

## CHAPTER XXXVII.

His Secretary's Diary—Ill in New York—His indefatigable Labours—Arrives in Washington—Debate in the Senate—Entertained by the President.

I HAVE in my possession a diary which was kept by Father Mathew's secretary, Mr. O'Meara, during their stay in America. It was written simply for his own satisfaction and guidance, partly as a chronicle of his daily impressions, and partly as a reference for facts—what had been done in such a place, or on such a day. But though, when writing this diary, Mr. O'Meara did not imagine that any eye but his own would have ever scanned its pages, it was freely placed at my disposal as soon as I had resolved on undertaking the biography of the great man whom he so truly loved, and so faithfully served.

I have read this diary through with the greatest care and attention; and the more I read, the more profound was my admiration of the man whose daily doings it recorded. There is scarcely a page which does not reflect his true character—his charity, his goodness, his humility, his compassionate nature, his love of the human family, his holiness of life and purity of thought. But these are not what excite astonishment, for they are belonging to his whole life; what most surprise us are his amazing energy, his endurance of fatigue, and his unconquerable courage and perseverance. Seriously afflicted with paralysis in Ireland, we see him confined to bed in New York, in the month of November, with a painful illness; and yet, in a few days after, we behold him again at

work. A few extracts from the diary will exhibit this more clearly than any mere statement of the fact can do:—

*Sunday, November 18th.*—Father Mathew improved in health to-day, though still confined to bed. This evening he bled rather profusely.

*Monday, 19th.*—Improving, but not able to be up. Though in bed, received several visitors.

*Tuesday, 20th.*—Father Mathew better. After breakfast, sat up, but felt weak. The motion in his limbs still perceptible. At 12 o'clock he had an interesting interview with the Hon. Henry Clay.

*Wednesday, 21st.*—After breakfast, he dressed and remained up the entire day. Received several visitors, but did not go down stairs.

*Thursday, 22nd.*—Considerably better. Breakfast down stairs. Several came to take the pledge. The doctor, at one o'clock, took Father Mathew out driving. . . . He gave the Rev. Mr. ——— ten dollars, and promised to write to his Bishop to take him back.

*Friday, 23rd.*—Still improving. Got up before breakfast. . . . Paid visits. Several took the pledge to-day.

*Saturday, 24th.*—Father Mathew had rather a troublesome night, the side painful. Gave young ——— 1l.

*Sunday, 25th.*—Father Mathew said mass at the S.S. of Mercy, Houston Street. Returned to the Irving at 11 o'clock, but still not free from pain. Dined in the Hall—his first appearance in public. . .

*Monday, 26th.*—Father Mathew had a troublesome night with his side. Better this morning. Hon. Mr. Fillmore, Vice-President of the United States, called to pay his respects. Also General Cass. Several to take the pledge. Gave to ——— twenty dollars, and to ——— five dollars. The doctor and ——— took the pledge.

*Tuesday, 27th.*—Father Mathew much better. . . . In the evening was waited on by the Mayor and Board of Aldermen, who came to bid him adieu.

*Wednesday, 28th.*—Left per rail and steamer this morning for Philadelphia. Arrived privately, and proceeded to the residence of the Bishop, Dr. Kendrick.

We shall now see how this feeble man, who had just risen from a bed of sickness, was employed on Sunday the 2nd of December:—

Father Mathew said mass at half-past six o'clock this morning, in the Bishop's private chapel, which was crowded. Immediately after, gave the pledge; and when he had breakfasted, proceeded with the

Rev. Mr. Gartland to Gloucester, five miles across the river, to attend the dedication of a new church, to which the Rev. Mr. O'Donoghue, of Waterford, is appointed pastor. Father Mathew preached the dedication sermon, delivered in his usual good style, notwithstanding his illness. After the ceremonies, he administered the pledge. The weather became very severe and extremely cold, and snow fell heavily throughout the entire day. After dinner, returned to the Bishop's, and remained administering the pledge until eight o'clock. Several came.

On Wednesday the 5th, he said early mass, and having lectured on temperance, administered the pledge. Then after having paid and received visits, he commenced again to administer the pledge, and 'did not close until nine o'clock p. m. Six hundred disciples were the result of his day's work.

