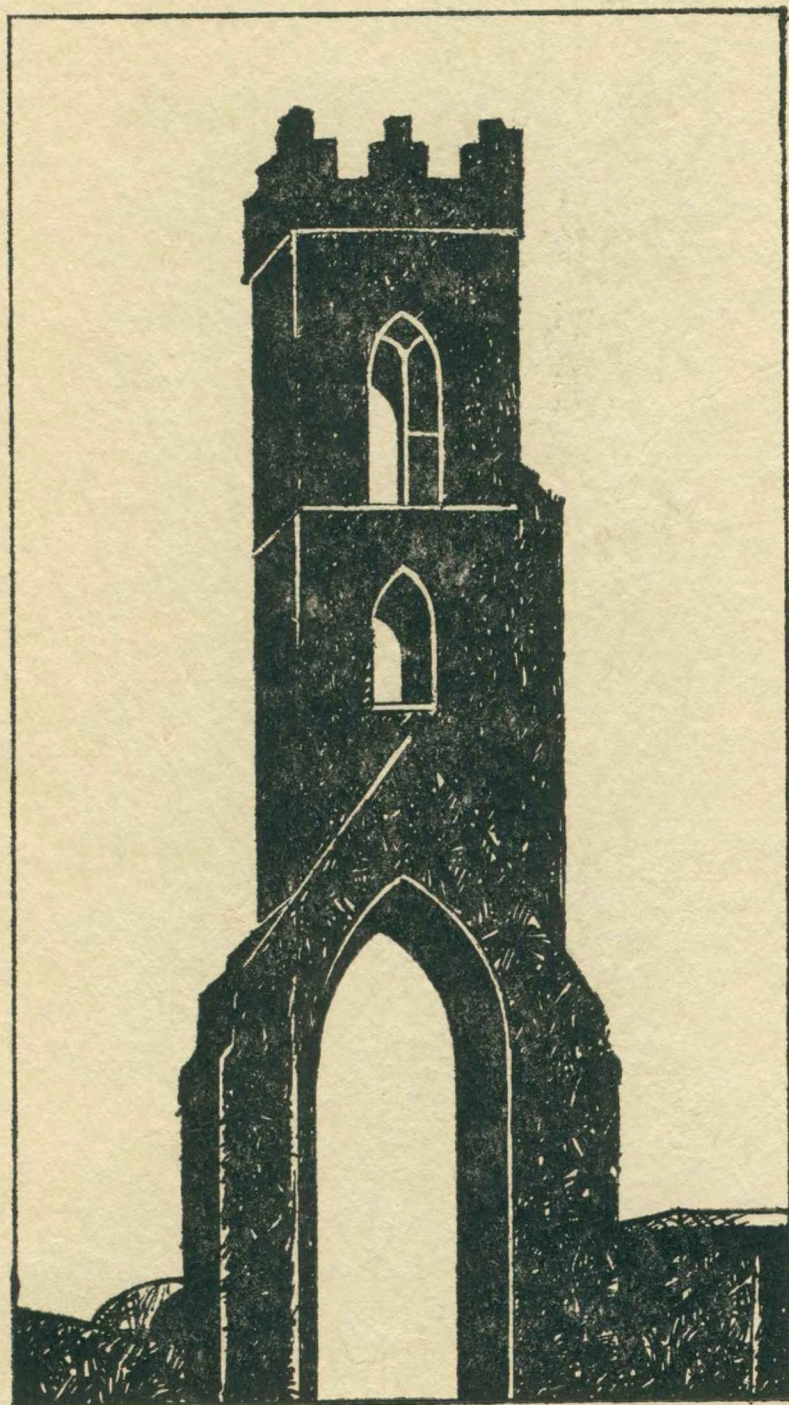




ST MAGDALEN'S CHURCH DROGHEDA

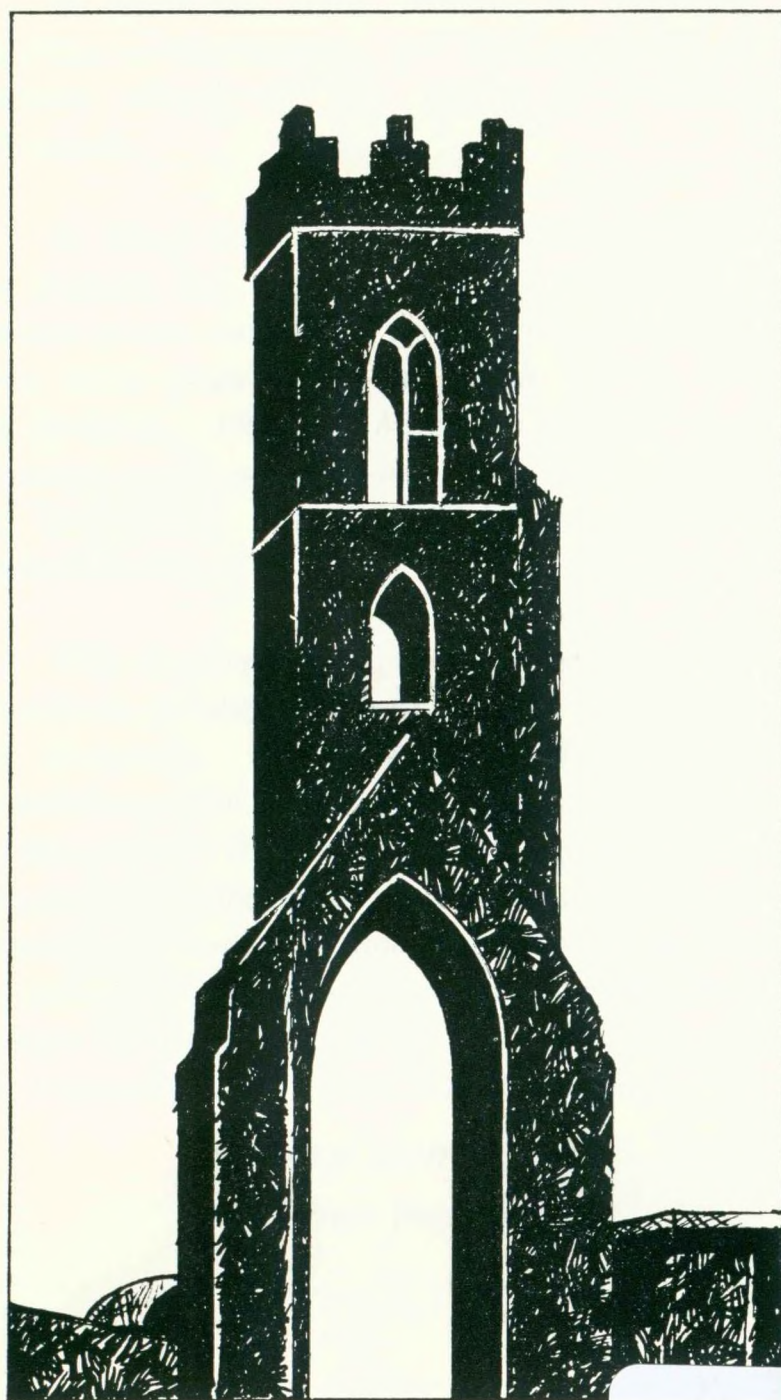


CENTENARY 1878~1978

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ST MAGDALEN'S CHURCH DROGHEDA



CENTENARY 187

Dominican Order - Irish Province
St Magdalen's Church Drogheda Centenar...
Damien Byrne, O.P.



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Introduction

It gives me great pleasure to introduce the booklet commemorating the first centenary of the present church of the Order of Preachers in Drogheda.

St. Mary Magdalen's was our second foundation in Ireland, for the Dominicans came to Drogheda within a few months of their arrival at Dublin and just three years after the death of St. Dominic at Bologna. The old Magdalen Tower, now six hundred years old, reminds us of the special place St. Magdalen's has in our tradition and in our affection today.

This booklet as a record of the Dominicans in Drogheda is also a record of the city and people of Drogheda. The Magdalen Tower and the Dominicans are part and parcel of the history of Drogheda. We have been closely associated with the people of Drogheda, not just for a century but for almost eight centuries, and this association continues to this day. We are honoured to have served the people of Drogheda for so long and look forward to continuing that service into the future.

DAMIAN BYRNE, O.P.,

Prior Provincial.



1978 Community

Back row from left — Fr. Gerald Alvey, O.P., Bro. Anslem Glynn, O.P., Fr. John O'Rourke, O.P., Fr. Columba Courtney, O.P. Front row from left — Fr. Reginald Rafter, O.P., V. Rev. Augustine Doherty, O.P. (Prior), Fr. Hilary O'Neill, O.P., Fr. Brice Heffernan, O.P.

A Hundred Years in Drogheda 1878 - 1978

The solemn dedication of St. Mary Magdalen's took place one hundred years ago, on 15 September 1878. The archbishop of Armagh, Dr. McGettigan, performed the ceremony and Fr Tom Burke preached. For both it was their third visit to Linen Hall Street, since they had already taken part in the laying of the corner-stone and the blessing of the bell. The Primate was assisted by a new visitor, the gentle Dr. John Leahy O.P., bishop of Dromore, a boyhood friend and collaborator of Fr Bartholomew Russell, reformer and re-builder of the Irish Dominican Province.

On that great day, the archbishop celebrated the first Mass ever said in the new church. It was, as the occasion demanded, a High Mass with deacon and subdeacon, the three ministers wearing "a beautiful and rich set of vestments" presented by Lady Gormanston and the Hon. Miss Preston. The strange thing about it was that there was no high altar, save for a temporary one put in specially for the dedication. In fact the church had not yet been furnished, apart from two side-altars of "richly carved and decorated oak", one of which was paid for by that constant benefactor, Mr. John Kelly. Contemporary accounts say nothing of the gallery above the entrance to the nave, but a high altar of white marble was under construction, while the stained-glass windows in the apse were already in place. These were the gift of three merchants of Drogheda, Messrs. Cooney, Halligan and Norris. The three central lights represent the Crucifixion, while two sets of three small windows to right and left illustrate scenes from the life of St. Mary Magdalen. The only other feature already in place was the wall and railing separating the church from the road, the work of Grendon and Co., a local firm.

What a change it must have been for those who had prayed all their lives in the old Linen Hall chapel! The new church, with a total length of 111 feet, was twice as long as the old. No narrow aisles blocked the view of the altar; the handsome nave stretched thirty feet across, widening to sixty-two at the transepts. In height too, the new building far surpassed the old, for the ceiling rose to forty-five feet and the tower to ninety. The tower in particular took the fancy of the journalist from the **Drogheda Argus**: "the tower is covered with a gabled roof. At the belfry stage, each face is pierced with triplet windows, the centre-pieces of which are formed of coupled monolith shafts which give a very light and open appearance." For all these advantages, many were sorry to leave the old Linen Hall chapel in which they had prayed for a lifetime. "It was very devotional," they used to say.

Father Meadthe, who had worked for ten long years to build the new church, died after a short illness just eight months after the solemn opening. He died, in fact, at six in the morning while the bell of his new St. Magdalen's was ringing out the Angelus. His friends buried him under a fine stone cross in the grounds of the church. The long inscription might have been reduced to a single phrase: "This beautiful church which overshadows his grave will be a lasting monument of his piety and worth." One month later, in June, 1879, when the new high altar was finally placed in St. Magdalen's, the first Mass celebrated on it was the month's mind for Fr Patrick Vincent Meadthe. Until quite recently, a small marble slab set into the sanctuary wall on the "epistle side" recalled the fact that the high altar itself was erected in his memory.

The mantle of Father Meadthe's immense popularity and esteem fell on Fr Antoninus Boyd, prior from 1876 to 1882, a priest who had apparently been working in Drogheda almost as long as Father Meadthe himself. To him fell the task of building a new priory and of furnishing the new church. With the only other member of the community, Fr. Albert Ryan, he took lodgings in Fair Street when their old house and the chapel behind it were pulled down to clear the chosen site. The new priory, set well in from the street, would occupy exactly the site of the former church. Father Boyd, in his fund-raising schemes, had the twin advantages of being entirely free from debt and of being able to rely on the boundless generosity of the people of Drogheda.

On a Sunday afternoon in January 1880, the Ladies Altar Society held a meeting in the "vestry" (probably the confraternity-room) of the new church, and a series of bazaars was organised, one of which alone brought in more than £1,200. The prior's plan was that the building should blend with the church; it too would be of cut-stone in the Gothic or "pointed" style. With extraordinary foresight, he allowed for no less than eight bedrooms some sixty years before the community grew large enough to need them. The architect was again Mr Ashlin and the contractor Mr James McAdorey of Dundalk who undertook to build the priory for £2,584.

