

MAYNOOTH AND THE NEW IRELAND

THE IRISH MISSION TO CHINA.

(By EAMON DUFFY, in the *New York Freeman*.)

The spirit kindled at Maynooth by O'Growney did not die there while it spread around the island. It had the qualities of mercy, for it blessed the institution that gave it birth and gave it to Ireland, and it blessed the country that received it.

I have said that the first and greatest achievement of O'Growney was that he turned the best brains of the country back upon its past history. Whatever be the success of the propaganda for the revival of the language as a spoken tongue, this first achievement has produced a movement whose fruits will remain. It has brought into being a new Ireland.

In no corner of the island has the flame of this new spirit raised by O'Growney burned more brightly and more steadily than in his Alma Mater! It could not be otherwise when we reflect that it was guarded and nourished there by the cream of the young manhood of Ireland. They took up the initiative of O'Growney enthusiastically. New classes were formed for the study of the language, new associations to keep the flame burning, new methods in Irish History studies. They, too, had turned their minds back on the glories of ancient Ireland.

In doing so they could not but be struck in a special manner by the golden period of Irish history when she sent her missionaries for the space of three centuries and more in a continuous stream over Great Britain and the Continent of Europe. A review for the encouragement of these studies and for the diffusion of their fruits was started within the college by the students themselves, and it is suggestive that it is named in honor of Ireland's two greatest missionaries and scholars—SS. Columbcille and Columbanus—the two Columbas. *The Columban Review* is the worthy organ of this student spirit at Maynooth, and thoroughly representative of the new movement.

The young men who were students from 1895 to 1910 are now mature men, zealous priests, on the mission, or professors in their Alma Mater and other colleges. From this body has the idea of the Maynooth Mission to China come. Students of the past, they could not forget or banish the present and future. These studies were not those of the recluse merely; they resolved to do something that would make the Ireland of the past live again; and, being priests, their choice lay but in one direction.

So has the Maynooth Mission been born. Maynooth is a great institution; a professorship there is an honorable position and obtained only after rigorous and competitive examinations. Ireland is now an interesting country. It holds many allurements for the young man of education, for the next score years are bound to be one of the most interesting and fascinating periods in Irish history. It is to be the climax of centuries of agitation and national striving. But down steps one of the most brilliant of Maynooth's professors from his chair in the great institution, turns his back on all these legitimate allurements, and calls for recruits for a mission to China.

Immediately he is joined by eight others like himself. They make an appeal for financial help to the people of Ireland, and, in the first nine months, Ireland, poor, impoverished, martial-lawed Ireland, responds by a contribution of over £30,000—\$150,000.00!!! And yet we are to be told that this nation is not fitted to stand on her own feet and to take her place among the nations of the earth in doing her own work and fulfilling her own special mission for the benefit of all.

This ideal of Ireland's mission as a nation was in the minds of the men who created the Irish Revival. Indeed, since they based their ideals of Irish nationality on Ireland's past history as a distinct nation, they could have formed no other concept of her future mission, if she were to remain the same nation and faithful to her past. Eoin McNeil, lately released from prison, may be taken as a fair and distinguished representative of the school of Irish thought and striving from which the Irish Revival sprang. He was one of the pioneers of the movement, later the founder of the Irish Volunteers, and now president of the Gaelic League.

But he had, as a young man still in his teens, already turned his mind to the study of Ireland's past history, her language and her literature, several years before the Gaelic League was founded. In the *Irish Ecclesiastical Record* for December, 1891, he had an article on the subject, "Why and How the Irish Language Is To Be Preserved," in which occurs the following passage:—

"The destiny of Ireland in the future, as in the past, seems to be that of a teaching nation. As the overflow of population carried other races over the globe, so the overflow of national mental and moral advance has sent, and we believe will again send, a stream of teachers and preachers from Ireland across the seas. But to ensure that result among many desirable results, it will clearly be necessary to preserve the national character from any considerable fusion of admixture with the character of another less mentally active, less self-sacrificing, and less morally zealous race."

The *Dublin Leader*, after quoting this passage, remarks that in the light of the Maynooth Mission it reads to-day like a prophecy. Be it noted that it was written by a young man just out of his teens, and a month or two after the death of Parnell when the country was seething with controversy between two political factions. Be it noted also that to ensure Ireland's moral and spiritual mission in the future this young man claimed it to be absolutely essential that she be not "fused" with another nation, that the "national character must be preserved distinct," and that the only secure means to ensure this result is to turn on the past and make it live again in the organic development of the future. Such was the ideal of the Irish Revival; and it will be seen at once that it was absolutely irreconcilable with the ideal of Ireland's future set out week by week by T. P. O'Connor in *Reynolds's Newspaper*.

His ideal was that a future Ireland would send Socialists to the British Parliament to help setting up there "in fusion" with the "British Democracy," the ideal state which would be realised in Germany by Bebel and in France by Jaurez. Such was the forecast of T. P. in *Reynolds's* after returning from a convention in Belfast—at a time when Bebel and Jaurez were the most rapidly anti-Christian exponents of Continental Socialism. The two ideals here noted were mutually exclusive; they begot two tendencies, as we shall see, in Irish politics, which were bound, sooner or later, to come to grips for the possession of Ireland's soul. It is no longer doubtful which is going to have it.

The *Dublin Leader* is not the official organ of any league or association connected with the Revival, but it may be said to be the best known and most widely circulated of all the papers that work for an Irish Ireland. It is a secular, not a religious, paper, and its editor is a layman. But it candidly recognises the Maynooth Mission both as an outgrowth of the Irish Ireland movement and as a great impetus to its success. It has accordingly given great prominence to the Mission in its columns. The following is an interesting item from a recent issue:—

"The proposition that the Maynooth Mission to China is a part of the Irish Ireland movement may seem at the first mention of it a somewhat far-fetched one, but a convincing case can be made out for it all the same. Of nine priests connected with it at present five are fluent Irish speakers, and the others have at least a book knowledge of Irish. Since the beginning of the year some of them have made their appeals in Irish in Irish-speaking districts; two of the priests have been professors of Irish in their diocesan colleges. From a national viewpoint the Mission helps to place Ireland before the world. It has already done so in Rome and in America, where the Bishops take a considerable interest in it. The Director of the Propaganda of the Faith in America writes:— 'Cardinal O'Connell looks with the greatest favor on this new movement of Irish priests, for we are convinced that the spirit of St. Patrick still lives in his sons.'"

In another passage the *Leader* wrote:— "It is at least significant that the new movement should spring up in Maynooth, where the Irish Revival has been so strong and so pure since the days of O'Growney, and it is significant too that the priests connected with the movement have been prominent in the Gaelic Revival either on its intellectual, athletic, or industrial side both within Maynooth and outside it."

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