On Thursday the 13th, he is still suffering from his side; nevertheless, he is up at six o'clock on the following Sunday, on which day he lectures twice, preaches to a large congregation, and administers the pledge to about 800 persons, including many distinguished people of different religious persuasions. He is thus engaged 'the entire day.' The same description might be given of each day during his visit to Philadelphia. And such, indeed, was the manner in which he prosecuted his mission in every city in which he stopped during his prolonged tour in America.

On the 18th, he left for Washington, but not before he had received, during that morning, a considerable number of converts to temperance.

As soon as his arrival was made known in the Capital, a resolution was unanimously carried in Congress, admitting him to a seat on the floor of the House—the very highest distinction which could be conferred upon the subject of another country, by the representatives of that great Republic. When Father Mathew availed himself of this flattering permission, the members rose to receive him. Had he been a crowned monarch, the respect thus paid to him by

that free assembly could not have been more impressively exhibited.

The same proposition was made in the Senate, and gave rise to a most animated discussion, which conclusively proved how wise was the reserve which he maintained in his interview with Mr. Garrison. The opposition to which the proposal gave rise was of great value, as it enabled Father Mathew's friends to place his mission, his objects, and his motives, in their true light before the American people, thereby rescuing him from the misrepresentations of those who desired to damage by traducing him.

The resolution, which was proposed by Mr. Walker, Senator for Wisconsin, was as follows:—'*Resolved*—that the Rev. Theobald Mathew be allowed a seat within the bar of the United States Senate during the period of his sojourn in Washington.'

Mr. Clements, who moved a negative to the resolution, thus justified his opposition:—

The reason which prompted me to make the objection was, that I had been informed that the individual named in the resolution had been charged with denouncing a portion of this confederacy with the maintenance of an institution which he was pleased to characterise as a sin and a crime; and when respectfully invited by the Governor of Georgia to express his views in relation to the institution of slavery, he refused to answer. Under these circumstances I do not think I could conscientiously suffer such a resolution to pass. I do not myself regard slavery as a sin, and I do not believe that I could be induced so to regard it by any representation on the part of any person; but if it be so, at all events it is an institution not to be interfered in by foreigners. I shall object now to the adoption of the resolution as I did yesterday, because there is in reality no necessity for its adoption, and, as it appears to me, there would be no propriety in adopting it.

Mr. Clay expressed his regret that any opposition should have been offered to such a proposal, which was simply intended as a compliment and mark of respect to a distinguished individual; and thus continued:—

I think it ought to be received as a just homage to a distinguished foreigner, for his humanity, his benevolence, his philanthropy, and his virtue, and as properly due to one who has devoted himself to the good of his whole species. It is but a merited tribute of respect to a man who has achieved a great social revolution—a revolution in which no blood has been shed; a revolution which has involved no desolation, which has caused no bitter tears of widows and orphans to flow; a revolution which has been achieved without violence, and a greater one, perhaps, than has ever been accomplished by any benefactor of mankind. Sir, it is a compliment that is due from the Senate, small as it may be, to the gentleman indicated in the resolution, as an illustrious Irish patriot; and I put it in all seriousness, and in a spirit of perfect kindness, to the honourable Senator from Alabama, whether placing this subject of slavery in connection with the proposition that has been offered is not imprudent and unwise, in respect to the very subject which he has so much at heart?

Mr. Seward concluded an eloquent eulogium upon the object of the intended compliment in these words:—

I must be allowed to say, with all respect, that I hope the American Senate will give evidence, by the unanimity with which we pass this resolution, of the sentiment which is almost unanimous amongst us, that if slavery be an error, or if it be a crime, or if it be a sin, we deplore its existence amongst us, and deny the responsibility of its introduction here; and that, therefore, we should not withhold this token of respect from virtue, merely because it happens to be found residing in the mind of a person who has expressed an opinion unfavourable to the existence of slavery, but who is celebrated for his devotion to virtue and the rights of man.

