

SOCIETY FOR IRISH CHURCH MISSIONS TO THE ROMAN CATHOLICS.

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Secretary.—THE REV. WM. MARRABLE, M.A.

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FEB.

STATEMENT.

1852.

THIS Society was instituted, under its present form and constitution, in the year 1849. It originated from a combination of providential circumstances. The minds of the Romanists had for some time previously been undergoing a change on the subject of religion, which was considerably strengthened by the conduct of their priests at the time of the famine in 1846. The failure of their pretended miracles in staying the potato disease, lessened their authority, and weakened their influence over their flocks, whilst the self-denying exertions of the Protestant clergy, in not only soliciting and dispensing the liberality of the British public, but in giving of their substance so far as to reduce their families, in many instances, to poverty,—disposed many Romanists to receive from them that bread “which endureth unto everlasting life.”

The Rev. Alex. R. C. Dallas, from his frequent visits to Ireland, was impressed with the necessity of immediately organizing some plans for presenting the gospel of Christ to them, which he was enabled to carry into effect by pecuniary assistance received from Christian friends.

Eight special messengers were despatched in 1846, whose duty it was to go, two and two, for several months, throughout nearly the whole of Ireland, to ascertain the minds of the Romanists on the subject of religion, and their feeling towards the priests—to converse generally with the people, and never to part company from any without communicating the gospel plan of salvation. About 90,000 tracts were sent through the post-office, and five important addresses to the priests. *Only Romanists received them.*

A “Special Fund for the Spiritual Exigencies of Ireland” was at this time called into existence, in response to the letters of Mr. Dallas in the *Morning Herald*, in the autumn of 1846, combined with the efforts of the late and much-lamented Edward Bickersteth. A Committee was formed; the sum of £8,504 2s. 8d. was raised in the first year, and £2078 7s. in the second: and at a

period of much outward pressure, was the means of aiding those societies which were most adapted to meet the spiritual wants of the people. "The Special Fund" continued in operation through the years 1847 and 1848, and was also instrumental in assisting the Missions hitherto supported by individual exertions. The Committee of the "Special Fund," at the suggestion of their fellow-labourer J. E. Gordon, Esq., were induced to alter their constitution and rules early in the year 1848. They determined no longer to act merely as the collector for other institutions, but to send forth ordained Missionaries to labour amongst the Romanists. The Society was afterwards (in May, 1849) designated "The Society for Irish Church Missions to the Roman Catholics," its great object being "to promote Church Missions to the Roman Catholics of Ireland through the established Church in Ireland; the chief attention being directed to the English-speaking population, except in the Missions in Galway, and except in such districts as may not be occupied by the Irish Society; and this object being carried on with cordial good-will to the Irish Society, labouring in their important sphere among the Irish-speaking population."

Mr. Dallas had been instrumental, from the year 1846, in supporting an important Mission at Castelkerke, in the parish of Cong, West Galway. The inhabitants of this lovely spot, on the shores of Lough Corrib, had shown a desire to abandon the Church of Rome, and on the 12th of March, 1847, as many as FIFTY-FOUR persons *openly* pronounced themselves members of the United Church of England and Ireland. Additional Scripture Readers were sent, and the original school-house built by Mrs. Blake, and the rector, the Rev. E. L. Moore, although considerably enlarged, was found much too small for the number of children that attended. A new one was speedily erected, and Mr. John O'Callaghan, a lay-agent, was ordained on the 21st of May, 1848 by the Bishop of Tuam, and sent to labour in those parts.

The reformation rapidly spread through the adjoining country a large company at Glan became obedient to the faith, and the following letter of Mr. O'Callaghan, (who has lately been promoted by the Bishop to the incumbency of Oughterard, another important missionary station of the Society, seven miles distant, dated from Castelkerke, 31st July, 1851, proves the extent of the missionary operations. After stating that there is now a larger and more respectable, and more intelligent congregation than at any former period since the work commenced, he proceeds thus:—

"A few years ago and there were not half a dozen Protestants in this place but at this moment I am convinced, without the slightest exaggeration, that there is not in the whole of West Galway a country Romish chapel more numerous attended on Sundays, than the place of worship at Castelkerke.