The foundation stone was solemnly blessed on 5 June 1881 by the Provincial of the time, Fr John Towers, who was given a silver trowel in honour of the occasion. Three Franciscans of Drogheda celebrated High Mass after the ceremony, but no bishop attended what was very much a "family" gathering. Fr Tom Burke, the great preacher of the day, delivered yet another fine sermon for Drogheda. Among the many visitors was Fr Bartholomew Russell of Cork, architect of the reformed Irish Dominican Province, respectfully known to his brethren as the "Patriarch". It must have cheered his old heart to see yet another of the venerable convents of **Hibernia Dominicana** rise, so to speak, from the ashes. There was a choir that day, directed by Miss Snow "at the organ". The good lady, to tell the truth, can have had no better than a harmonium to play,

for many a year would pass before a proper organ would be installed.

The priory took only fourteen months to build, whereas the church had taken eight years. Father Boyd had been wise to employ a main contractor. Mr. McAdorey of Dundalk worked quickly and worked well. Yet another, but final ceremony took place on 12 August 1882 when Father Towers returned to bless the new priory of St Magdalen's. There was Mass at noon and Father Tom Burke, preaching at Drogheda for the fifth and last time, held his audience spellbound for a full hour after the Gospel. The collection, taken up by the former Mayor, Alderman Mangan, and members of the Corporation, came to £400. When all was over, Father Boyd and his companion were able to furnish a few rooms in the new building and take possession, glad enough to leave the rented rooms in Fair Street where they had been living for more than a year.

Brother James Duggan

In 1879, just after the building of the new church, a laybrother named James Duggan came to join the three priests of the community, the first in a long line of brothers who have faithfully served St. Magdalen's right up to the present day. He was unusual in that he had been a lay tertiary from the 1850s when there were about fourteen thriving chapters of tertiaries in Roscommon, Longford, Westmeath and Offaly. Brother James, at an early age, was prior of the chapter at Durrow near Tullamore and remembered how they used wear the habit when going in procession to meet the Provincial once a year. On one such occasion "the singers were led by a brother who played a flute." He also remembered how strictly the men kept the women under control. "While the Brothers appeared in the secular clothing of their class, not using every colour, the Sisters were greatly looked after by the Brothers. When the old custom of the heavy cloaks went out and females gave up wearing the hood and kerchief on the head, and began the bonnets and other coloured garments, the men were rigorous in forbidding ribbons, fringes or any kind of

ornament. The Brothers would always have them appear in black with dress and head-covering of the simplest material and of the most severe form."

These tertiary chapters flourished with practically no direction from any Dominican priest. Their members were tested for years before receiving the habit, and for many years again before profession. Even though few had been to school, each chapter would have a library of about fifty books. On Sundays they spent four or five hours in the chapel, praying, reading and teaching catechism long before it was time for Mass. Many of them would travel at least twenty miles to and from their chapter meetings, and that mostly on foot. Even though many were quite young, they seem to have been celibate and reserved. "It would be looked upon as a sacrilege if a Tertiary Brother had any part in ordinary amusement and gaiety." Brother James was born near Castletown-Geoghegan in 1836, joined the Order at Tallaght at the age of forty and died at Drogheda in 1893.

Father Patrick Conway

These reminiscences of the Third Order in the midlands were taken down by Fr Patrick Conway who came to Drogheda as vicar of the nuns of Siena Convent in 1883 and remained there until his death. He was no ordinary priest and no ordinary vicar, but one of the most saintly Irish Dominicans of the century. A Dubliner by birth, he studied at Lisbon, and still looked so young on his return to Dublin in 1846 that a parcel of tops and marbles was left in to the priory with the note: "These are for the boy priest lately arrived." The boy priest became prior of Cork in 1855 and held that office (being very much a member of the "reform" party) for more than ten years before succeeding Fr Tom Burke as master of novices at Tallaght in 1866. And when he was elected Provincial in 1872, he made history by retaining the guidance of the novices throughout his provincialate. He never looked for these positions. When finally he had to leave Tallaght after twenty years, the prospect of saying good-bye to so many friends seemed so dreadful that he packed and left unknown to the community.

At Drogheda, the nuns thought to please their new vicar by singing the "**Rorate Coeli**" as he was vesting in the sacristy, but that haunting chant reminded him so keenly of Tallaght that he broke down and could not enter the chapel for several minutes.

One might think there was some affectation or lack of balance in such a man, yet he was venerated both by the nuns and by the countless Dominicans with whom he lived down the years. On the occasion of the golden jubilee of his priesthood in 1896, the entire Province presented him with a finely decorated chalice and a special "address" printed on vellum. Although religious are the last to praise those with whom they live, this formal address contains a compliment which must be unique in the history of the Irish Province: "these past fifty years have been most nobly and most faithfully spent in the practice of every Christian virtue that could adorn a true son of St. Dominic."

On his death in 1898, the large confraternity room attached to the church of St Magdalen was arranged for the occasion as a mortuary chapel, "and to it came the faithful in great numbers to pray and to honour the mortal remains of the holy priest, so greatly venerated by all. Towards the end, the people became so eager in their devotion that a guard had to be set lest the habit, scapular and cloak should be cut in pieces as relics. Children surrounded the coffin, showing no signs of fear. Mothers lifted up their little ones to touch the hands. All felt the impression of sanctity; that the holy face now calm in death was that of a saint."

The Windows of St. Magdalen's

The two side-altars of carved oak, facing down the church on either side of the high altar, were dedicated to Our Lady and St. Joseph. The western transept thus became, for all practical purposes, a "Lady Chapel". Above the altar a stained-glass window of three lights represents Our Lady giving the Rosary to Saints Dominic and Catherine. The inscription reads: "Pray for the soul of

Kate McConnell who died Feb. 11, 1880, to whose memory this window is erected by her brother James John Keappock."

The west wall of the same transept has a small upper window representing St. Thomas Aquinas, surmounting two sets of three-light windows. The older set, that closer to the altar, was erected "by the people of Drogheda in memory of Fr. Antonius Boyd O.P. who lived for sixty years amongst them". The window shows his patron St. Antoninus, the Dominican archbishop of Florence, healing the sick. The face of the Dominican wearing the black cappa in the left-hand panel is that of Father Boyd himself, builder of the priory. He died in 1916 and was buried near the church beside Father Meadthe and Brother James Duggan.

The second set of windows belongs to a much later date, as one would notice even from the subject: Christ the King. It is inscribed "in memory of Alphonsus J. McQuillan. Erected by his loving wife and family". While the other windows were

made by Mayer of Munich and London, this McQuillan window was the work of Clarke of Dublin about 1950. Alphonsus McQuillan had a brother named Joseph who entered the Order in 1900, served for twenty years in Trinidad, and died at Dublin in 1935.

Turning then to the eastern transept, the windows above St. Joseph's altar were erected in 1891 "by Mrs. Connolly in memory of her husband James Connolly and her daughter Alice May." On the east wall of the transept there are again two sets of three lights, corresponding to those straight across the church. The set nearer the altar, representing the Nativity, is inscribed: "In memory of Mary Sarah McQuaile, erected by her loving husband Michael McQuaile, West Street, Drogheda." Before her marriage, Mrs. McQuaile was one of the Bradys of West Street. In 1932 her daughter Kathleen or Kitty, later president of the Altar Society, presented the golden ciborium still used in the church. The Nativity window was probably made by



Mayer, as that of St. Joseph certainly was. The second set of windows, by Clarke of Dublin, again betrays its later date by the subject chosen: the Assumption of Our Lady. There are fashions in devotion just as there are in everything else. This window was donated by Mr. P. McCann in memory of his brother Hugh. The family were then grocers and wine merchants in West Street. On the wall above all these windows there is a small one of St. Vincent Ferrer, the great Spanish Dominican preacher.

It is said that the elaborate window over the "Boyne Door" or main entrance to the church was originally designed as a Rosary window to depict the fifteen mysteries of the Rosary. Yet it has six lights rather than five, could only be seen by people leaving the church, and if ever fitted with stained-glass would greatly darken the interior. At the moment there is only one stained-glass window in the body of the nave, above the Shrine of St. Martin de Porres on the east wall. Like all the others already described, it comprises three lights, rounded off at the top by some Gothic tracery. It was made in 1948 by the Dublin firm of Earley and was erected by Mrs. Moira D. McArdle in memory of her deceased parents, Patrick and Mary Elizabeth Drew. What is particularly attractive about it is that it represents the patroness of the church. Each of the three lights is occupied by a single figure—Jesus between Martha and Mary—while across the base runs the divine charter of the contemplative life: "Mary hath chosen the best part which shall not be taken away from her."

The Organ Gallery

When the church was first opened to the public, it was scarcely furnished at all. So far as sacred music was concerned, Mr. McGough, Miss Snow and Miss Callaghan, all directors of the choir in the 1880's, had to manage with a harmonium. It took twenty years to install a real organ. The famous Dublin firm of Telford and Telford were given the contract, and Mr. Telford himself played the new instrument during High Mass on the opening day, 23 May, 1897. The organ was powered by an hydraulic engine or, more simply, a water

pump, replaced in 1933 by an "electric blower."

This first organ was found in 1944 to be infested with woodworm. In any case it obstructed much of the Boyne window behind it. During the priorship of Fr Columba Courtney, the organ was demolished, the gallery itself lowered, and a new stairs put in. Mr. Rooney built a new organ, using some spare parts from the old, and the instrument was first played at Midnight Mass in 1950. Miss McGeough, organist from 1919 to 1949, arranged many operas and concerts on behalf of the church and priory.

The graceful design of the marble high altar, since removed, can be judged only from some old photographs. A tall and very narrow spire rose above the tabernacle, enclosing a large brass crucifix which, with six matching candlesticks, was donated in 1881 by Mrs. Carroll as 'an offering to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus.' Two large statues stood on wooden brackets at each extremity of the apse, close to the altar-rails: the Sacred Heart on the right and St Catherine of Siena at the other side close to Our Lady's altar. The statues were removed long ago, but there is still a golden chalice presented to Father Boyd in 1910 by Misses Annie and Josephine MacCreanor on the golden jubilee of his profession.

Right from the start the church has suffered from damp, and practically every means known to science has failed to solve the problem. The windows, especially those on the Dominic Street side, have had to be reset time and time again. The first recorded alterations were those carried out by Fr Thaddaeus Crofts (1913 - 1919). He moved the high altar out a little from the wall, probably for the convenience of altar-boys and sacristans, and laid a mosaic pavement in the sanctuary. Father Crofts also put down new tiles on the aisle from the main door to the altar-rails and heated the church for the first time. The three confessionals now in use were installed in 1922. In those early days both church and priory were lit by gas, but all this changed rather hurriedly in 1930 when "the gas pipes began to leak in the church" and the ESB was called to the rescue. From

1934 the heating system in the church has been run on oil instead of solid fuel, but the priory had to wait until 1963 for the luxury of central heating.

Among the names of those living at St. Magdalen's around the beginning of the century, one notices that of a constant migrant, Fr. Ambrose Coleman. However little time he may have spent in the city, Father Coleman deserves to be remembered there. Not because he wrote some excellent historical books, but for his successful efforts to preserve the Magdalen Tower. He had a tablet put on it in 1906, as a deterrent to anyone inclined to knock it down, and succeeded in 1912 in having the monument surrounded by a railing as a further deterrent to those who never read tablets. Among his unpublished works is a biography of Fr Patrick Conway with whom he lived at Drogheda in 1896.

Fr Jordan Powell was for twenty years vicar of the Siena nuns, but belonged to the Drogheda community for only three years (1916 - 1918), though he did return briefly

later on. When Benedict XV decreed the beatification of Oliver Plunkett in 1918, Father Powell wrote two short biographies of the martyred Primate. The first was an ordinary pamphlet, but the second was larger and had many interesting illustrations. Both were printed by the **Independent**. The head of Blessed Oliver was given to St. Peter's by the nuns in 1921, and in the following year Siena Convent closed its boarding school in favour of a fully contemplative life. The nuns then began the daily adoration of the Blessed Sacrament to which they and the people of Drogheda have been faithful ever since.

Brother Andrew Ryan

St. Magdalen's is unusual in that the most permanent and beloved members of the community over the past hundred years have been brothers rather than priests. There have been remarkable priors, men of great ability, such as Fr Dominic Geelan or Fr Dominic Fitzmaurice, but however capable

DOMINICAN ALTAR SODALITY DROGHEDA 1931



First row (seated) — Joseph Craig, James McGuigan, Michael Lochrin, Rev. Bro. Ryan, O.P., V. Rev. Fr. McKenna, O.P., Liam McSorley, Michael McSorley, Patrick Smyth. Second row (standing) — Owen Lochrin, Shaun Black, Thomas Branigan, Michael O'Hagan, Thomas McDonnell, Garrett Lynch. Third row (standing) — Joseph Roche, Anthony Weldon, Thomas McNally, Patrick McConnell, Michael McGuigan, Shane Donnelly, Brian McDonnell, Peter McNally. Top row — Patrick Bell, Leo Branigan, Thomas Craig, Patrick Duffy, Thomas Dwyer, Bernard McManus, Oliver Craig, Eugene Black.

a prior may be, his term of office is fixed and when the day comes he must go. There have been others too, priests famous in their generation like Fr Stanislaus Hogan or Fr Antoninus Keane, yet they made their mark elsewhere and came to Drogheda only for "a safe haven and peace at the last". It is the brothers who are remembered, and none more warmly than Brother Andrew Ryan.

