

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

How he employed his Sunday in Richmond—A Sunday in Savannah—As Generous as ever—His Success at New Orleans—He believes the Irish Exodus Providential—His Appeals to the Irish—Arrives at Little Rock—A Mission in the Woods.

AN extract from the diary will exhibit the manner in which he was employed in Richmond on Sunday the 23rd of December, while he was yet suffering from the effects of his recent attack :—

Said mass at seven, and gave an exhortation particularly addressed to the Irish. Administered the pledge. At eleven o'clock the church crowded—the majority Dissenters. Father Mathew preached again in his best style, after reading from the Gospel, 'Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight His paths.' The congregation delighted. Immediately after mass, again spoke with very great ability on temperance. *He astonished myself.* Administered the pledge to about two hundred. Had some friends to dine with us. Again at vespers attended, and spoke briefly to a crowded audience. It is astonishing how he is able to labour so much. The Dissenters delighted with his discourses, which were very good. The evening becoming cold, and snow falling, retired to the house at five o'clock.

On Sunday the 30th, he is at Wilmington. Says the diary :—

This will be a memorable day in Wilmington. Father Mathew, as usual, celebrated the holy sacrifice at half-past seven o'clock, lectured and administered the pledge; and at eleven o'clock preached—his text, 'The Lord in His holy temple.' The sermon universally applauded by all present. The little church was never filled so much before. Three-fourths were Dissenters, and many known to possess strong prejudices. All most orderly and respectful. Immediately after the sermon, spoke on temperance with much ability and force. His arguments, as usual, most conclusive, replete with scriptural quotations. The majority of the Catholic community, and several others,

most respectable people, took the pledge. The Rev. Thomas Murphy and the boys on the altar were the first. The impression made by Father Mathew's sermon and discourses has had a most beneficial effect, especially with those of different opinions and strong prejudices.

During the day, we are told, 'he had some Americans, whose accession was much applauded, and who acknowledged they would not take a pledge from any other individual.' 'It is extraordinary,' continues the diary, 'the effect produced by Father Mathew's influence.'

On the 5th of January, while in Charleston, he is complaining of his leg; and yet on the next day, Sunday, he undergoes an amount of fatigue which would try a robust constitution. Two sermons and two discourses on temperance were rather many for a man in his condition.

Farther on, we have blisters, and plaisters, and other applications; and the next day we find him commencing his work in the morning, and 'continually occupied until eight o'clock p. m.'

Here is the account of a Sunday in Savannah :—

Sunday, 27th Jan., 1850.—Father Mathew had a large congregation at eight o'clock. Exhorted in the usual style; text from the Book of Exodus. Congregation chiefly Irish. Some took the pledge. At half-past ten o'clock, again preached at High Mass; text, 'I was dumb.' After High Mass again exhorted, and administered the pledge to a large number, some hundreds, including the principal Catholics, and many Americans. The church was not capable of containing a single individual more than were in it. Numbers remained outside. Father Mathew's voice was strong, notwithstanding the day was extremely hot. Dr. Prendergast had us all to dine with him, and some strangers. At half-past three o'clock Father Mathew resumed. After vespers introduced various temperance arguments, not exactly in the same words, but to the same purpose. The anxiety to take the pledge increased. Father Mathew announced 700 before vespers, and 300 more joined during the evening, making 1,000 for the day. Remained engaged until eight o'clock, when we returned to supper, all friends waiting for us. Spent a pleasant evening.

Considering that the same kind of work was continuously carried on, without the cessation of a single day, unless when

travelling by rail or steamer, it is not surprising to hear that 'Father Mathew was very tired,' or that 'he had not recovered from his fatigue,' or that 'his leg was again troubling him,' or that 'his side was giving him annoyance,' or that he had 'passed a troublesome night.' But nothing short of a complete break-down could stop him, so long as there was work for him to do; and so long as there was a drunkard to be reclaimed, a profligate to be received back into the fold, or an emigrant from Ireland to be preserved from danger, there was work for Father Mathew. Thus, for instance, after having attended a levee of the citizens in the Concert Hall in the City of Columbus, he 'went to the prison to give the pledge to its inmates.'