'The question,' said Mr. Davis of Mississippi, 'resolves itself into this:—

Whether the Senate, having upon its floor those who represent a slaveholding constituency, shall vote an extraordinary compliment to one known as the ally of O'Connell, and in whose expressed opinions he openly coincided? Why, if he came here as a guest to share our hospitality, and not to disturb the peace of our country, did he not say that our domestic affairs are our own, and that he did not come here to disapprove of any portion of them; that he came here to express no opinions in relation to slavery? He comes covertly, a wolf in sheep's clothing; and I hold the Senator from New York to be the very best authority upon that subject.'

Mr. Walker, the mover of the resolution, vindicates its proposal:—

So far as we have had intimation of the character of the mission of Father Mathew, it is one of peace and good will to all mankind, and not of aggression upon any class of the community. Regarding him in this light, as a man who has not only accomplished a great amount of good, but who is now engaged in the good work of endeavouring to reform and improve the social condition of society, I have thought it appropriate that this mark of respect should be tendered to him, without regard to what his individual opinions may be upon other subjects.

Mr. Hale voted for the resolution, 'as a tribute to the virtues, the philanthropy, and the meritorious exertions of Father Mathew,' although he disapproved of the course which he had taken on the slavery question.

Mr. Badger objects to the proposal, as not only being without precedent, but establishing a dangerous and embarrassing precedent for the future:—

In the first place, it is without precedent, so far as I know, and so far as I have been able to ascertain from gentlemen around me, who have had opportunities of being better informed than I am. I say it is without precedent, because it is impossible to conceive that the case of Gen. Lafayette can be supposed to furnish a precedent for this resolution. He stood upon such grounds of preeminence as to render it a case altogether distinct from any that can now occur, where an individual, who is not a citizen of the United States, is to receive a particular mark of respect.

Mr. Cass deprecated the introduction of the slavery question, respecting which the public mind was already 'in a high state of excitement,' and thus placed the proposition on its right ground:—

This is but a complimentary notice to a distinguished stranger just arrived among us. And well does he merit it. He is a stranger to us personally, but he has won a world-wide renown. He comes among us upon a mission of benevolence, not unlike Howard, whose name and deeds rank high in the annals of philanthropy, and who sought to carry hope and comfort into the darkest cells, and to alleviate the moral and physical condition of their unhappy tenants. He comes to break the bonds of the captive, and to set the prisoner

free—to redeem the lost, to confirm the wavering, and to aid in saving all from the temptation and danger of intemperance. It is a noble mission, and well is he fulfilling it. I need not stop to recount the evils which the great enemy he is contending with has inflicted upon the world—evils which are the source of a large portion of the vice and misery that human nature has to encounter. But the inundation is stayed. Higher motives, nobler aspirations, the influence of religion, and the hopes of life are coming to the rescue, and are doing their part in this great work of reformation. You grant a seat here to the successful warrior returning from the conquests of war. Let us not refuse it to a better warrior—to one who comes from the conquests of peace, from victories achieved without the loss of blood or life, and whose trophies are equally dear to the patriot and the Christian.

Mr. Foote spoke in favour of the resolution; and the passage which is quoted is not only an evidence of the bitter feeling existing between the two parties, but is a further proof of the wisdom of Father Mathew's conduct in maintaining the strictest neutrality in a cause of so much anger and animosity. Mr. Foote said:—

I regret to learn that, when addressed by citizens of Alabama and Georgia as to his views upon the question of slavery, he either declined responding, or responded by letters withheld from publication at his own request. I think that in this transaction he committed a great mistake, and one which will greatly impair his efficiency as a champion of temperance. But, until I receive conclusive evidence to the contrary, I must believe that he still adheres to the resolution which he assumed and made public shortly after his arrival in this country, not to connect himself at all with any of the domestic controversies in progress on this side of the Atlantic. I well recollect the scene which occurred somewhere in the State of Massachusetts between certain fierce abolition agitators and Father Mathew, in which these wicked incendiaries made a most indecent and ungentlemanly attempt to inveigle this venerable personage in their nefarious schemes, and to wield the influence of his name and character against the institutions of the South; and I have not forgotten the dignified and severe rebuke which he administered to these infatuated factionists, nor the scurrilous denunciations which they showered down upon him so plentifully afterwards. These facts are too recent not to be recollected by all of us. Did I regard Father Mathew as deserving any part of the