Brother Andrew was born at Upperchurch, County Tipperary, in 1882. After some initial training at Tallaght, Newbridge and Dundalk, he came to Drogheda in 1919 and never left St. Magdalen's until his death in 1949. During those thirty years he took care of church, sacristy and garden, while at the same time developing some surprising talents. By nature he was neat and efficient, very courteous in manner, popular with the people, although he is said to have retained "a certain dignity". The skill he developed in cultivating roses for the church was applied with equal success to the large band of altar-boys he marshalled around him. He trained them carefully in their duties and led them to understand that only the best behaviour and appearance were good enough in church.

His free time was given over to Yorkshire canaries, Cocker spaniels and clay pigeon shooting. The surprising thing is that he was so successful in all three hobbies. His canaries took first prizes at Belfast, Lurgan and Portadown. A Cocker dog and bitch he presented at the R.D.S. in 1938 won two green stars. He became a member of the Irish Kennel Club and judged dog championships all over Ireland, England and Scotland. As a member of the Irish Gun Club Association, Brother Andrew came to be reckoned one of the finest shots in the country. The only setback to his sporting career was a letter from the Provincial advising against golf.

Yet all these interests covered a span of thirty years and took no more than the holidays to which he was fully entitled. He is warmly remembered still, thirty years after his death, by those he trained as altar-boys long ago. And he is remembered, not for birds or dogs or clay pigeons, but for his careful service of the church and the religious courtesy he showed to all.

Changes in the Church: 1956-1974

No significant changes were made in the church until 1958, during the priorship of Fr. Norbert Barry. Since there never had been a private oratory in which the community might recite the divine office, a fine and rather original one was built in the form of a wide corridor leading from the sacristy around the outer curve of the apse. The altar in this oratory, donated by Mr. Desmond Grant, was first used on 4 November 1958. Father Barry also employed the Irish Mosaic Company to execute panels showing scenes from the life of St. Mary Magdalen beneath the windows of the apse.

Under a new prior, Fr. Anselm Moynihan, St. Magdalen's got its first microphone in 1959. It also got two marble side-altars in 1962, replacing those of carved oak which were given to St. Mary's parish across the river. A year later, Fr. Joseph Collins built the small but decent shrine of St. Martin de Porres in the form of a chapel jutting out from the east wall of the nave. Irish devotion to St. Martin, the dark-skinned laybrother from Peru, can be traced back to Fr. Stephen Glendon at Tralee about the year 1943. On moving to Cork after the war, Father Glendon continued to spread this devotion with the help of Br. Antoninus Dowling, while from about 1947 Fr. Louis Coffey of Dublin was fully active in the same good cause. St. Martin, therefore, came late to Drogheda, but he came to stay.

The Second Vatican Council, with all its emphasis on a renewed liturgy, spelt the end of the elaborate high altar and led to the complete refurnishing of the sanctuary. This work, begun by Fr. Finian Lynch in 1969, went on until 1974 during the priorship of Fr. John Cahill. The new altar of white marble, like most new altars, is a salutary reminder of the Mass-rocks of former times. It also permits the priest to face the people, is completely free on all sides (a help to concelebration) and has the great artistic merit of simplicity. Most of the cost was borne by Mr. Patrick Mohan.

A new carpet was put down to cover the old mosaic floor, and a new tabernacle (the gift of Mrs. McArdle of Wellington Quay) was set at eye-level into the wall of the apse. It was then that windows were put into the apse wall between the sanctuary and the choir. Monsignor Lavery, vicar general, consecrated the new altar on the feast of St. Mary Magdalen, 22 July, 1970.

When the old wooden pulpit was removed in 1971 it became obvious that the pillar just behind it was out of plumb. The finger of suspicion immediately pointed to the belfry above, and after four months' expert examination it became evident that the belfry was still moving. A supporting wall was then built between two of the three pillars in Our Lady's transept, so that while St. Magdalen's still has a "leaning tower" the rate of movement is almost negligible.

Like the old pulpit, the Stations of the Cross too were taken down in the name of progress. These were large oil-paintings of no artistic but great sentimental value which had been in the church as long as anyone could remember. Every effort was made to find them a suitable home somewhere else, but they could neither be sold nor given away and were eventually taken by someone who wanted the frames. The new Stations in carved wood came to St. Magdalen's as a gift from the Sligo community in 1973. For years they had been in the old church of Holy Cross, but did not suit the new church opened at Sligo in that year.

The final touches to the new sanctuary were given as late as 1974. Fr. Henry Flanagan of Newbridge College designed and made a copper-enamel front piece, representing the seven Sacraments, to make the altar look less severe. Following his advice, the height of the reading-desk was reduced and the tabernacle brought out from the wall to be set on a white marble pedestal. Sister Paul of Siena Convent made a special veil to hang in front of the "ambo" or reading-desk. So much work on the sanctuary made the rest of the church look shabby by comparison but this too was renovated completely by Christmas 1975.

Page Twelve

Brother Anthony McNamara

Brother Anthony became such an institution in Drogheda that one tends to forget that when he went there first he was a man of sixty-one with a life-time of hard work behind him. He was born in Clare and spent many decades as a careful sacristan in the convents of Newry, Galway and Limerick. He was also known as a good cook and gardener, but more famous still as a collector of money for the improvement of the various churches he served. Although straightforward in speech, even at times to the point of bluntness, he had a winning way with him which few were able to resist. Thanks to this gift of parting people from their money, he raised most of the necessary funds for the new convent built at Limerick by Fr. Leo McArdle in



REV. BRO. ANTHONY McNAMARA
1950 - 1975 (Drogheda)

1942. A story is also told of how he brought a large quantity of linen across the Border and escaped the Customs men by turning a particularly thin house-boy from the priory in Newry into a walking clothes-horse.

Although no longer young on reaching Drogheda in 1950, Brother Anthony was to work there for twenty-five years during which he endeared himself to all, especially to school-children who visited the church and found that he always had time to talk and encourage them. It was at Drogheda that he celebrated the golden jubilee of his profession, and from Drogheda that he went in 1972 to be received by the President at Arus an Uactarain. He worked hard to

within a fortnight of his death. For years he took care of the "country quest," with Mr. Joseph Hoey as his patient and careful driver.

In his last few years, Brother Anthony was most often to be found in the church with his stick and his Rosary. Certainly he went to the church to pray, but he also went to meet whoever passed in or out during the day. It was an apostolate of his own, in which he talked to God and to his friends without ever breaking the conversation. He died on 18 April 1975 at the age of eighty-five and was laid to rest in St. Peter's Cemetery with many another who had served St. Magdalen's before him.

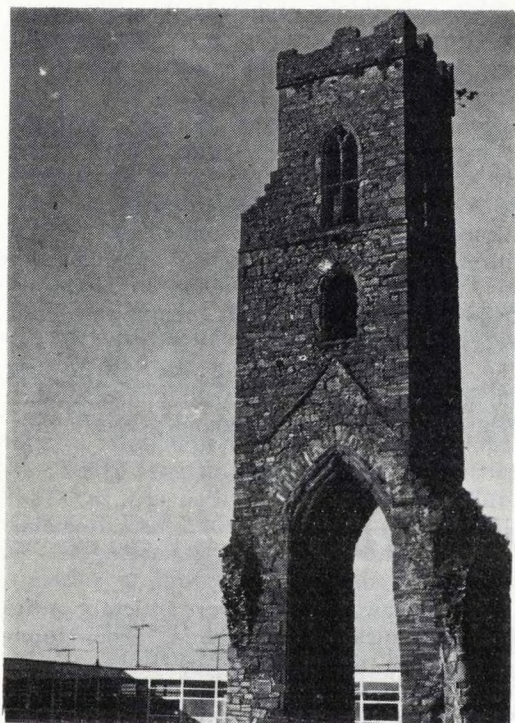
Looking Back

The first St. Magdalen's

The walls and gates of Drogheda, which enclosed the city until about 1800, are still impressive even though St. Lawrence's Gate is the only substantial portion that remains. If the many other gates and linking walls were equally massive and imposing, old Drogheda must have been a handsome city in its day. Yet when the Dominicans or Friars Preachers first arrived in 1224, these famous walls had not yet been built. Only rough palisades or earthworks protected the small Anglo-Norman colony which had occupied the ancient settlement a generation before. Hugh de Lacy, one of the first Norman invaders, built two castles on the southern or Meath side of the Boyne at Drogheda. The city itself straddled the strategic bridge from which it took its name, and the Dominicans chose a site on the northern rim of the town where the Magdalen tower or steeple still cuts the skyline. This spot may well have been outside the ramparts when the friars came first, to be enclosed at a later date. At Dublin, to which they first came from England earlier in the same year, and again at Kilkenny a year later, they settled outside the walls, either because they could not find a place inside or preferred to live more freely outside them.

In any case, we know very little about the first Dominicans of Drogheda. Their foundation was underwritten by Luke Netterville, Anglo-Norman archbishop of Armagh, who is said to have been buried in their church in 1227. The friars themselves came from or through England and spoke a peculiar language called Norman-French, but yet they soon blended with both the Anglo-Norman and Irish communities. One of their own, who became archbishop of Armagh and was buried by the Dominicans of Drogheda in 1270, bore the unmistakably Irish name of Patrick O'Scannell. The new priory, most likely a modest house "of clay and wattles made," was dedicated to St. Mary Magdalen, a saint of whom the Dominicans were always fond. When Christ rose from the dead, it was she who was sent to tell St. Peter and the others, becoming an apostle to the apostles, and therefore a most suitable "protectress" for the Friars Preachers who were setting out to do in the thirteenth century what the apostles had done in the first.

The Magdalen tower, as it stands today, cannot have belonged to the first Dominican church. It was built later when the friars were better established and could rely on wealthy benefactors. The whole complex of church and convent survived practically intact until about 1770 when all but the



Magdalen Tower, site of the first foundation the Dominicans made in Drogheda in 1224.

tower was taken away. Some say that the tower alone proves that the church was in the shape of a cross, but the pointed arch on which it rests is so narrow and so high that it is more reasonable to see it as the centre of a long, narrow church on an east-west axis. Beyond the tower, facing the sea to the east, stood the altar and the choir-stalls in which the friars prayed. At the other, western end there was room for the people, and in between (under the arch of the tower) a rood-screen which was lifted only for the Consecration during the Mass. The site covered an acre and a half in 1540, but not even the foundations of the various buildings on it could be discovered more than a century ago. Some glazed and decorated tiles from the mediaeval friary, which came to light in 1950, seem to have been imported from Cheshire during the fourteenth century.

All, then, that remains of either church or convent, apart from a few expensive tiles, is the Magdalen tower. But what a tower! Higher than any other Dominican

tower in Ireland, rising from the highest point of the city, graceful in design, resting only on a slender arch, and yet as old as any monument in Drogheda. One would think it square in plan, but there is a slight projection on the northern face where an enclosed spiral staircase rises from above the arch to the top. Since a few ladders inside would have served the same purpose, and the staircase upsets the symmetry of the tower, the stairs may have been added to buttress the tower itself.

Life in Medieval Drogheda

Drogheda was a Norman stronghold of the Pale, a river-port conveniently facing England, a small but crowded city of merchants and tradesmen. It must have been quite a colourful place, since the freemen dressed according to their profession and social status, while the many groups of friars, monks and canons wore distinctive religious habits on the streets. "Wild Irishmen" too, coming in to fairs and markets, wearing only their shirts and shaggy mantles, added variety to the scene. Much of the social life of the city turned on religious celebrations and on the guilds or trade-unions into which workers of every category combined to protect their interests. There was occasional fear of attack from the ever-stronger "Irish" outside, but far greater and much more constant danger within, from plague or fire, because of the open sewers, the heaps of refuse, the straying animals, and the crowding together of so many wooden houses (usually thatched) in such a narrow space.

The role of the Dominicans in that society was to offer a mobile group of preachers, better prepared for their task than the usual run of medieval priests, and not tied down (like the Cistercians and other monks) within the walls of their own convents. Their churches were designed to hold as many as possible, but they also preached in the parish churches of the countryside. To lend what we would call "credibility" to their teaching, they led a very severe life, never (for example) eating

meat, and depending for their support on the alms of the faithful rather than on landed property.

How faithful the Dominicans of medieval Drogheda were to this ideal is something we shall never know, but they seem to have been poor enough. From 1253 right up to their suppression in 1543, they received an annual alms from the King of England, though there may have been long periods during which they saw little of the royal bounty. The first prior of the community mentioned in any source was deposed from office by a General Chapter of the Order held at London in 1263. Neither the priest's name nor the nature of his fault appears in the record.