His hand, too, was for ever in his pocket. 'Give, give, give!' was his motto in America as in the old country; and though he met little squalor or mendicancy during his sojourn in the States, scarcely a day passed that some one did not appeal to his compassion or excite his sympathy. To children and coloured people he gave medals without charge, and silver medals were presented in great number to those who served or who patronised the cause. Thus, what with money left in the hands of the clergyman for some useful charity, or sums given to applicants, or voluntarily offered, and the cost of travelling and lodging, and other causes of expense which it would be impossible to particularise, Father Mathew often found it hard to pay his way, although he was frequently made free of boat and rail, and often accepted hospitality eagerly pressed upon his acceptance. An extract or two will illustrate the liberality which was his daily habit, and at the same time exhibit with what zeal he prosecuted his mission, in spite of his infirmity of body:—

Wednesday, 27th February, 1850.—Distributed upwards of 100 cards and medals gratis.

Thursday, 28th.—Distributed nearly 300 cards and medals gratis, the majority to children and coloured people.

Monday, 11th March.—He gave to the S. S. for the female orphans twenty dollars, and twenty dollars to the Brothers for the male orphans. . . . Preaches well, but not so energetically as formerly; was complaining of his limbs being infirm, and felt nervous. He feels the effects of his exertions always more the day after. Went to Dr. McNally, who applied an issue in his neck, which he says will be of great service. The operation was very painful to him.

Wednesday, 13th March.—Yesterday witnessed the festival at which, by his contribution, Father Mathew entertained the orphans. Poor creatures, they were quite happy, and so was Father Mathew—it was so like former acts of his in the old country. . . . Gave a poor woman two dollars.

This was how he spent Patrick's Day in Mobile:—

Father Mathew said mass at half-past seven o'clock. Many of those who took the pledge were communicants. The morning very warm, as hot as our summer days. At half-past ten, went to the High Mass, at which Father Mathew preached in good style; text—'Why have the nations raged,' &c. When the ceremonies were over, several presented themselves for the pledge. Dined in company with the Bishop at Mrs. Brown's, a respectable and good Catholic lady. Returned to vespers, and at the close had about forty more to join. Father Mathew, though he did not pretend it, felt much excited and nervous from his exertions. He is not so strong as he was some time since. At seven o'clock adjourned to St. Vincent's church, with the Rev. Mr. Hackett, who preached the eulogy of St. Patrick. A good many took the pledge.

During his stay in Mobile he addressed the following to his friend Mrs. Rathbone:—

Mobile, Alabama: March 8, 1850.

MY DEAR MRS. RATHBONE,—Since my departure from your hospitable mansion, I have, as you are aware from the papers, endured much toil and anxiety; and though the mild climate in which I now sojourn is very beneficial to me, yet I find myself weak, and my limbs are become infirm.

You will be glad to hear that the storm attempted to be raised against me in the South has subsided. The inhabitants I find, in general, as you represented, courteous and affable. I now perceive the necessity that existed for my having firmly adhered to the resolution I had formed when coming to this country, not to interfere with its institutions. Had I done anything to prevent my journey through the Southern States, I should never have forgiven myself. There are

tens of thousands of my beloved countrymen scattered over the South; and all are cheerfully coming forward, at my invitation, to rescue themselves from the wiles of intemperance. The consequences might have been dreadful, as many who had been slaves to this debasing habit were anxiously expecting me. . . .

In my journey through this country, I have hitherto, thank God, been most fortunate in escaping accidents. I cannot feel sufficiently thankful to the Almighty for preserving me from a dreadful calamity that occurred yesterday on the Alabama river, in the steamboat in which I had but come to this city the day previous. She accidentally caught fire, and nearly forty passengers perished.

In the course of another week, I go on to New Orleans, and from thence up the mighty Mississippi.

Present, my dear Mrs. Rathbone, my respects to my esteemed friend Mr. Rathbone, and believe me to be,

Dearest Madam,

Your ever grateful and devoted,

THEOBALD MATHEW.

Mrs. Rathbone, Green Bank, Liverpool.

From Mobile, where he had been the guest of the Catholic Bishop, he proceeded to New Orleans, in which city he was welcomed with equal warmth by its spiritual head.