"A few years ago the people of this place were sunk in ignorance and superstition—fond of drinking and fighting—but they are now surprisingly intelligent, peaceable, and all, more or less, acquainted with God's word. C

sted of any crime for the last three years. So late as Sunday week, some Romanists, who were drinking in a shebeen-house not far from this, quarrelled, and one man was stabbed and badly wounded; and on every court-day there are trials for fighting, stealing, &c., on the part of the Romanists: while there has not been a single case of any quarrelling or fighting amongst the converts. "On Sundays the Romanists meet together after mass to play at cards, to drink whiskey, to curse, and to fight, or may be seen at work as on the other days; while the converts, after prayers and Sunday school, remain at home with their families, or go to the houses of the Readers to receive instruction: remembering to keep holy the Sabbath day.

"These are facts, which prove the extent and value of the work already done; and which—as proving what Ireland might be, if once rescued from the degrading, pauperising, and mischievous influence of the Romish priests—should stimulate her true friends to exert themselves, more and more, in working out her emancipation by their means, their energies, and their prayers."

The Clifden Mission has been equally successful under the superintendence of Mr. D'Arcy. It was commenced in January, 1848. Great multitudes gave heed unto the word. School-houses were built, and missionaries sent, who now preach to the people, in their own tongue, "the unsearchable riches of Christ." The ordination of Mr. D'Arcy (now Rector of Clifden) has greatly tended to strengthen the minds of the converts. The Bishop presented him to this Living on the 21st of July, 1851.

The Bishop of Tuam held a confirmation of the converts during the month of October, 1849, in Oughterard, Castelterker, Clifden, and Sellerna, when 401 converts availed themselves of this rite. In September, 1851, the Bishop again visited the various missionary stations, and confirmed 712 converts—all brought to the knowledge of the truth through the instrumentality of the "Society for Irish Church Missions."

In the district of West Galway, there are now between 5000 and 6000 converts in connection with this Society, where, in the year 1840, not 500 Protestants were to be found! The Bishop of Tuam has lately issued an appeal for the building of eight new churches, and the enlargement of two others.

Upwards of 3000 children of converts or Romanists, daily attend the scriptural schools of the Society, and in many cases the instruction conveyed by them to their parents and friends has been remarkably blessed; and the change of character evident in the peaceable demeanour of the adults, is in striking contrast to their former condition.

There has been much persecution and opposition, but the Lord manifestly favoured these Missions by the out-pouring of His Holy Spirit, not letting His word return unto Him void.

The *Times*, in a leading article, dated Oct. 7, 1851, thus gives testimony to the success that has attended this Society:—

"It seems now pretty clear that something like a Reformation is taking place in the province of Connaught. We were unwilling hastily to give credence to the numerous statements which reached us on this subject,"

—"the Irish mind is at this moment undergoing a change of incalculable importance, and shaking off, at any rate in some degree, the fetters of its

which have achieved such signal success, we recognize a just and fair reprisal for the arrogant aggressions of the Pope. In answer to his bulls, they have published the Scriptures, and, while he is threatening our Crown and hierarchy, they sap the foundations of his power by disseminating the Word of God among his people. We trust that those who have undertaken this great work will not lack public sympathy and support.”—*The Times*.

The Dublin City Mission labours amongst 200,000 Romanists. About 2000 of these are visited, weekly, by the agents of this Society, who are generally very well received. A spirit of enquiry is now abroad amongst all ranks of society, inducing numbers to attend the controversial sermons, delivered weekly in various churches. “The Class for Enquirers”—conducted by the Missionary, on Tuesday evenings, in St. Michan’s School-house—is always crowded to inconvenience,—the room containing between 600 and 700 persons.