From the same thirteenth century, there are two papal documents in which the Dominican prior of Drogheda (unnamed) was commanded to concern himself with the irregular election of an archdeacon of Armagh and with civil encroachment on the rights of the Church in Dromore. Between 1266 and 1274, the community was also active in preaching and collecting alms for the seventh and last Crusade, a rather hopeless venture on which Prince Edward, the heir of Henry III, set out in 1270. A certain Father Clement of Drogheda took a leading part in the collection.

The many Dominican houses in Ireland, and there were eventually about thirty-five before they were all suppressed, were kept tightly under English control and were ruled by an English superior for centuries. In the normal course of events they would have constituted a Province of the Order, responsible only to Rome, as soon as they had a reasonable number of priories. As it happened, this sort of division was based on language rather than on territory and the creation of a new Province was as much a matter of politics as of better administration. The English Provincials kept control by means of a compromise: from at least as early as 1256, the Irish houses constituted a vicariat ruled by a vicar of the English Provincial. This Irish vicariat held chapters or meetings of its own, three of which took place at Drogheda in 1290, 1303 and 1347. The number of friars attending from all over Ireland must have been great, but this tells us nothing

of the size of the priory. Visitors may have lodged elsewhere in the city, and were in any case accustomed to sleep in dormitories rather than in cells.

Carrickfergus, on the northern shore of Belfast Lough, was another early Anglo-Norman stronghold, far more important than the cluster of huts at the mouth of the Lagan where Belfast stands today. In 1300 a prisoner named Walter, son of Hugh, escaped from Carrickfergus gaol and took legal sanctuary with the Dominicans in Drogheda. Another of the same name, Walter Galwey, took refuge with them too. Both were pardoned for their crimes on the understanding that they would leave the country. When Edward Bruce invaded the north from Scotland, Carrickfergus was one of the first places he attacked. Drogheda immediately sent an armed force under Thomas Mandeville to its defence. Bruce was defeated, but Mandeville died on the field of arms and was buried with the Franciscans nearby. The dead warrior must have had some connection with St. Magdalen's, for in 1317 the prior of Drogheda sent two of his friars — William Aubrey and Florence de Ardino — to bring his body home despite the protests of the northern Franciscans. The prior's name does not appear, but it may have been John le Rous who held that office in 1319. Florence de Ardino, despite his rather Italian name, may have been a native of Ardee.

The Black Death

Just one year after the vicariat chapter in 1347, the bubonic plague known as the Black Death reached Ireland from the East. According to Friar Clyn, the gentle Franciscan annalist who foresaw his own death in this disaster, the plague claimed its first victims at Howth and Dalkey, and "almost destroyed and laid waste the cities of Dublin and Drogheda". Between August and Christmas of that year, no less than 14,000 people died in Dublin. Eight Dominicans of Kilkenny died within the space of a few months. One can presume that the citizens and friars of Drogheda had to bury thousands of their own. The Pale took two centuries to recover from the

calamity. The famous archbishop of Armagh Richard Fitzralph, later venerated as St. Richard of Dundalk, preached at Drogheda in March 1349, urging the terrified people to invoke the intercession of Our Lady.

By this time, the friars of England and Norman Ireland lived rather more comfortably than they had done in the days of Saints Francis and Dominic. Satirical ballads took up the theme with relish. Archbishop Fitzralph too had some crows to pluck with the friars, and minced no words when dealing with those of Dundalk and Drogheda. All his complaints concerned the sacrament of penance, for the friars (exempt from his jurisdiction) too readily absolved penitents whom the archbishop had excommunicated, and did not insist on full restitution when absolving those who had failed to pay tithes. This struggle began at Drogheda in 1350 and eventually involved the whole city, for in 1353 the archbishop went so far as to lay Drogheda under interdict. The wealthy merchants, he thought, were not contributing enough to diocesan funds.

The archbishop also attacked the guilds of Drogheda, not only because they feasted too well, but because they refused to admit members "of a certain nation". St. Richard of Dundalk could find no biblical basis for the life of the begging friars, but at least he respected the lives of the "wild Irishmen" outside the Pale. Norman border-law took little account of murder, arson or robbery, once the victim was not a colonist. And many of the Anglo-Norman clergy reckoned it no sin at all to kill an Irishman.

Not long after the archbishop's death, Lady Joan Fleming, wife of Lord Travers, and Lady Margaret Birmingham, wife of Lord Preston, were both buried in St Magdalen's in 1361. Such events testify to the growing wealth and influence of the community, for these families were benefactors of the priory and noble ladies never slept in death without arranging founded Masses for their souls' repose. On the other hand, the Dominican convent of Drogheda was the first Irish house connected with the reform launched on the continent by Raymund of Capua, then Master of the Order. In 1390, Nicholas

Hill was appointed "vicar of Ireland" with special authority over the convent of Drogheda: "so that he may gather there friars devoted to regular observance." This return to the primitive constitutions of the Order may not in fact have taken root at Drogheda, since it had far more success in Gaelic areas than in the Pale.

Four years later, in 1394, the priory had a royal visitor, Richard II of England. Finding it next to impossible to control Ireland by post, he came over to see whether the royal presence might make any impression on Irish rebels, English subjects, or that strange hybrid class, "the degenerate English", who had become more Irish than the Irish themselves. Richard had some success, for many "kings" and chieftains saw the wisdom of showing respect to a monarch who had never seen them before and was most unlikely to see them again. And so, in the Dominican church at Drogheda, Richard II received the feudal homage of Niall Og O'Neill, king of Ulster, and his more outstanding chieftains: O'Hanlon, Mac-Donnell and MacMahon. The bishops of Kilfenora and Kilmacduagh also came to Drogheda to pledge their loyalty. Each in turn knelt before the King, laid aside his belt and weapons, and placed his hands in his, before being admitted to the "kiss of peace." This simple ceremony was of some political advantage to the Irish chieftains, and most certainly cost less than a war.

At much the same time, Pope Boniface IX extended the plenary indulgence of the Portiuncula to all who should visit St Magdalen's or the chapel of Our Lady attached to it, and give alms towards their repair, on the feast of the Annunciation and the four days immediately following. This famous medieval indulgence took its name from the little church below Assisi in which St. Francis received his call, the place he made his headquarters, and the place in which he died. The prior, lector and confessors of the Drogheda community were also permitted to grant the indulgence on other occasions at their own discretion. This "Great Indulgence" was annually preached in St. Magdalen's as late as 1950, and a framed modern copy of the document may yet be seen near the sacristy. In 1401, the

same Pope granted another but less prestigious indulgence of seven years and seven quarantines for the same purpose. Clearly, St. Magdalen's was in need of repair and not as much frequented as the Dominicans would have liked. The Magdalen tower may well have been built on the strength of these indulgences.

A Dominican Peacemaker

Medieval Drogheda was peculiar in that it had two boroughs, one for each side of the river: Drogheda "facing Meath" and Drogheda "facing Uriel" or Louth. Incoming vessels preferred to berth on the Meath side to avoid taxes levied on the other, with the result that Drogheda "facing Meath" monopolised imports. This led to quarrels, fighting and even bloodshed, especially on Drogheda's only bridge. A Dominican named Philip Bennett eventually called both parties to St. Peter's church where he preached to them on the text: "How good and pleasant it is for brothers to live together in unity".

The sermon closed with a stirring appeal. "Will you be united to the Body of Christ?" One of his hearers, William Symcock, answered for them all, "we will", and it was agreed to ask the King to blend the two boroughs into one. The result was the signing of a royal charter on 1 November 1412 whereby the town and suburbs in both counties were constituted the new "county of Drogheda" under one mayor and two sheriffs, to be elected by the burgesses and commonalty of the town. The first Mayor, unanimously elected, was none other than the William Symcock who had expressed the general desire for peace.

Just a few months later, in April 1413, two young Dominicans were ordained acolytes at St. Peter's church, receiving one of the "minor orders" which under the old arrangement led gradually to the priesthood. The interesting thing about them is that their names were so clearly Irish: Magonius O'Hilly and John O'Kyltaun.

This slow blending of Irish and Norman stock found full expression in the person of Thomas Fitzgerald, the Great Earl of

Desmond, Lord Deputy of Ireland from 1463 to 1467. Earl Thomas sympathised with the Irish, he spoke their language, he welcomed their chieftains and gallowglasses even in the streets of Dublin. He wanted to establish a university at Drogheda: "where may be made bachelors, masters and doctors in all sciences and faculties as at Oxford." Nothing came of the idea, but that was scarcely Desmond's fault. Edward IV grew uneasy about the power of the Geraldines and sent over a new Lieutenant, with the result that the Great Earl was attainted and his lands forfeited at a parliament held at Drogheda in 1468. Desmond forfeited also his life, for he was beheaded at Drogheda and buried at St. Magdalen's. The body was later removed, though whether to Christ Church, Dublin, or to Tralee is not quite clear.

That very parliament, which killed both the Great Earl and two of his infant sons, took note of the fact that the Dominican priory at Drogheda was "ruinous", and ordered the corporation of Dublin to subsidise the community at the rate of ten marks a year. Drogheda itself cannot have been too prosperous at the time and the situation, if anything, grew worse. Another dreadful plague decimated the city, and indeed the whole country, in 1479, to such an extent that the boats of Laytown (then a busy little port) lay rotting on the strand for want of anyone to use them.

Reform and Suppression

Despite English opposition, the Irish houses of the Order eventually managed to win recognition as an independent Province. That was in 1484, but they held on to their independence only for seven years. Their first provincial, Maurice O'Mochain Morall, came from Connacht where the reform movement had been a growing force since the early 1400s. In 1488, Father Morall obtained permission to reform the convents of Drogheda, Coleraine, Cork and Youghal, as well as any others he thought in need of it. Historians tend to dismiss this licence as ineffectual, pointing to the fact that St. Magdalen's was already in ruin at the time of the suppression. But yet, in 1496, the

archbishop of Armagh granted an indulgence to those who would give alms to Cornelius Gerald, prior of Drogheda, then preparing to quest in the northern parts of Armagh. Father Gerald had already repaired both church and convent; he had even provided books, lights and vestments, but needed money to improve it even more. Not necessarily proof of vigorous reform, but at least a shaft of light in the darkness.

After the collapse of the "Irish Province" in 1491, a collapse due to English Dominican influence, Drogheda seems to have come once again under the English provincial's vicar in Ireland. Neither they, nor their brethren at Kilkenny, seem to have been happy with their position. Perhaps the two communities contained both English and Irish friars, or were internally split by parties for and against reform. In 1524, both Drogheda and Kilkenny had lacked a prior for twelve months, precisely because of their own disputes, and had violently rejected the lawful vicar of the English provincial.

This was a case of Nero fiddling while Rome burned, for the convent of St Magdalen was abruptly suppressed in 1540 and surrendered three years later by the last prior, Peter Lewis. To tell the truth, they had not much to surrender, save for a few parks and gardens about the city and a "villa" of more than eight acres at Philipstown about two miles north of Drogheda on the road to Ballymakenny. The church and most of the dormitory had fallen down from age. Two bells were sold to a William Manning of Dublin, the site of one and a half acres was sold to Walter Dowdall and Edward Becke and by 1844 had passed to the Leigh family. The only other detail of interest is that the convent still received in 1540 a royal annuity of £6-13-4 by letters patent. And that, so far as we know, was the end of the Dominicans in Drogheda for quite a long while.

Eighty Homeless Years

Peter Lewis and his community probably made their way into Connacht or Ulster to priories not as yet suppressed. The older ones among them may have sheltered

with their noble benefactors of Louth or Meath. So far as is known, the Franciscan guardian in Drogheda was the only friar in Ireland to receive a pension. Since Drogheda remained thoroughly Catholic, the Dominicans may have returned there during the brief reign of Queen Mary (1553-1558). The Jesuit diplomat David Wolfe, in a memorial of 1574, described Drogheda as "a great town near the sea, well walled in the old fashion and containing about 700 or 800 inhabitants, all merchants or artisans, and all Catholics, though perforce they go to hear the Alcoran of the heretics. They have no munitions or artillery, but are armed only with bows, arquebuses and such-like weapons."

Father Wolfe was, of course, trying to encourage a Spanish invasion to topple the government of Queen Elizabeth in Ireland. Upon her death in 1603, the citizens of Drogheda evicted their Protestant ministers, bringing in priests in their stead. Public processions were organised, altars built, and no less than eighty Masses celebrated in two churches within a single day. It is hard to see where they would have found eighty or even forty priests, but similar scenes took place in Kilkenny and elsewhere at the same time, when it was widely believed that James I would allow his new subjects to profess the old religion.