He received and declined an invitation through the Mayor from the municipal authorities to accept the hospitalities of the city. Notwithstanding his correspondence with Judge Lumpkin, the feeling for Father Mathew in New Orleans was most friendly. 'Although,' says Mr. O'Meara, in his diary, 'the Bar-rooms are extremely numerous,' in about ten or twelve days after his arrival, he had given the pledge to more than 6,000 persons, including many of the wealthier classes. 'The change is already most perceptible,' adds Mr. O'Meara; 'not a single drunkard seen in the streets during Easter Saturday night.'

Sunday, 14th April, 1850.— . . . I never heard him preach better. It was for the establishment of schools. Many of the most respectable and influential citizens, including Protestants and Dissenters, present—an immense congregation. Five hundred took the pledge to-day. Gave twenty dollars for religious purposes. He visited the charity hospital, and gave five dollars.

Thursday, 18th April.— . . . At two o'clock dined with Mr. Cohen and his family, all of whom took the pledge. He is a Jew. . . . The statement of his affairs by his brother Charles most distressing to him, and makes a sad impression on his mind.

Monday, 22nd April.—Father Mathew had a feverish cold, and remained in all day.

Writing from New Orleans on the 3rd of May, to Mrs. Rathbone, Father Mathew says:—

As far as my temperance labours in New Orleans are concerned, you have been made acquainted, through the press, with my progress and unqualified success. Already upwards of 12,000 have taken the pledge in this city, and I expect an increased accession of three or four thousand more. This I consider an adequate compensation for any sacrifice I made of my feelings on the slavery question. New Orleans is a great and populous city, and apparently as healthy as any other portion of this great Republic; though the yellow fever occasionally carries off many, the city is wholly free from consumption and other maladies which make such ravages in the old country. My general health is improved; but the incessant speaking and attendant excitement have occasioned an increase of the paralytic lameness in my left leg, which I find very inconvenient, as I am obliged to be constantly in motion. . . . I have cautiously avoided any act that would afford grounds for the suspicion of my being influenced by mercenary motives; but I find it difficult to make out sufficient funds to defray my own and secretary's expenses.

We continue to make further extracts from the diary:—

Monday, 13th May.—Gave an Arminian priest four dollars—four dollars for postage for the two last days—five dollars for servants and cabs. Many coming to take the pledge in a shocking plight—cut faces and black eyes, and not a cent in their pockets.

Friday, 16th May.—Father Mathew met with an accident, which frightened us a little. On getting into a cab, the horse started, and he was dragged along in the gutter. He sent for me and for clothes, and he continued his farewell visits. More than 13,000 have already taken the pledge in New Orleans.

Tuesday, 21st May.—Though few joined to-day, yet amply compensated by the consolation afforded to him as well as to families of respectability, who have reason to be rejoiced at his arrival. One in particular, Mr. ———, at whose house we dined, declared that Father Mathew was the saviour of his son, and that he had now no fear of

him—that he was one of the best men in the country. Many other respectable families similarly circumstanced.

Wednesday, 22nd May.—In the Princess steamer, on our way to Natchez. Father Mathew enjoyed this day. Was full of anecdote. He is strongly opposed to capital punishment. He was much struck by the appearance of two criminals in chains, bound for Baton Rouge. Among other things he mentioned, he told of his having once attended a penitent who was dying; and after having prepared him and administered the viaticum, &c., the poor innocent man turned to him and asked with great coolness, 'What's the news?' Father Mathew told him he should be thinking of something else, and that he should prepare to meet his God. 'I know that, your reverence,' was the reply; 'but I should like to take to my friends in the other world the latest news.'

Saturday, 25th May.—Gave thirty dollars for religious purposes—ten dollars to the Sisters for a feast for the children.

Tuesday, 28th May.—Visited the hospital and the prison, and had postulants in both.

