their morals must be attributed. So you have done and are doing more good to Ireland than all the political excitement of others. I have not only expressed this to the First Minister in England, and to others, but have written the same to my friends in India. I only wish that I could have remained a few more days in your company, or that I

can at some future period meet with you somewhere. I have in my possession the valuable present you bestowed on me, which has been seen and admired by everybody. Think that I went to pass a few days with the Lord Chancellor at his country house, and Lady Lyndhurst wanted me to give up your medal; as she only lives upon water, and never touches wine, she said she had a greater right to it than myself. So you see how much I am envied in having such a gift. I can only say it will go as an heirloom to my family as a remembrance, and remain in my possession as long as I live. If I am not so fortunate as to meet you somewhere in England, you may depend that, if I am alive, I will some day next year do so in your own country. My Irish friends insist that your portrait must be painted in Dublin, though I had wished it to be done here, for two reasons; first, that I should have the gratification of meeting you, and second, it would have been painted by a first-rate artist. However, if I am to agree to my Irish friends, Mr. Gresham will arrange everything; it must be a full length, and in the position of giving your blessing to the people, whilst giving the pledge. If the artist could introduce a *Hindoo* with his turban, standing by your side, it would increase the interest as commemorative of an event which can never be obliterated from my mind. With great respect,

I remain,

My dear Father Mathew,

Yours very sincerely,

DWARKANAUTH TAGORE.

Father Mathew did not altogether confine his attentions to his visitors and strangers of the male sex; he occasionally displayed great courtesy to the gentler sex, and even afforded them hospitality, either at his own house, or at Lehenagh—arranging, of course, in case his own house was the scene of the entertainment, that members of his family should join the party. The Countess Ida Hahn-Hahn thus acknowledges the kindness and hospitality which she had received at his hands :—

London, Octbr, 17, 1846.

DEAR SIR,—I am about to leave England, and feel compelled, before doing so, to express to you my best thanks for your kindness and hospitality. The hours which I did spend with you shall not be forgotten. I was prevented from accepting your invitation at Killarney by a want of full-dress, and I thought myself not fit to appear in an evening party,

and amongst ladies, in my travelling dress; so I lost the opportunity of seeing you once more. But I saw you in moments of higher importance to my feelings, and they are perhaps the most gratifying in my whole journey.

God bless you, dear sir, in the grand and noble work you carry on, and God bless your people with wisdom in the stormy trials hovering just now over them.

Yours with true and warm admiration,

IDA CTSS. HAHN-HAHN.

Mrs. Asenath Nicholson, a lady from New York, made a pedestrian tour through Ireland in 1844-45, for the purpose of becoming personally acquainted with the condition and character of its people. She generally lodged in the cabins of the peasantry, and distributed tracts among them as she went on. In a work which she published on her return, entitled 'Welcome to the Stranger,' Mrs. Nicholson gave a description of her interesting tour. Her impressions of Father Mathew—whom she first saw at Roscrea, and whom she afterwards visited at Cork—are admirably given in the book, and are the more valuable from the writer being of another faith. A single extract from its pages will be read with interest, as the testimony of a clever and appreciative stranger. Her sketches are also true pictures of the extraordinary movement of the day. She thus describes her first impressions of its leader:—

At 8 o'clock the next morning, Father Mathew gave a stirring scriptural discourse on the importance of temperance, proving from Scripture, as well as from facts, the sin of using ardent spirits. The concourse was immense, so that 'they trod upon one another.' At 12 o'clock he gave another address. His simple unaffected manner carries that evidence of sincerity and integrity with it, that no one can doubt but he who loves to doubt. His unabating zeal is beyond all praise; yet, at this late hour, do I hear his name traduced by his countrymen, who are ascribing his object to a political one. Yet among all his traducers not one can be found who is an abstainer, whether he took the pledge from him or some other one; and I should not hesitate to say that in Ireland, he has no enemies among the teetotallers, few among the drunkards, but many, many among the moderate drinkers.

Father Mathew's visits to the Blackrock and other convents, both in Cork and Dublin, were the occasion of much rejoicing to the young ladies, who generally enjoyed a holiday and a feast in consequence. He delighted in witnessing their innocent merriment, and received their graceful tributes of affection—usually in the form of a pretty poem, descriptive of his triumph as the great moral regenerator of his country—with the utmost gratification. He treasured up these poetical effusions with care; and many a mildewed poem, written carefully, and in the neatest hand, on embossed card or satin paper, were found in the recesses of his ink-spattered desk. But a little drama, in which the mission of the Apostle was illustrated by its influence upon the life and fortune of a family, and which was admirably played by the pupils of the Convent of Loretto, Dublin, was a testimony of which he was especially proud. It was written by one of the nuns, and was assisted in its general effect by the introduction of national music and graceful dances, in which the younger children took a conspicuous part. No one could appreciate better than Father Mathew the efforts of these innocent young people to please and do him honour; and they, in their turn, were proud of his praise.

Between Father Mathew and several dignitaries of the Established Church a strong feeling of friendship existed. Even where prejudice was entertained against his creed, it was disarmed by the charm of his manner, and the conviction of his real goodness of heart; but where genuine liberality took the place of prejudice, and he became known to a man of his own stamp in the Protestant Church, the acquaintance soon ripened into friendship, and esteem invariably warmed into enduring affection. That this sentiment was felt towards him by the late Venerable Tighe Gregory, Rector of Kilmore, the words of that liberal-minded man will attest:—

Paget Priory, Post Town, Kilcock:
June 6, 1846.