In point of fact, James I had somewhat different plans for Ireland, so the Catholics of Drogheda had to become more secretive in matters religious. About the year 1611, the Protestant primate set out one day to find the priests of Drogheda. "And by chance he broke up a door wherein two or three nuns did dwell at the back. There was a little chapel where the friars did say Mass; he broke the door and by chance he found a cup of tin and thought it was silver. They found a suit of vestments . . . but he carried all away and locked it up. But that night all was taken away and it was never found who took it away." These friars and nuns were Franciscans, so far as one can tell, for there is no trace of any Dominican in the city until 1621.

The Dominicans did establish a Rosary Confraternity in Drogheda many years before this date. The Confraternity even

had a large oratory of its own. But there was no Dominican house or chapel. In such cases the policy of the Order was to appoint a local diocesan priest as Prefect of the Confraternity, and to send preachers and confessors from the nearest convent (in this case from Dublin or Trim) from time to time. The religious history of Drogheda during the 1620s is rather bizarre, for the parish priest (backed by the Jesuits) did everything to drive the Franciscans away. One result was that anti-Franciscan forces demolished the oratory of the Rosary Confraternity on St. Francis' day, 1622, just because the Franciscans (with their own chapel under construction) had hired the larger one in honour of the occasion.

All this time there was an ever-growing freedom of religious practice, even though the authorities did not quite approve. When Falkland was Lord Deputy in 1628, the government issued a decree against Roman Catholics. At Drogheda, this solemn document was taken rather lightly, for it was publicly proclaimed not by the Mayor but by a drunken soldier who, to quote the Lord Deputy, "made it seem like a May game." The only effect of the decree was that the friars and priests shut up the front doors of their Mass-houses, while admitting the public "by private passages" as often as before. Both the Augustinians and Carmelites came to Drogheda during the 1630s, and in all likelihood a Dominican community too was formed there during this decade of recovery and expansion.

Two Martyrs

The great rebellion of 1641 began in October with the massacre of English colonists in northern and north-western areas. Drogheda was soon besieged by Sir Phelim O'Neill, but Sir Henry Tichborne defended the city with success until Ormonde defeated O'Neill in March 1642. Tichborne was then able to capture both Ardee and Dundalk from the rebels. No Dominican figures in any known account of this first siege, but a Discalced Carmelite named Thomas of Jesus was hanged by soldiers at Drogheda on 25 May 1642.

As the war progressed, its character chang-

ed, for the Anglo-Irish nobility, particularly those who were still Catholic, joined forces with the Irish to support Charles I and obtain freedom of religion. This nine-year struggle brought horror and death in every form to the four corners of the land. And on the execution of King Charles, Cromwell came over in person to write the last chapter in England's Civil War. Whatever one may think about him, he was business-like. Shortly after reaching Dublin in August 1649, he realised that Drogheda would have to fall before his highly-organised Model Army could safely march anywhere else. The place was held by Sir Arthur Ashton with 3,000 troops of whom half were English Catholics. The Protestant inhabitants had already been expelled lest they should form a fifth column within the city.

Cromwell took up his position south of the town, sent troops around to cut off communications on the northern side, and waited a week for his artillery to arrive by sea. This siege, which began on the third of September, was all over within nine days. About 3,500 of the besieged were killed, burned or put to the sword without regard for age, sex or status. Some of the lucky survivors were sent, practically as slaves, to the Barbadoes. Cromwell himself said: "I believe all their friars were knocked on the head promiscuously, but two, one of which was Fr Peter Taaffe." Father Taaffe, the Augustinian prior of Drogheda, was tied to a stake and shot by a platoon of soldiers. John Bathe, a Jesuit, was also shot on the taking of the town. Two Dominicans, apparently army chaplains, "were captured and beheaded in front of the army." They were Dominic Dillon, prior of Urlar in Mayo, and Richard Oventon, subprior of Athy. Cromwell left Ireland within nine short months of his arrival but he has never been forgotten and never will.

The coronation of Charles II in 1660 closed two disastrous decades in the story of the Irish Church and ushered in a slightly longer period of toleration tempered by reprisals. Decrees of banishment against friars and priests appeared every now and then, many ecclesiastics died in gaol, but the Church as a whole managed to prosper. Two Dominicans of Drogheda were con-

cerned in the famous Remonstrance or declaration of loyalty made to the new king soon after his accession. John Scurlock, prior of Drogheda, is said to have been the only priest of that city to sign the document in 1661. There is no reason to judge him too harshly for that, seeing that the idea came from the bishops.

Unfortunately, the Catholics chose a bad spokesman, the Franciscan Peter Walsh, whose theology had little room for the Pope and who was in fact being used by the government to divide the Church against itself. One of his closest collaborators in 1667 and 1668 was John Reynolds O.P., prior of Drogheda and Vicar of Carlingford. Walsh appointed Reynolds visitor of the dioceses of Achonry and Killala, besides giving him a mandate to deprive the Dominican provincial of the seal and archives of the Province. The unfortunate provincial ended up in gaol. Reynolds' papers may still be seen in the library of Trinity College, Dublin.

One of the early letters of St. Oliver Plunkett, archbishop of Armagh, tells us that there were three Dominicans in the convent of Drogheda in 1671: the first explicit mention of any "convent" since 1543. The Primate singled out one of the three friars, Christopher Bathe, as being "grave, prudent and learned." The same priest was prior in 1672. They had no chapel of their own, which perhaps explains why Fr. Patrick Hegarty of Coleraine was praised for preaching in English in the "parochial" church of Drogheda. That detail comes from the historian John O'Heyne of Athenry, himself a member of the Drogheda community in the 1670s. One notices a certain "foreign" influence here, as though St. Magdalen's had no "sons" of its own and was being staffed by priests from other areas. Even Father Bathe belonged by right to Carlingford.

Father O'Heyne had at least two duties in Drogheda, for he was both a "preacher," which many Dominicans of the time were not (perhaps because they had been unable to study properly), and master of novices. The "large school", which he conducted on his first return to Ireland after studies, may also have been in Drogheda. Clearly

the accent was on local recruitment, and that task cannot have been an easy one. According to St. Oliver Plunkett, "all the convents and novitiates" of his diocese were swept away by the persecution of 1673. Another decree banishing the regular clergy came out in 1678 and Father O'Heyne left Drogheda to accompany a Dominican bishop, Dominic Burke of Elphin, then "on his keeping," for an entire year.

The Battle of the Boyne

The last twenty years of the seventeenth century began hopefully with the reception of many local boys to the habit, were neatly divided in 1690 by the defeat of James II at the Boyne, and closed with the general exile of all the bishops and friars of Ireland in 1698. The Dominicans of Drogheda, from 1683 to 1689, usually numbered four or five priests, four novices and two laybrothers. James Teeling and Dominic Magennis held the priorship successively. Father Magennis was another outsider, a "son" of Carlingford. In those days, friars made profession for their local convent and not for the Province as a whole. One could supply the names of the other priests, but those of the novices are more interesting since they at least were natives of the area.

Four took the habit in 1684: Dominic Nugent (who died soon after), Thomas Quinn, Robert Balfe and Henry Russell. After a two-year lapse, four others were admitted: Thomas Hamling, James Taaffe, Christopher Connell and Patrick Dugan. After another two-year gap, Thomas Glancy took the habit alone. Practically all these young men were sent for their studies to France or Spain after a year or two of preliminary training. Edmund Dowdall, a laybrother, is on every annual list from 1683 to 1696, but his companion Patrick Geraghty appears only in 1688.

The settled existence reflected by this novitiate owed much to the coronation of a Catholic king, James II, in 1685. For that very reason it came to an abrupt end in 1690 when King James lost the battle of the Boyne and Drogheda passed to

William of Orange. Once the city surrendered, Fathers James Teeling and Constantine MacDonough left for Limerick where the Irish were to make a final and hopeless stand for James II. Father Teeling died there, while his companion, an army chaplain, left Limerick with his regiment for France.

Some members of the community held on at Drogheda even after the disaster. In 1692, Ambrose Fitzgerald of Roscommon was prior there, accompanied by two priests and a brother. The priests were Robert Balfe, one of the novices of 1684, and Thomas Monteige. Our record is blank for 1693 and 1694, but takes up again for the two succeeding years. The laybrother, Edmund Dowdall, was still at his post in 1696. So too was Robert Balfe. The only others were the new prior, Ambrose Mooney, and a Patrick Hanlon who had not been seen at Drogheda since 1683. They must have abandoned their little convent, for a Capuchin reported in 1695 that the people of Drogheda had to go a mile outside the town to hear Mass and had been stripped of their property despite all the assurances of the Williamites. Perhaps it was at this time that the Dominicans slipped across the river to Donore, but since they were all exiled in 1698, they would not have had much time to settle anywhere.

The most extraordinary relic of the past still preserved in St. Magdalen's is an old monstrance, now rather the worse for wear and not very steadily attached to its present base. The upper part seems to be made of tin. But when one looks underneath the base, one reads the boldly-cut inscription: "This Chalice was made by R. B. D. for the use of the D. Convent of Drogheda Anno 1699." What we have in fact is the base of a silver chalice, the work of Anthony Stanley of Dublin, adapted at some later date to hold a monstrance. Whether R. B. D. was "Robert Balfe Dominican" we shall never know, but somehow or other the Dominicans of Drogheda were still in the country a year after they had all been ordered out of it under the harshest penalties.

Outside the West Gate

Some seventy Dominicans ignored the decree of exile by going to ground in remote areas. Connacht was a favourite hide-out. Some passed themselves off as parish priests when the secular clergy were formally registered in 1704. A Father Ambrose Mooney thus appears as parish priest of Portrane in the diocese of Dublin, and he may well have been the former prior of Drogheda.

Generally speaking, the Corporation of Drogheda turned a blind eye to friars once the Stuarts were safely out of the way. Fr Patrick Matthews, who had spent about thirty years in London working for Cardinal Howard and James II, appears in 1710 as prior of the Dominican convent "in the town of Drogheda". In this capacity he signed a recommendation favouring the parish priest, John Verdon, for the vacant see of Armagh. Another prior, Patrick Diamond, appears in 1720, and he too was a man of mature years. Nor was it just a question of a solitary "prior" holding the fort alone. Account-books were kept without a break from 1721 to 1741, although the first volume (1721-1727) has been lost.

Also in 1721, we find the Dominican provincial encouraging the foundation of a nuns' monastery in Drogheda. For this purpose he recalled from Belgium a young nun named Catherine Plunkett, daughter of Thomas and Rose Plunkett of Drogheda, and grand-niece of the martyred Primate. St. Oliver's successor, Dr Hugh MacMahon, took a close interest in the new venture; the nuns still preserve his portrait and a grandfather-clock he gave them in 1722. Normally such monasteries, like those of Galway and Dublin, were under the authority of the provincial. In this case, because Rose Plunkett disagreed with the provincial, the new monastery came directly under the Master General of the Order from its foundation. The Master simply appointed a vicar, some discreet Dominican of Drogheda or Dublin, to take care of them.

The nuns still preserve a tradition of Dominicans crossing the river by boat well before dawn to say Mass for them, and returning again to Donore under cover of

darkness. But since the friars were already keeping account-books before the nuns arrived, and were certainly installed in a comfortable house and chapel outside the West Gate by 1727, these uncomfortable crossings cannot have gone on for long. After some years in a small house by the Boyne the nuns moved to better quarters in Dyer Street.

Ravell's map of Drogheda, drawn in 1749, shows the actual building in which the Dominicans lived on Mill Lane, though without a word as to its real character. It was then the only building in that narrow gulley leading from Trinity Street down to the river. It is now the last house on the left as one goes down the lane, and can best be seen from the western side of the new bridge which overlooks part of the original garden. The building has been greatly altered over the years. In the 1720s the house was thatched and had only two storeys. The Dominican chapel, hidden from the lane, projected from the northern end of the house into the garden, running parallel with the river.

On the same map, there is a "Chapel Yard" facing the entry to Mill Lane on the northern side of Trinity Street. This was the early eighteenth-century precursor of the present St. Peter's, commonly called "West Gate Chapel", in which the Dominicans preached about five times a year. In 1801, the Corporation leased this site, "the old chapel ground", to the parochial clergy "for keeping thereon a charity school or chapel". Later it passed to the Patrician Brothers and then in 1859 to the Christian Brothers who staffed a school there until 1955. The Star and Crescent Recreation Club now occupies the site.

The most outstanding member of the Mill Lane community was Fr John Donnelly, prior for much of the time between 1721 and 1739. Most of the monthly accounts for those years are in his neat and regular hand. An inscribed silver chalice, which he bought for the convent in 1725, is still preserved. Having been in early life a teacher of philosophy and theology at Amiens, Louvain and Rome, he acquired a collection of two or three hundred books which lined his shelves at Drogheda. Most

of them were by French authors, by Jesuits in particular, and a high proportion were collections of sermons or other practical books which a priest might rely on for next Sunday's sermon. Being a methodical man, Father Donnelly wrote out a full list of his whole library, and that list may now be read in the pages of *Collectanea Hibernica*. The "wandering friars" may have been forced to live outside the town walls, but they had closer links with European culture than many a prosperous merchant inside them.