As Father Mathew reached Vicksburg, a city which has since then acquired a terrible celebrity, the weather, which had become overpoweringly warm, greatly oppressed him, although he continued to exert himself as long as he could resist the weakness which was daily increasing. In Vicksburg, as in every village and town and city which he passed through, he met with old friends—either those whom he had personally known in Ireland, or their children; and while some were in rather indifferent circumstances, many were prosperous and respected, occupying good positions, and possessing considerable influence. The Catholic clergy were almost invariably Irish, the exception being French. He also met several Irishmen in command of the finest boats on the Mississippi and its tributaries. The following extract from the diary was written on board the 'Cotton Plant,' which was then bound for Little Rock:—

Saturday, 15th June, 1850.—Had a very troublesome night with the mosquitos, which were most annoying during the time the boat lay up at night. The day became very agreeable. Reading nearly all day. Father Mathew saw several inhabitants as we passed on the

river—some of them Irish. Strange that the Irish are to be found everywhere. It is so different from the Germans, French, &c., who emigrate in colonies, and always settle down in one place. Father Mathew, in defending his countrymen from the fault thus attributed to them, gave it as his opinion, that it was much better the Irish should be scattered amongst the people of this great country. He instanced St. Giles's, London, where they congregated, and were found so troublesome and dissatisfied. 'Independent of this, he felt that the children of such a nation, whom the Almighty permitted to endure so much suffering and misrule, were destined by that all-wise Providence to propagate the Faith amongst the nations of the earth where infidelity reigned. No other people were more respected by the Americans than the Irish who respected themselves. That one blot on their escutcheon was their only crime, and, with the Divine blessing, he would remove that stain from their character. Though French, Spanish, and German are good Catholics, he said, yet no people have done more to promote the Faith, and to support their pastors, than the Irish. That generous noble disposition is not to be found amongst other nations. Wherever a few Irish Catholics settle down, their first effort is to raise a temple to the God of their fathers. The zeal that glowed in the breasts of their ancestors still glows in theirs. It is to be deplored, said Father Mathew, that many who came from Ireland to settle in distant portions of this country have lost the Faith, in consequence of their not having pastors or Catholic temples. This occurred chiefly when the first settlers arrived.'

Father Mathew was painfully struck at reading on the tombstones of the grave-yards which he visited on his route, many familiar names, and finding that his countrymen of the working class died off at an early age. He attributed this premature decay to several causes, including the inordinate use of tobacco (which weakened the powers of digestion), to strong drink, to the too frequent use of fresh meat, which was also eaten too rapidly, and to over work, to which they were urged by contractors, who thought more of the accomplishment of their undertakings than of the lives of their workmen.

He availed himself of every opportunity to appeal to the pride and patriotism of his countrymen, and employed every topic which he thought most calculated to impress them with the necessity of sustaining the character of their race and the

honour of their country in their adopted home. The glory of their ancestors, the piety and heroism of their fathers, the sorrows and sufferings of their country, the great work—the spreading of the Faith, which, by God's providence, they were destined to accomplish—these and like topics produced a powerful effect upon his Irish hearers, whose cheeks flushed, or whose eyes filled with unbidden tears, as the words of the speaker awakened their pride or stirred the depths of their hearts. Father Mathew knew the Irish nature as thoroughly as any man ever did, and he used that knowledge for the best and noblest purpose—the moral purification and social advancement of an exiled race.

Little Rock was reached on the 16th of June. The Bishop was an Irishman. His priests—O'Reily, Corcoran, and O'Donoghue—were also Irish. Their names smacked racyly of the old country. The welcome was—*Irish*. It may be mentioned, as one item of the expense to which Father Mathew was put by his constant travelling through the States, that he had to pay 24 dollars, or about 5*l.*, passage money for three persons, from Napoleon to Little Rock. Here, according to the following from the diary, Father Mathew was comparatively happy, though still anxious:—

The exertions of Dr. Byrne were very great when first he came as Bishop. He had to stop at the hotel, there being scarcely any Catholics in Little Rock. Now, through his untiring zeal, he has laid the foundation of a prosperous diocese. . . . Weather very fine, but extremely warm; agreeing with Father Mathew very well. He feels comparatively happy. One matter makes him somewhat uneasy, as we have been for nearly two months exceeding the limits prescribed by the Insurance Company, which arranged that he could stay in the South, to the extent of 33° north latitude, up to the 1st of May. . . . In the evening visited the young ladies' academy, where an address of welcome was spoken by one of the pupils, to which Father Mathew replied. . . . Much anxiety expressed by the citizens to hear him speak.