MY VERY REVD. FRIEND,—By the merest accident I have this moment heard that you are to be in Maynooth to-morrow. An additional weight of duty, consequent upon the day, renders me unable to drive over and wait on you; but I trust your arrangements will not clash with your favouring me by naming a day, before your return to the south, on which I shall have the pleasure of welcoming you to Paget Priory, where there cannot, I assure you, be a more valued or welcome guest.

I have had a note from my right revd. friend Bishop Cantwell, promising to partake the humble hospitalities of my poor parsonage, on his approaching visitation of this district, as his lordship kindly did on his last progress.

I would that you could meet on the occasion. Polemics and politics are forgotten in the good ship *Harmony*, as she placidly sails in the bay of Concord; 'tis the vessel which Jesus pilots—may it never be wrecked.

It would, I well know, have given my son great delight had you been induced, when in Norfolk, to extend your progress towards Lyme Regis, and paid him a visit at his glebe in Hunstontun, eighteen miles east of it, from the pulpit of which his heart warmed towards his 'dear, his native land,' as he fearlessly advocated the claims of the Apostle of Temperance; and as the worthy and enthusiastic Mr. Hansard observed, it was cheering to recognise father and son, separated by seas, and unknowing of each other's intent, embarked in the same cause. It is, indeed, a cause which presents a neutral ground on which all should and could cooperate. Every day gives evidence of the blessings of temperance, and I never saw it more fully exemplified than last Easter Monday in my own churchyard, where an ill-conducted terrorist of the Clarendon Lodge found his safety (and impunity too) in the exemplary sobriety which caused the meritorious forbearance of the numerous Roman Catholics present, whom, in drunken bigotry, he audaciously stigmatised and insulted, in spite of his pastor's stern reproof.

They talk of panaceas for Ireland's ills, and say 'all attempts to find one are utopian.' I deny it. *Temperance* is the *panacea*—on it domestic peace, public order, morality, industry, meekness, mildness, and Christian charity are reared; and family broils, riot, tumult, violence, dissipation, idleness, intolerance, and bigotry are *crushed beneath* it.

The instance I have just recounted—almost at the time, and but six

miles from the place where you will probably be administering the pledge when you receive this—forms a great and striking proof that in temperance this panacea is to be found; and with heart and hand ALL should therefore promote its growth. I was charmed to find my son, and my friend the Bishop of Norwich, acting the noble part they did, in presenting you at the Shire Hall. Persevere and prosper.

Accept, very reverend and dear friend, the assurance of the enduring esteem of,

Yours faithfully and truly,

E. TIGHE GREGORY, D.D. and LL.D.

Rector and Vicar of Kilmore.

The Very Revd. Theobald Mathew, &c.

It has been seen that Father Mathew, in the belief that he was acting most wisely with a religious people, imparted as much as possible a sacred character to the pledge. This practice was the occasion of considerable controversy, even between members of his own Church; those who objected to it contending that, when the pledge was violated, after having been so taken, its violation inflicted the additional injury of degrading the person in his own esteem, making him feel as if he had been guilty of perjury. On the other hand, it was urged that the more solemnly the pledge was administered, the more binding was it rendered, and that the introduction of the religious element was wise and beneficial. Of this latter opinion was the Vicar of Yardley, who thus expressed it in a letter to Father Mathew:—

Vicarage, Yardley, Birmingham:
Nov. 27, 1845.

MY DEAR SIR—I hear, with gratitude to God, of your doings in Ireland to promote total abstinence from all intoxicating drinks as a beverage. I rejoice in your abundant and successful labours, and wish you 'God's speed' with all my heart.

I find, and probably you do so too, that when true piety attends or follows the temperance pledge, there is stability, and there hope and almost confidence may be entertained; but that, when this is not the case, the fairest promises are often broken, and the brightest prospects blasted.

I admire, in your pledge, the acknowledgement of the need of *Divine assistance*, and, in your blessing, a prayer for *grace* and *strength* to keep the promise.

This is your rock of strength. Go on, my brother, and prosper, till Ireland and the whole earth be converted to your holy principle of temperance. I am glad that I have a spark of the temperance fire that glows in your heart; and may I have your prayers and your blessing, and you shall continue to have that of, my dear sir,

Your faithful but unworthy
Brother and fellow-labourer,
HENRY GWYTHER,
Vicar of Yardley

CHAPTER XXVI.

The Famine—Its Effects and its Causes—Ireland before the Famine—The Blights of 1845 and 1846—Father Mathew's Correspondence with the Government—Timely Appeal—The Famine setting in.

TOO soon, alas! arose a state of things which, while materially influencing the Temperance movement, brought about a social revolution of the greatest magnitude, and the gravest results. The history of the Irish Famine is yet to be written; and no event of modern times more requires an able and impartial pen than that terrible calamity, which filled the land with horrors for which a parallel can only be found in the pages of Boccaccio or De Foe—which counted its victims by hundreds of thousands—which originated an emigration that has not yet exhausted the strength of its fatal current—which caused twenty-three millions' worth of property to change hands, called into existence a new race of proprietors, and swept into poverty, banishment, and oblivion, many a once opulent family, and erased from the bead-roll of the Irish gentry many a proud and distinguished name. That history is yet to be written, and will be best written when time shall have brought with it a more impartial spirit and a cooler judgement than exist at this moment, while the memory is still too vivid, and the sympathy too keen, for a task so grave and so important. Fortunately for the writer of this biography, his duty compels him to treat that terrible event merely as an episode in the history of Father Mathew's career, and as a means of exhibiting, in a more striking manner, a character which the misfortunes of