Judging from the old account-book, it would seem that the Mill Lane chapel was first opened, or at least extensively rebuilt, in the autumn of 1727. On 6 October, one shilling and fourpence was paid "for paper for the leases and for ale at the signing of them." Their landlady was a certain Mrs Johnson, but they paid rent also to others for two parks, probably fields in which their horses might graze. These horses were quite important, for most of the income of the community came from the quest, an age-old custom whereby the friars would visit the country parishes within a radius of fifteen miles once or twice a year. Nor was it just a matter of collecting money or oats, or even the occasional filly. The priest would arrive early at the chapel, hear confessions for an hour or two, and only then begin the Mass during which he would be expected to preach for half-an-hour or so in Irish.

The great advantage of the custom was that the parishioners would have a confessor "from outside" every few months. The Dominicans came only once a year, but the Franciscans and Augustinians of Drogheda would do the same in their turn. The Dominicans preached much more often at the West Gate chapel (to the building of which they contributed in 1728), at John's Gate chapel about once a month, very often at "the Cross", and three times a year at Tullyallen. No other chapel or Mass-station was visited more than twice a year. It may be interesting to list the furthest points of the perimeter within which they quested, beginning with their southern boundary and following the circuit clockwise: Balrothery, Naul, Garristown, Ratoath, Brownstown, Ardmulchan, Kilberry, Castletown, Nobber, Drumcondra, Rogerstown, Ardee, Drumcar

and Clogher. As can be seen, the quest took them into three different dioceses: Dublin, Meath and Armagh. These mounted friars carried their own Mass-kit and even their own consecrated altar-stones. There is still in the priory a thin and finely inscribed altar-stone of slate, only six inches by four; just the right size, shape and weight to slip neatly into a saddle-bag.

The community numbered about six at this time and stayed at this level until about 1775. Some acted as curates or even parish priests, particularly across the river at Donore. Some stayed only for a short time before moving on to other convents in Ulster or Meath, but there was a solid core including Father Donnelly, the two Watsons (Hyacinth and Edward), Eugene or Owen Lennan, John Byrne (parish priest of Donore) and Edward James Sampson. They lived in peace, entertained visiting aldermen with glasses of claret, and even received three novices: Thomas Teeling in 1728, a Mr Nugent in 1734, and Michael Reilly a year later.

Just how Catholic Drogheda was may be seen from the "Report on the State of Popery" in 1731. On just the northern side of the river, there were four friaries, six "popish schools" and four private chapels, plus the official "Mass-house" staffed by the two diocesan priests of St. Peter's. The four "private" chapels were probably the very public ones of the four friaries. Fears of a rising in favour of Bonnie Prince Charlie brought this peaceful period to an abrupt end in 1744. The chapel was closed, the five Dominicans took to their heels, while the mayor and sheriffs assured the government that they would use their "utmost diligence" to bring the friars to court. The Dominicans came back again, certainly by 1749, but were prevented from opening their chapel for many a year.

There is no doubt that the community survived the crisis. A benefactor named John Kelly presented them with a chalice in 1752. There are detailed lists of their names for 1756 and 1767. Two brothers, Thomas and Francis Netterville, took the habit at Rome in the 1730s and found their way back to Drogheda about thirty years later. They were closely related to the Nettervilles

of Dowth. Thomas took the religious name Luke in memory of his namesake the thirteenth-century archbishop of Armagh, founder of St. Magdalen's. The two brothers became Provincials in their turn, while Thomas in his later years became a sort of father-figure for the nuns of Dyer Street. The priory was still in Mill Lane, but their own chapel was certainly closed from 1744 to 1756.

Linen Hall Chapel

The second surviving account-book begins in 1771, but since it carries over a balance of £125 from an earlier volume, the date marks the continuance and not the resumption of conventual life. One of the first entries is for "free-stone for the chapel": the earliest indication that their chapel was again open to the public. There is also an important memorandum on the very first page, signed on 28 June 1771 by the prior, John O'Neill, and the subprior, Hyacinth Berrilly. "We took a new lease of our house and garden from Mr. John Orson of Millextown for the term of 27 years from the 25 of March last past at the yearly rent of £8."

Immediately the lease was renewed, work began at once (and went on for over a year) on the rebuilding of the old house in Mill Lane. Ten thousand bricks, thirty loads of sand and 156 barrels of lime are only some of the larger expenses noted in the accounts. There are also some perplexing entries, such as "to rum, potatoes and brimstone", or "to half a pint of whiskey for mending the wall". That half-pint, incidentally, cost two-pence ha'penny, just a shade more than one new penny. So far as one can judge, it was the house and not the chapel they repaired. And the house was newly slated. An old photograph, taken about 1880, shows that it had but one chimney (there are now three) and three windows (where there are now four) on each of the three stories. The later demolition of the chapel probably enabled the house to be extended a little at the northern end.

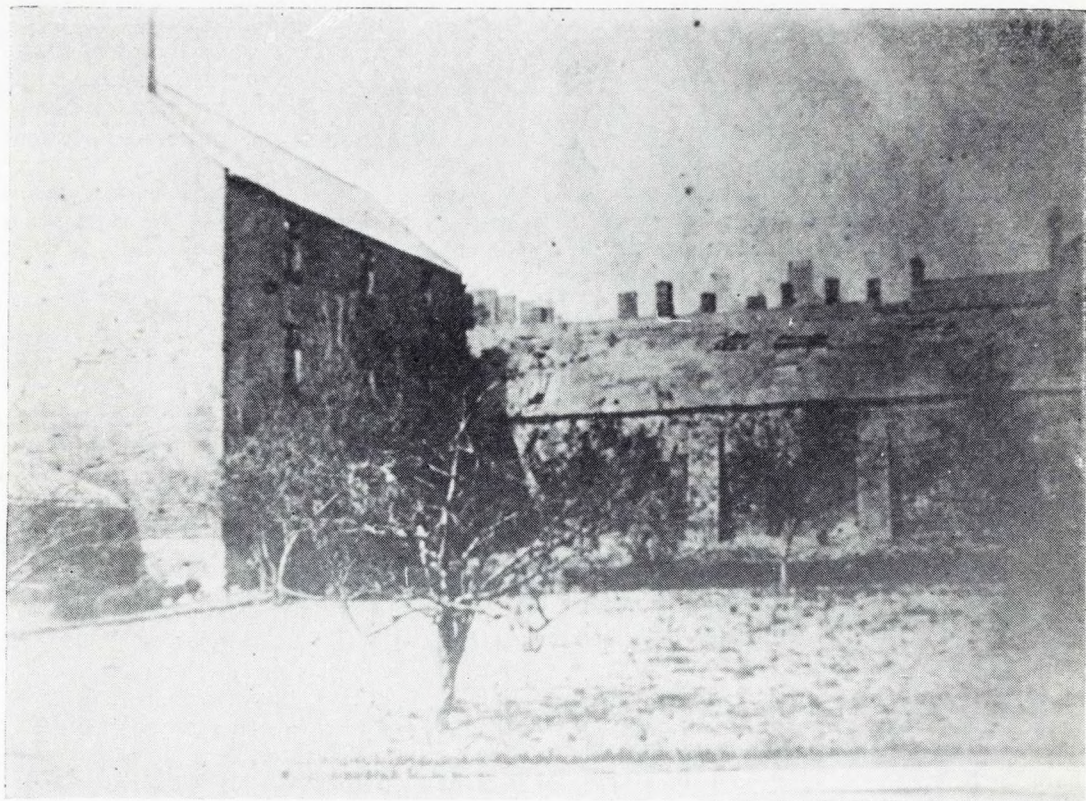
One of the new rooms was built "at his own expense" by the provincial, John Francis Netterville, and the community

agreed in 1772 that he might use it for the rest of his life. The arrangement, not to say the abuse, might have come straight from the fifteenth century. John Byrne, the retired pastor of Donore, was one of those who signed the agreement, but other new names also appear: James Duffy, Fr. Byrne's successor in the parish, Vincent Meany (who later called himself Talbot), Thomas McDonagh and Patrick Jennett.

All this rebuilding by a relatively large community in the early 1770s contrasts favourably with the general situation of the regular clergy in Ireland. Most of the rural convents were in full decline, and even priories in towns like Waterford and Kilkenny were at a very low ebb. One of the main reasons was that the reception of novices in Ireland had been forbidden by

Rome since 1750, and few boys were willing or wealthy enough to take the religious habit on the continent. At length, after long complaints, the Dominicans got leave to establish four novitiates at home, one of which (for Ulster) would be at Drogheda. Even the archbishop of Armagh, who held out for years, agreed to the proposal. The choice of Drogheda indicates how suitable the convent was for the purpose.

The two Nettervilles, both members of the community, had fought hard during their provincialates to obtain this very concession from Rome. Yet when the proposal was put to the community in 1774, they solemnly protested "that the income of the house could provide for six people and no more". Only Hyacinth Berrilly stood out against the rest, insisting that the decision was "against



Former church in Mill Lane.

the common good". Drogheda and Dundalk survived, but the other five convents of Ulster disappeared.

The new priory in Mill Lane, on which so much money had been spent, was occupied for only fifteen years. In 1786, "all that concern known by the name of the Friary out of West Gate" was set to Mr. Samuel Austin, a linen manufacturer, at an annual rent of £20 - £15, "until such time as the lease held by the Dominicans from Mr. John Orson should expire", namely in 1798. And so the Dominicans moved into the city to the former Trooper's Lane, by now called Linen Hall Lane because of the Linen Hall erected in the Hide Market in 1774. By a curious coincidence, the diocesan clergy moved into West Street at the same time.

Fr Thomas MacDonagh, who was then prior, bought an old store on the eastern side of the street, facing the Linen Hall, exactly where the priory is now. This store he converted into a residence and chapel following a plan then widely used in Ireland. From the front, the house looked like any other on the street, but there was a yard behind it, a thatched chapel (59 x 24½ feet in the clear) at the other end of the yard, and a long dark passageway leading from the street to the vestry. The penal laws had largely gone at this stage, but it was still thought better to hide chapels from public view.

There is yet another old chalice belonging to this period, though from the inscription it seems to have been made simply as a silver cup: "The gift of Mary Norris to Mary Anne Norris Dublin 22nd May 1790". There is also an old stone waterfont, dated 1793, set into the garden wall; it has all the appearance of being medieval and came quite recently to the priory. Meanwhile, the number of those in community at Drogheda slowly dwindled. There were only four in 1800, one of them being Fr John O'Connor, author of an *Essay on the Rosary*, who was to be Provincial from 1801 to 1803. In 1817 there were only three: James Connolly, by now an old man who had served in Drogheda since about 1776, Patrick Thomas Barron, a native of the city, and Mark Nowlan. Father Nowlan, at the age of forty-nine, died in the same year shortly

after Christmas, "from malignant fever contracted in the discharge of his sacred functions". So highly was Father Nowlan esteemed that a very long inscription in stone was erected in the chapel in memory of a priest "whose every hour was spent in doing good". That memorial was later transferred to the present church, set carefully into the wall beside Our Lady's altar, removed about 1951, and since lost without trace.

When Catholic Emancipation finally came in 1829, Father Barron was prior of Drogheda, but his only subject was George Dominic Corcoran, a native of Loughrea. Father Corcoran was to become prior himself (1830-1833) but left Ireland for South Africa with the Dominican bishop Raymund Griffith in 1837. Dr Patrick Griffith, speaking at Drogheda on the Sunday before his departure, told the people that there was only one priest in that vast territory. Father Corcoran took up the challenge and spent the rest of his life in Capetown and Port Elizabeth.

A School of Harpists

John Dalton, the historian of Drogheda, mentions that the number of public houses there in 1844 "has been reduced, under the happy influence of the temperance movement, from 120 to about 75; indeed more than half the population are now of the total abstinence principles". He also notes that Irish was spoken to some extent in the town and in the surrounding countryside, especially in Louth. In another passage, Dalton returns to the same two subjects, teetotalism and Irish, which at first sight seem mutually exclusive. "A public reading-room has been fitted up very recently by the Total Abstinence Society in West Street . . . a circulating library is attached, for the use of the members. With the main object of this society have also been united, in the last year (1843), useful and desirable efforts for the revival of the Irish language, literature and music".

In fact both movements had the same patriotic goal: to make Irishmen more worthy of the name by putting an end to widespread drunkenness and giving people a proper pride in their own language and



Harp played at Tara — belonged to Fr. Burke's school — now in the keeping of P. Cooney.



Portrait of Fr. T. V. Burke, O.P.

music. There was also a political side to it all, in that those were the years of Daniel O'Connell's great campaign for Repeal of the Act of Union. Millions longed to see Ireland "a nation once again", and one of those who did something practical about it was Fr Thomas Vincent Burke of the Linen Hall chapel. He launched a Harp Society in 1839 and was also president of the Drogheda Total Abstinence Society founded on 16 February 1840. The first minute-book of the Total Abstinence group was presented to St. Magdalen's some years ago.