The *Tablet*, of Saturday, the 8th November, 1851, thus bears testimony to the Dublin Work:—

“We repeat, that it is not Tuam, nor Cashel, nor Armagh, that are the chief seats of successful proselytism, but this very city [Dublin] in which we live.”

The operations of this Society are not however confined to the districts of Connemara, West Galway, or Dublin city and suburbs. An important work is also carrying on in the towns of Galway, Carlow, Portarlington, Enniscorthy, Tuam, Kilkenny, Drogheda &c. &c., besides affording the means of missionary effort to the clergy in various parts of thirteen counties in Ireland.

The agency employed is as follows:—15 Clergymen, 7 Lay Agents, 96 Readers, 34 Schoolmasters, 21 Schoolmistresses; total 173. This number does not include those employed by local committees, whose salaries are paid by the Society.

This Statement is prepared peculiarly for such as love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, to commend to their prayerful consideration the present spiritual exigencies of Ireland.

If *so much* has been already effected, under the Divine blessing in those places where missionary stations have been planted, what benefits, of a Christian and civilizing character, may not be looked for, if pecuniary means are afforded for over-spreading the whole of Ireland with a similar agency.

Let British Christians now come forward liberally—as they value their own privileges—and Ireland will, with the blessing of God, be released from the tyranny and slavery of Romanism, and millions and daughters be brought to a knowledge of Him, “who to know is life eternal,” and whom to serve is perfect freedom.

. *An extended “Sketch of the Origin and Operations of the Society”* be had at the Office, or of any bookseller.

Annual Subscriptions and Donations to the Society for Irish Church Missions to Roman Catholics will be received by the Treasurer, Sir John Dean Paul, Bart., at Messrs. Strahan, Paul, and Co.’s, Strand; at Messrs. Williams, Deacon, and Co.’s, Birchin-lane; at Messrs. Herries, Farquhar, and Co.’s, St. James’s-street; and by Messrs. Hatchard, Son, Piccadilly; Messrs. Seeley, Fleet-street, and Hanover-street; and Messrs. Nisbet, Berners-street.—Communications are requested to be addressed to the Secret

tions. We have missions in the city of Galway which are peculiarly interesting. There every effort was made to hinder our approach. Forewarned, the priests determined to be forearmed, and as the mission had extended within four miles of the city, they thought they would bind the chain that had kept the people to the Church of Rome with still stronger power over them, by opening schools and feeding the children, thinking that they would thus be secured from the operations of our society, and so prevent its success in Galway. Still we persevered, and commenced missionary operations there last autumn. One school was opened called the Dovor school; God blessed that school, and blessed the preaching of the Gospel in that, the darkest and most benighted spot in Ireland. And when lately, the Rev. Mr. Daly, the parish priest, began controversial sermons in the chapel, our missionary attended the chapel, and sent a written answer to the priest, which was published the following day and sold in the streets; the people came to hear the controversial sermons which were preached in answer, in the Church, in immense numbers. The school we opened greatly increased; and two other schools are now being opened, to contain the numbers of children who are anxious to avail themselves of the opportunity of learning the word of God. Now, if it be said, that it was the hope of mere pecuniary assistance that induced the people in the West to send their children to our schools, and themselves to become converts; the conduct of the people of the city of Galway is a sufficient proof that they were not guided by any such motive, because, when we opened these schools, they received no assistance whatever. Our missions give not the slightest temporal relief, but frequently kind christian friends combine and assist the children, so as to enable them to attend more regularly, by giving them a little food every day. Even this, however, was not the case in the city of Galway. The children left the Roman Catholic schools where they were fed and clothed, and came to our schools which provided no attraction but the word of God. The school was filled from the drainings of other insti-

tutions; the children rejected the Roman Catholic schools, that they might read and study the word of God in the mission schools.

In the city of Dublin itself we have a considerable number of agents, visiting continually among the Roman Catholics, and every week thousands are spoken to on the affairs of their immortal souls. A considerable portion of this mission is maintained by the ladies of Dublin, who supply salaries for the missionary agents.