commendation bestowed upon him, in connection with the cause of abolition, by the honourable Senator from New York, instead of recognising him as a noble philanthropist, I should feel compelled to class him with thieves, and robbers, and murderers, and midnight incendiaries. Did I suppose that the honourable Senator from New York had been duly authorised to give expression to the sentiments of Father Mathew upon the question of slavery, I should regard it as insulting to this body to have his name even uttered in our hearing. I might suppose, until proof to the contrary shall be adduced, that the honourable Senator from New York, whether designedly or not I will not undertake to decide, has done serious injustice to a worthy and unoffending personage, and that in his fiery eagerness to advance a favourite but infamous cause, he has attempted to drag to his aid the influence and popularity of a great and potential name, in a manner that cannot fail to prove displeasing to all the disinterested friends of the temperance reform, to be found upon the habitable globe.

Mr. Downs, while vindicating the principles which he held, and which he represented, did ample justice to the wisdom and good taste manifested in Father Mathew's conduct. The following extract is the last which it is necessary to give of a debate which had a material influence in rendering successful in all portions of the States which he visited, the mission of the Apostle of Temperance. Thus spoke Mr. Downs:—

It is said that long ago, before he came to America, he expressed opinions opposed to slavery. Well, suppose he did, is it reasonable or proper in us of the South to require of him to retract these opinions? He comes among us, not as a propagandist either of religious or political doctrines, but on a benevolent mission of humanity, to make mankind better and happier, like the Saviour of the world who preceded him—on a mission scarcely less divine. He has, when approached, refused to commit himself, or in any manner to interfere in public affairs or opinions on that subject in our country. Is not this a course which all must approve of? Could he, with propriety, or without defeating the success of his mission, have pursued a different course? For myself, I confess, coming to the United States for the benevolent purpose he did—an object to be accomplished in no particular section, or by no particular party or sect, but throughout our broad land, from north to south and from east to west, and by the cooperation of the well-disposed of all—if he had taken any

part in political discussions, or obtruded his opinions on all occasions, I should not have approved of his course, even if it had been in favour of our side of the question, but should have considered him wanting in that wisdom and discretion necessary for the success of his mission. Besides, sir, we of the South believe ourselves to be right in our opinions on the subject of slavery; that our course will bear the test of scrutiny and examination; that people abroad entertain erroneous opinions of our institutions, which would be removed by visiting our country and ascertaining the true state of the case. Would it not then be inexpedient and unwise to ask Father Mathew, before he has visited our section of the country, and had an opportunity of judging for himself, to change opinions previously formed? Would the world say this was the conduct of a people confident of the justice of their cause? or would it not rather say there is something to conceal, or there would not be such precaution? For myself, I do not believe that he has evinced any disposition to interfere in our institutions; on the contrary, it seems to be admitted on all sides, that when approached by the abolitionists on the subject, he refused to concur with them in their views, or give them any encouragement. But, even if he was so disposed, I have too much confidence in the justice of our cause and the strength of our institutions, to suppose he could do us any harm. Mr. President, I shall vote for this resolution upon another ground. This distinguished gentleman is upon a mission which I consider of vast importance to the people of the United States and to all the world. I believe his efforts are to be of immense advantage, and I concur in the object of them, and I wish them success, and am disposed to advance them in every possible way.

The original resolution was carried by a majority of 33 to 18; and an honour which had been only previously conferred by the representatives of the American people on Lafayette, who had brought his name and his sword to the cause of their freedom, was now accorded to the humble Irish friar, who had won a name even more glorious by his services in the cause of suffering humanity.

On Thursday, the 20th of December—the day after the discussion in the Senate—Father Mathew was entertained by the President of the United States at a grand dinner, to which fifty guests, including the foremost men in the

country, had been specially invited. The President presented each member of the distinguished company to Father Mathew, who dated the commencement of many valuable friendships from that occasion. The dinner was served in sumptuous style; but though the choicest wines of Europe sparkled on the board, scarcely any wine was used by the company, and none by the host, out of respect to the guest of the evening.