The idea of a Harp Festival seems to have come from Granard and Belfast where such assemblies or competitions were organised in 1782 and 1792. The Belfast Harp Society, founded in 1808, took in numerous pupils but collapsed in 1813 for want of funds. Although Father Burke played the harp himself, he brought a teacher from Belfast at a salary of £27 a year. Johann Kohl, a German tourist, visited Drogheda in 1843 when enthusiasm for Irish music was at its

height. Father Burke, with whom the German lodged, organised a "musical-poetical soîr  e" to amuse the visitor. "The harp was produced and a blind young harper prepared to play some old Irish pieces . . . his music enraptured us all. Although the Harpers' Society of Belfast was lately dissolved, yet another has been founded at Drogheda, of which the clergyman whose guest I was for a long time, is the soul and president. His whole room was full of harps and contained many new ones which had been made by his directions. With this society a harpers' school is connected, in which there are sixteen pupils."

This Society gave its first public performance before the Mayor in February 1843. One of the performers was Mr. William Griffith, grand-uncle of Mr. Patrick L. Cooney of Drogheda who still possesses one of the five harps from Drogheda which were played before O'Connell in 1843 at his mass-meeting on the Hill of Tara. Father Burke died just one year later and was buried with his brethren at the Chord cemetery. The Great Famine stalked the land. The cause of Repeal died with O'Connell himself, and what remained of the Irish language and Irish music in Drogheda was carried away in the partial death of a nation.

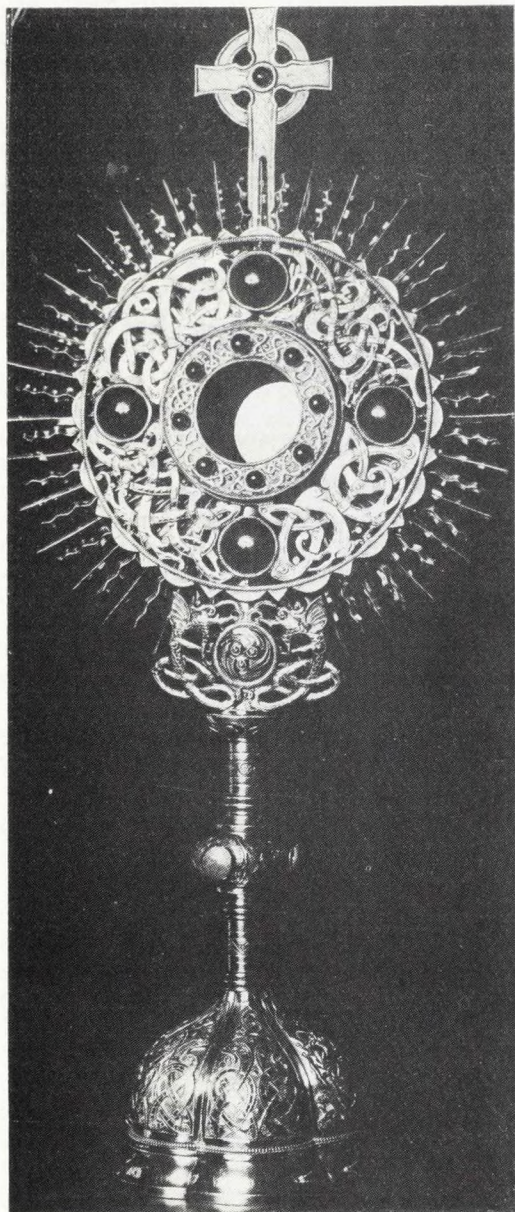
Fr. Patrick Vincent Meadthe

Taking stock of St. Magdalen's a few years after the Famine, one would have given it small chance of survival. A reduced congregation with only too vivid memories of cholera, famine and fever. Two or three priests serving a back-street chapel which could be entered only through a long dark tunnel and which, with its cramped aisles and wooden galleries, most definitely belonged to the penal times. And yet, there was hope for the future. Not that anyone noticed it then, but birth is never far from death and some things had already happened which would ensure, not just survival, but definite progress for the Dominicans of Drogheda.

As far back as 1839, a local boy named



Patrick Vincent Meadthe set off for Lisbon to take the Dominican habit at the old college of Corpo Santo, one of those Irish colleges on the continent which for centuries kept the old country supplied with priests. On finishing his studies in 1845, he served



The Monstrance that is in use at the present.

for a few years in Galway and Kilkenny before returning to his native Drogheda in 1853. Perhaps no other Dominican was ever so much loved by the people of Drogheda; loved for his gentleness, his humility, his love for the poor, and particularly for the kindness and understanding he showed in the confessional. He had another quality too, which most would envy "a large charity of heart to which the slightest taint of acrimony was unknown."

Earlier still, even before Patrick Meadthe went to Lisbon, a young and energetic Dominican in Cork named Bartholomew Russell set himself to reform and rebuild the Irish Dominican Province. It was a long haul, and not an easy one. His confreres said that his new churches in Cork and Dublin would leave the Province in debt for a century. Father Russell was lucky in that the years of his own maturity coincided with those of Père Jandel, the great reforming Master General of the Order, who (incidentally) visited Drogheda in 1851 and found that St. Magdalen's fell a good way short of his definition of a "convent". Right up to mid-century, the Irish Dominicans still depended on their old colleges in Lisbon and Rome. From 1855, thanks to Father Russell, they had their own novitiate and house of studies at Tallaght outside Dublin where postulants were introduced to such ideas as "the common life" and "choral recitation" of the divine office, not to mention midnight prayer, silence and abstinence from meat, all of which had come close to being lost in Ireland.

The first master of novices at Tallaght, Father Tom Burke of Galway, became the most famous Irish Dominican preacher of all time. He preached at Drogheda at least five times, as often as St. Magdalen's needed him. For all that, his novices at Tallaght meant more to Drogheda and to every other Irish priory than he did himself. New men, properly trained in the religious life, acquainted with each other from their earliest years, brought new life and a new spirit to houses such as Drogheda which might have disappeared without them.

The old Linen Hall chapel was soon to be

replaced. We know little of what it looked like, and even less of what went on inside it. There were four public Masses on Sunday: at seven, nine, eleven and twelve. At other times the Confraternity of the Holy Rosary held their meetings, and perhaps the Children of Mary too. Three pieces of church-plate belong to those final decades. Two of them are silver ciboriums, still in constant use for Communion. One, dated 20 January 1857, is inscribed with a prayer for the soul of James T. Murphy O.P. The other was "the gift of William Ball and his wife Margaret Mary" in January 1874. There is also an undated silver chalice marked simply "Dowth Hall."

The trouble about building a new Dominican church was that the people of Drogheda had already built a new and magnificent St. Peter's, a new Augustinian church and a new Franciscan one, all in a very short time. The question was whether they could afford another. Father Meadthe took the whole matter very gently, set up a fund-raising committee under the chairmanship of Mr. John Kelly T.C., and already had £1,000 set aside before calling a public meeting in the old church on 29 January 1870. Some of the speeches made that day must have made the old walls blush for shame. "This church is only fit for penal times", this "dilapidated edifice", this "lowly and unsuitable chapel". That day alone, the collection came to £640, equivalent surely to several thousand at the present day.

Nine months later, on 4 September 1870,

In the long association with the town of Drogheda the Dominicans have never produced a book of this kind. The present community are indebted to the author Fr. Hugh Fanning O.P. and to Fr. John Cahill O.P. who's research was invaluable. To them and the printers Drogheda Independent, a very grateful thanks.

Fr. Prior and Community.

Dr. McGettigan, archbishop of Armagh, came in full pontificals to the "dilapidated edifice" to bless and lay the foundation stone of the new St. Magdalen's. After pontifical High Mass at noon, Father Tom Burke gave a stirring sermon and a procession set off from the sacristy to the new site just a few yards down the street closer to the river. The Children of Mary led the way, followed by the members of the Rosary Confraternity and all the visiting clergy, while the band of the Catholic Young Men's Association played "the sacred music of the litany." After the ceremony the procession returned to the Linen Hall church where the Primate imparted Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament.

A similar ceremony took place on 6 June 1874 for the consecration of the new bell. Even after four years, the new church was still unfinished, but "everybody was delighted to see the forward state to which the zealous Fathers had advanced their great work." The Mayor and Corporation attended. So too did the Primate and Fr. Tom Burke, who remarked in his sermon that "the tiny shrill bell" which had summoned them to the chapel "was like the bated breath of one afraid to speak . . . the last utterances of a persecuted church." The procession after Mass from the old church to the new was led this time by the children of the orphanage in Fair Street carrying little banners. And the Sisters of Charity were there too. The new bell, donated by Messrs. Dilger and Brennan, was placed in the transept and raised a few feet so that the archbishop might make it ring, after the solemn blessing, for the first time.

Yet another four years were to pass before the solemn opening of the church. The architect was Mr. Ashlin of Dublin, but no contractor seems to have been employed. Father Meadthe may have done the work himself with the help of a competent foreman. Having that old-fashioned reluctance to go into debt, he just pushed the work along according as there was money in hand to pay for it. The limestone was quarried at Sheephouse and brought by cart to Linen Hall Lane where local masons slowly raised the walls. The fact that the

cut-stone was of "pitched face-work with bands of white limestone finely chiselled" may partly explain the delay.

One day, when Father Meadthe was directing operations, he climbed up the scaffolding to the very top of the wall where two labourers, unknown to him, were treating themselves from a jar of whiskey. Seeing the priest coming, they hid the jar in the wall on which they were working, but since he stayed there for quite a while

and suggested they get on with the work, they had to plaster over their own jar of whiskey and bury it for ever in the wall. When, after eight years, the building was finally roofed, the total cost was £8,000, all of which had already been collected by the generous merchants and people of Drogheda. For the best of reasons, St Magdalen's is "their" church and the Dominican community is glad to serve them in it.

Priors of St. Magdalen's

1319	John le Rous	1844	Patrick T. Barron
1496	Cornelius Gerald	1853	Patrick Dunne
1543	Peter Lewis	1861	James T. Murphy
1661	John Scurlock	1862	Patrick V. Meadthe
1667-1668	John Reynolds	1870	Robert White
1671-1672	Christopher Bathe	1874-1875	Patrick V. Meadthe
1678	James Teeling	1876-1881	Antoninus D. Boyd
1682-1686	James Teeling	1882-1884	Joseph Flynn
1686-1688	Dominic McGennis	1885-1890	Antoninus Hughes
1688-1690	James Teeling	1891-1894	Antoninus D. Boyd
1692	Ambrose Fitzgerald	1895-1896	John D. Roche
1695-1696	Ambrose Mooney	1896-1897	Raymund MacGuinness
1710	Patrick Matthews	1897-1898	Dominic MacCarthy
1720	Patrick Diamond	1898-1900	Francis Stack
1721-1723	John Donnelly	1901-1903	Joseph Bannon
1725-1728	John Donnelly	1904-1906	Pius Kenny
1728-1729	Patrick Diamond	1907-1908	Dominic Houlihan
1729-1732	Hyacinth Watson	1909-1911	Malachy Headley
1732-1733	John Donnelly	1912-1913	Dominic Houlihan
1733-1736	Eugene Lennan	1913-1918	Thaddaeus Crofts
1736-1739	John Donnelly	1919-1920	Constantius Gallagher
1740-1741	Augustine Fleming	1920-1921	Dominic Muckian
1756	Eugene Lennan	1922-1924	Thomas O'Neill
1757	Bernard MacHenry	1924-1930	Dominic Fahy
1764-1767	John Byrne	1930-1936	Paul McKenna
1771-1773	John O'Neill	1936-1939	Antoninus Dalton
1773-1775	John F. Netterville	1939-1946	Dominic Gee'an
1775-1778	Thomas McDonagh	1946-1947	Dominic Fitzmaurice
1778-1781	Patrick Jennett	1947-1953	Columba Courtney
1782-1784	Laurence McConnin	1953-1959	Norbert Barry
1786	Thomas McDonagh	1959-1962	Anselm Moynihan
1796	Thomas McDonagh	1962-1968	Joseph Collins
1817	James Connolly	1968-1972	Finian Lynch
1829	Patrick T. Barron	1972-1978	John Cahill
1830-1833	George D. Corcoran	1978	Augustine Doherty
1836-1838	Thomas V. Burke		
1839	John D. Berrill		
1840-1843	Thomas V. Burke		

Dec 9 - 1979

FOREIGN.

We continue our extracts from our files by the *Caledonian*. They will be found to possess unusual interest.

ENGLAND.