We have four enquiring classes, which Roman Catholics are invited to attend, and numerous conversions have taken place, owing to the instruction thus conveyed.

Now, one word as to the means by which this great work is effected. I have already said we give no food; the mission supplies no clothing, no temporal relief; but we do hold out that bribe which is more than sufficient to induce the converts to abandon home and house, and relations, and priests, to seek the salvation of their souls. We tell them that salvation, full, finished, and free, was wrought out by Christ on the cross of Calvary. While we give them no food, we give them the Bible which tells them of the Bread of life; we do not clothe their bodies, but we point them to the clothing of Christ's righteousness, and tell them that the precious truths which the Bible sets before them are those which makes the sinner "wise unto salvation," and it is the knowledge of these truths which produces that bold profession of the Gospel which the converts exhibit when they are opposed and met by those whom they were in the habit of bowing down to and adoring almost as their Gods.

A beautiful instance of this Christian boldness occurred in the case of a little child who met Dr. M'Hale, the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Tuam. When he was visiting the town of Clifton, on a confirmation tour, last autumn, he was accompanied by a large number of his priests, and one of them pointed out this little girl as they were walking on the road. He asked her, was she a jumper? and she said she was, and gloried in the name. He said, "What induced you to leave the Church to which your father and mother belonged?" She said, "It was the same grace that constrained St.

Paul to leave the church in which he was bred." He asked her, "Are your father and mother alive?" She said, "My father is dead, and my mother is a Protestant." "Had your father the priest before he died?" "Yes; and I am sorry for it." "Why do you refuse to go back to the Catholic church?" "Because that church teaches doctrines contrary to God's word,—what does she teach? she teaches that the priest has power to change bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ, whereas the Scripture says, in 1 Cor. xi, 'As often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.'" Dr. M'Hale looked at the priests and said, "What does this mean?" The little girl answered, "It means, that we eat the sacramental bread and drink the cup in remembrance of our Lord's death." Dr. M'Hale answered her with words I am almost ashamed to repeat. "You are a devil, and I have done wrong to talk so much to you." He then called upon the priests to join him in prayer, and they knelt and offered up a prayer to the Virgin for her conversion; and when they rose from their knees, the little girl quoted that passage in Ecclesiastes ix, 5, "The living know that they shall die, but the dead know not anything." Now, this boldness and readiness to quote Scripture on such an occasion as this, proves how graciously the Spirit has operated on these children's hearts, turning them from what they formerly believed and trusted in, and rendering them free from that slavish adulation they once paid to the priests. It is nothing but the truth of God that makes men free, which gives them to know "the glorious liberty

of the children of God" can produce such glorious results as these.

It is that these missions may be extended far and wide (for our object is not to evangelize one portion of Ireland merely, but to extend our missions over the whole face of Ireland's map, and make it eminently Protestant and Christian, instead of Popish), that we ask you to assist us with your means. Until lately, the effort was made by English Christians alone, but the people of England generously said, we have abundance of money, and can do the whole work ourselves, but we must not be selfish, we will allow our Irish Protestant friends to co-operate with us, and share with us the glory of Ireland's reformation. We ask you, therefore, to assist us with your contributions and your prayers. We ask you to remember this great missionary cause in your family devotions, when you kneel with your children around you, imploring God's abundant blessings, that the dark and barren scene around you may bloom and blossom as the rose. We ask you to become missionaries yourselves to your servants, and relatives, and friends, who are under the delusions of the church of Rome, and remember the cause of Irish missions when you plead with your God in secret, and entreat Him to pour the blessing of wisdom and abundant grace on all connected with these missions. We call upon you to aid us and sympathize with us in this great and glorious work, that thousands of our dear countrymen and countrywomen, now in spiritual darkness, may be brought to the light, and multitudes of souls, ignorant of the way of salvation, may be brought to know Jesus, "whom to know is life everlasting."