Greater numbers flocked to his standard in many other American cities, but in none was he received with a warmer

affection, or did he feel more thoroughly at home. Those who differed from him in religion treated him with respect and confidence, crowded the little cathedral to hear him preach the Gospel, and received the pledge at his hands. The good bishop and his priests surrounded him with every attention, and sought to induce him to remain with them during the summer, until his health, which was painfully infirm, should be somewhat restored. The bishop asked him to remain with him entirely, and become his coadjutor; but Father Mathew's mind was fixed upon returning as soon as he could to the country for which his heart yearned with passionate longing. Such, however, was the debility which was but too apparent, that Dr. Byrne secretly expressed his wish to Mr. O'Meara, that should it please Providence to close that saintly life in America, his honoured remains might find a resting place at Little Rock. Hope was entertained that his visit to the Springs of Arkansas would have a beneficial effect on his constitution, and he was now on his way to visit those famous waters, and test their efficacy by a trial of some duration.

Father Mathew was much amused with the missionary adventures of his friend Father O'Donoghue, one of the three priests of Little Rock. This excellent man, whose death occurred during the course of the summer, was the true type of the spiritual pioneer. Possessing considerable ability and ready powers of argument, full of wit and humour, and enjoying the gift of an imperturbable temper, he was more than a match for those who occasionally challenged him to controversy, in sustainment of the truth of his religion. He was by no means aggressive, but he was at all times ready to put the lance in rest in defence of his faith. The extended nature of his spiritual fold, and the wide tract of country over which his flock were scattered, called for the constant display of courage and endurance as well as zeal. He had to ride for days through tangled forests, the home

of wild animals, against whose attack he had to be ever on the watch. Frequently he lost his way, and had to sleep under some shelter which he ingeniously improvised. One day he was very near being strangled by a wild vine, and on another his hat was sacrificed to the same kind of obstruction, and he had to ride bare-headed for several miles, until he reached the first log cabin to be met with in the depths of the verdant wilderness. When he was lucky enough to enjoy the shelter of a roof, he either slept on the floor, his head pillowed on his saddle bags, or, if he stretched his weary limbs on the bed, he found himself the companion of a slain bear, which the hunter had flung in that receptacle for game. But, whether on the floor, or by the side of a shaggy monster, the slumber of the brave missionary priest was profound and unbroken. However, this constant strain upon every faculty of mind and body was soon to bring him to an early grave.

To show how missions prosper where they are energetically worked, it may be mentioned that when Father Mathew was in Little Rock, there still existed the log hut in which Bishop Byrne had taken up his episcopal residence seven years before; and that although he was then too poor to employ a regular servant, he had within that time built a cathedral—not very large, and with only three regular pew-renters—a dwelling house and a seminary, and had also established a college at Fort Smith, opened a mission at Pine Bluff, and accomplished a number of things which, considering the smallness of his means and the poverty of his congregation, were literally marvellous.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

He sets out for the Springs of Arkansas—Delightful Journey—Spends his Time pleasantly—Letter to Mrs. Rathbone—Bigotry rebuked—Scene in the Navy Yard of Pensacola—He objects to 'Lecture'—His wonderful Memory—Causes of his pecuniary Embarrassment.

ON Tuesday the 25th of June, Father Mathew set out for the Sulphur Springs, having previously distributed 100 dollars for various charitable purposes, besides having given a number of cards and medals gratis. The barouche and wagon cost him twenty-one dollars more. The journey was delightful, through a beautiful country, full of variety—hill, plain, rock, mountain, gushing streams and winding rivers, majestic trees as well as fragrant shrubs—and the most perfect stillness reigning over all. No song birds filled the air with their music, and not a sound was heard in this beautiful solitude, save the murmur of the babbling brook, a rustle amid the branches, or the clatter of the horses' feet over the track which was called a road, and which was occasionally but a passage, cleft, as it were, through a dense mass of living verdure. It seemed as if these lovely wilds of Arkansas had never been trodden by the foot of man, who had not yet come to claim as his own an earthly Paradise which had been rendered so well suited for his enjoyment. The settlers were few, and the attempts at clearing were rare.

Father Mathew for a time flung aside his cares, his load of anxiety and trouble, and resolutely left behind him the haunting shadow of debt—more terrible to him than the spectre of Death on the Pale Horse—and became himself