DREADFUL EXPLOSION.—Terrible Loss of Life. The Government powder-mills at Waltham Abbey were blown up on Thursday! The sound and glare of the explosion were terrific—two distinct bursts were heard in London. In the neighborhood houses and human beings were thrown down, windows were broken in houses and churches, and the effects generally resembled those of an earthquake. Four miles, separated by 600 yards from each other, with brick mounds between, were totally destroyed. It would be well if the ruin of the buildings, and the destruction of the stores, were all; but, unfortunately, in the works which first blew up, a number of unfortunate persons were employed, and a number of whom survive. Seven were carried over the river to a very considerable distance, and fell lifeless fragments in the marshes. One corpse was recovered from the ruins, and one dead body was found out of the building, but on the same side of the river. It was difficult to recognise the deceased, they were so blackened, shattered and disfigured. The names of the unfortunate men who have perished are as follows: Thomas Sudd, Edward John Newland, John Dudley, James Luck, Samuel Brown, and James Cole. Mr. Sudd was the master worker. On Thursday he had been in the building but about ten minutes when the event occurred. The victims were all working in the building and persons of respectable character. Sudd had worked on the establishment for more than half a century. Sudd's remains were soon identified by the blast which he was killed by the loss of one tooth. He was said to have been carried not less than 130 yards from the corner-house, and to have lost one foot when he reached the ground. At a considerable distance from the ruins, the impression made by the fall of one of the sufferers remains very distinct. The county papers contain details of this dreadful accident. On Saturday an inquest was held at the house, after having been at the station-house, proceeded along the right bank of the river Lea, to the scene of the disaster, in order to identify the persons of the deceased. This was a task of no small difficulty, from the extent to which they had been mutilated and disfigured. One was recognized by the size of his hand, another by the shape of his body, a third by the way in which the mill of his toes had been pained, and a fourth by the remains of a waistcoat remembered to have been worn by him. One body was so dismembered, blackened and mutilated, that it was only known to be that of James Luck, because his was the only one which could not be traced. In this instance the head had been blown from the body, and had not been found. The greater number had their legs and arms broken, and in some instances the head was blown away. It was, altogether, a very horrible and revolting sight. A number of little birds were observed floating dead in the water of the Lea in returning to the station-house. Numerous witnesses were heard, but they of course, knew nothing with regard to the accident except that it was not caused by any negligence or error. The evidence having been brought to a close, and the depositions made, the jury returned a short address from the Coroner, retired for a few minutes, and returned with a verdict of—Accidental death upon all the deceased. The verdict was couched with an expression of their decided and unanimous opinion that the manufactory appeared to be carried on by Captain Tulloh, the inspector, with every possible regard to the safety of the men employed under his superintendence. On Saturday the bodies of the sufferers were interred in Waltham Abbey churchyard, with the exception of Mr. Sudd, who, being a Dissenter, is to be committed to the earth in the burial ground of the Baptist Chapel this day. The spectacle presented by so many open graves attracted a number of spectators, and the church was crowded with the obsequies commenced. Six coffins in line appeared in the centre aisle of the ancient edifice, long trains of mourners followed most of the bodies, and the deepest affliction was evinced by not a few of the mourners. The ceremony concluded between six o'clock. Captain Tulloh, who presides over the works at Waltham Abbey, has assured the witnesses that every thing that can be done to alleviate the affliction shall be attended to. It is understood that the funeral of the deceased was most respectfully performed, would throw no expense on the surviving relatives. One fact in the midst of these melancholy details is of a gratifying character, and ought not to be forgotten. When the explosions occurred, Adams, who was with Mr. Austin, had a son, a youth of 18 or 20, who was then in the adjoining building. On finding that the adjacent building had blown up, instead of thoughtlessly attempting to save himself by flight, he had the presence of mind to close the windows and shut off the smoke. This presence of mind may be prevented the extension of the calamity. The meeting of the father and son immediately after was dramatic. Each had feared that the other would be lost. In their flight from the point of danger they met, and the younger exclaimed on beholding his father, "To see you done my heart good!" Mr. Austin continues unwell, but is in no danger. This twofold escape is remarkable. When the first and second explosions occurred, he heard them in the corner-house, which for some moments he hesitated to leave. The second and third explosions took place in buildings which he had quitted the moment before, and consequently a miraculous delay in either case would have cost him his life.—*London Times*.

FAVORS OF EMIGRANTS. In the *World of Saturday* last we find a great number of accounts of the arrival of emigrants, and it is to be feared that it is but one of the many which pass unknown to the world. On the 15th ult. a poor woman with her seven children arrived at Liverpool for the purpose of engaging a passage to America, where her husband was. On the evening of the 17th, the writer of the account, a Mr. Picketty, found her in a shipping office, treating for a passage. Mr. Picketty asked the agent some questions which he evaded, and kept asking the woman to pay 15s. for her conveyance with her family; he had previously demanded 100s. Subsequently the agent offered to take 15s.; Mr. P. advised her to wait until he had made inquiry at some other office, and upon doing so he found that the woman and her family would be brought over for 12s. 4s.; before he saw her next day however, she had paid to the agent of the first office 14s. 10s., under threats and intimidation, such as "If she went any where else they would take care she should not go," "they should be paid for the trouble they had with her," &c. On asking to see the receipt Mr. P. discovered that it

was a printed form with the blanks partly filled up, and partly not. It set forth that the parties had agreed for a second cabin passage to New York, in the ship *Alfred*, with the words "of room" interlined, so that the poor woman had been left without a room for the next vessel, on the ground that there was no room. It was also set forth at the bottom that a balance of 4s. was still due for the passage, although the poor woman declared the agreement was for the 1st 10s. which she paid in full. They immediately proceeded to the office to demand an explanation, but could get none, as they were told the agent who made the bargain was out. On going to the other office and telling the case, and then going to the government emigration office, the police office, and after threatening to write to the Home Secretary, and to have the parties brought before the magistrate for swindling—after, in fact, indefatigable exertions on behalf of the poor woman, Mr. P. compelled them to refund the 14s. 10s., and next day the woman and her family sailed in the *Cambridge*, in which the passage charged was only 12s. 10s. The parties in the other shipping office, in the government emigration office, and in the police office gave Mr. Picketty to understand that similar cases are by no means uncommon. On the other side of the Atlantic we have reason to know that very many frauds are practised on the unprotected emigrant, and for this reason we are anxious for the success of the Catholic Emigration Society—such a society as would at once take charge of the intending emigrant on the day he entered the port of embarkation, and protect him until he was placed in a situation in which he could earn his bread. The difficulties which the unprotected emigrant has to encounter in New York are almost incredible; without knowing how to find employment, liable on every side to be cheated if he has any thing to lose, dispirited and disappointed; it is absolutely necessary that a society to procure him employment should be formed, and in the Catholic Emigration Society we believe this desideratum exists.—*Drogheda Argus*.

SCOTLAND.

REVIVALS IN ROSS-SHIRE.—Terrible Emulation. We are favored with a letter from Ross-shire of the 4th inst., which contains a very curious exposition of the prevailing monomania of the "Revivals." We have had further particulars of the "Revivals" from the West, and it appears that the parishes of Kintail, Glenelg, Lochmaben, and Lochmaben are now laboring under black mail. These poor and hitherto, harmless people, the most primitive in Scotland, seem to be carried along by some hidden power that puts them beyond the influence of argument or common sense. We thought, by the last accounts, that they had reached the climax, but it now appears that they are little more than in the beginning, though progressing rapidly and fearfully in the evil cause. It is remarkable that the working of the knowledge of the mysterious "working of the spirit." They have, however, got quite unsettled, and ceased from their accustomed industry and daily toil and are doing nothing but travelling backwards and forwards, over hills and mountains, after their "inspired" preachers, sighing and groaning, and wailing in a state of great mental suffering, from whatever cause. It is remarkable that many of them have acquired a most appalling expression of countenance, a scowling stare of the eye which almost makes the gaze prostrate with horror. The impression made by the preachers upon the minds of the "revived" is awful. They are cast prostrate and thrown into convulsions; and this is now so common a sight, that the usual expression is, "Such and such persons fall to-day, they were unmaking even in numbers all around us." The hearer probably replies—"Where I was I saw twenty fall; tall strong men were rolling on the ground and foaming at the mouth," &c. Another says, "Well, I tell you that was nothing to the frightful appearance numbers of the men had, when their faces became distorted in the convulsion, and the dreadful language they uttered—Oh! if the ministers did not tell us that it is the spirit of God that brings them to this state, to prepare them for heaven, and keep them from committing further sin, I would feel quite sure that it was the devil himself that had entered into them." One of the Revival preachers is an old pensioner, who is compared by these enthusiasts to St. Paul, as above the apostle of the Gentiles. He has perished his thousands, and is often complimented on this fashion—"You have a long list of killed and wounded to-day." He prohibits dancing and all amusements, and makes frights of the women by forcing them to abandon all head ornaments save their own hair; when they fall seized with the religious fit, a new falling sickness, the prophet says the devil is within them, and he is to be cast out, and they are in the way to sin no more. At a late wedding one of these prophets rushed among the merry-makers, and opening his mouth with a hollow groan and a loud voice, told them, "they were all on the road to hell! he felt every one of them; they had not yet been regenerated by the spirit of grace, and he seemed from their countenances and capering, and derisive wrappings of plaids and ribbons." The poor bride fell motionless, and was the first carried off; the bridegroom became frantic, and was but little consoled by seeing more than half the assembly, one after the other, affected in the same way; by what influence we know not, but the scene of innocent, happy mirth was soon changed into a den of howling and mourning that would be tedious to describe. The effect of the power, real or pretended, in the preacher, is painfully and faithfully manifested in the yellings, tortures, convulsions, and appalling looks of the sufferers; but the cause of this effect is unknown. Divines are silent, and scientific men talk of the mesmeric influence. It appears important that the facts should be submitted, if not to the General Assembly, at least to the general public.

THE KEE. Dr. Chalmers, as Professor of Theology, in concluding his concluding lecture of the session at Edinburgh University, thus addressed the students:—"Ere we meet again, the Church of Scotland will have separated into two great parties; though it remains a question which of the two will be entitled to the name of the Church of Scotland, the people (cheers). It only now remains for me to bid you farewell; but while I do so I do not bid you to forget me, I bid you to remember me, and I bid you to look forward to our meeting again; and, though I may be in a college minus endowments, it is some consolation to think that we will not have to give utterance to the complaint, which others will, that ours will be a college minus students."—*Caledonian Mercury*.

MR. O'CONNELL'S VISIT TO COKE. Monday next, the first of May, has been fixed upon for the public reception of Mr. O'Connell. There will be a banquet in the evening.—*Nation*.

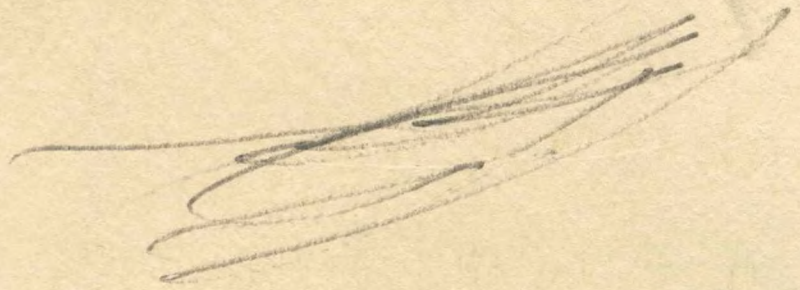
IRELAND.

TEMPERANCE AND MINSTRELSY.

The following is the first annual report and address of the committee of the Drogheda Temperance and Irish Harp Society, Order of the Golden Cross, founded January 15th, 1843, by the Rev. J. V. Burke, O. S. D., and principally supported by him, and the piety, zeal, and aid of a few artisans, O'Sullivan, O'Fay, Duffy, Reynolds, O'Flinn, and O'Kelly.—"Upon the waters of Ballydon, there we sat and we sang, and we danced, and we were merry, and we let my right hand be forgotten if I make thee the beginning of my joy. For the sake of my brethren and of my neighbors and of the house of the Lord our God, I will pray for thy peace and abundance for them that love thee." Ps. 136, line 21.

"On the willows our harp we suspended:
Oh Salem! its sound should be free;
And ne'er shall its soft notes be blended
With the voice of the spoiler, by me."

Irishmen.—Are we not honored, is not our national character exalted, whenever the actions of our fathers, the heroes of the past, or the harp of the present, so many glorious themes for the eloquence of the virtuous of other lands? The harp of our country excels all other instruments: it never sounds in slavery—its notes are only for the good and free. "It is the only instrument," says the celebrated composer Haydn, "that can speak to the heart," or give us the full heart witness of our ancient airs. It was not born from a want of faith in your taste or nation, so many glorious themes for the eloquence of the virtuous of other lands? The harp of our country excels all other instruments: it never sounds in slavery—its notes are only for the good and free. "It is the only instrument," says the celebrated composer Haydn, "that can speak to the heart," or give us the full heart witness of our ancient airs. 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