

6. Soup and souperism

Pub. National Library of

Ireland - 1995

While the Society of Friends and other groups provided soup and relief in a spirit of Christian charity, irrespective of the religious denomination of the recipients and with no claims on their allegiance, a number of evangelical missionary groups made relief conditional on conversion to the Protestant faith. Among the most controversial proselytisers were Rev. Edward Nangle who established a missionary colony on Achill Island, Co. Mayo in 1831, and Rev. Alexander Dallas who established schools in Connemara during the Famine. They attracted some hundreds of converts, but their strident propaganda caused great resentment among the Catholic clergy. 'Souperism' remains an abiding image in popular folklore.

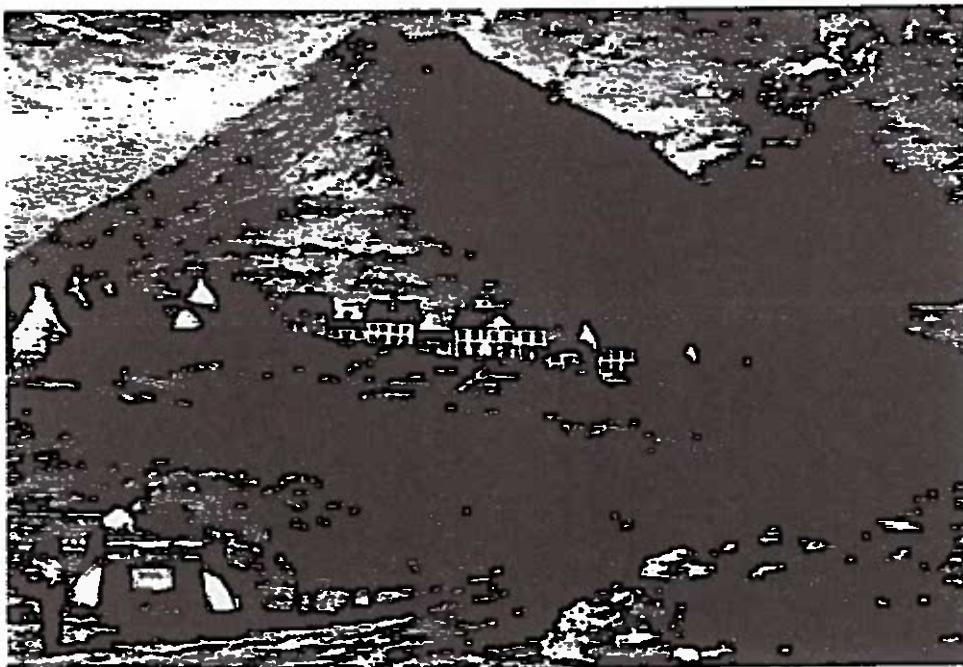
Views of a 'liberal' Protestant couple on the Achill mission.

We consider every conscientious accession to the Protestant faith as a contribution in aid of the well-being of the state and the prosperity of Ireland more especially; but such experiments as that at Achill will be made in vain. We have shown that here it has been a complete failure; the principles upon which it has been conducted have not been in accordance with the divine precept of 'charity', nor has the clergyman under whose control the settlement is placed been an example of that gentle, peace-loving, and persuasive zeal, that 'meek and unaffected grace', which should distinguish a humble follower of 'The Lord and Master'.

One word more and we dismiss this subject: it was impossible not to appreciate the magnanimity of the

poor, miserable, utterly destitute and absolutely starving inhabitants of Achill, who were at the time of our visit enduring privations at which humanity shudders, and to know that by walking a couple of miles and professing to change their religion they would have been instantly supplied with food, clothes and lodging. Yet these hungry thousands – for it would be scarcely an exaggeration to say that nine-tenths of the population of this island were, in the month of July last, entirely without food – preferred patiently to endure their sufferings, rather than submit to what they considered a degradation... But we have deemed it our duty to submit the case fully to our readers, with a view, particularly, to invite the consideration of English subscribers to 'The Mission'.

(Mr and Mrs S.C. Hall, *Ireland: its scenery and character*, etc., London, 1841-3, vol.II, p.167-9.)



'The Protestant missionary settlement at Isle of Achill': A contemporary lithograph. (NLI 1493TA.)

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'Ballinaboy School [Co. Galway], near the monastery, 10th August, 1850', established by the Rev. Dallas. (NLI 2003TX, a sketch-book illustrating the work of Rev. Dallas and his followers.)

Letter of Father William Flannelly to Dr Daniel Murray, Archbishop of Dublin.

Ballinakill, Clifden, Co. Galway, 6 April 1849.

My Lord,

I beg most respectfully to claim your lordship's indulgence for presuming to submit the following observations to your judgement. The enemies of the faith are now endeavouring by all means to proselytise the people, have money to no end, and apostate priests and laics are the instruments selected to conduct this impious crusade. It cannot be wondered if a starving people would be perverted in shoals, especially as they go from cabin to cabin, and when they find the inmates naked and starved to death, they proffer food, money and raiment, on the express condition of becoming members of their conventicles. Scurrilous tracts are scattered in thousands among the poor by those emissaries of discord, and they go so far as to send the Catholic clergyman a copy of those pamphlets through the post office.

They are in the habit of saying to the poor people, 'why not go to your priests and get money from them'; but they take care to conceal the fact that there was a period when the priests had both lands and money, and in trust for the poor of God; but

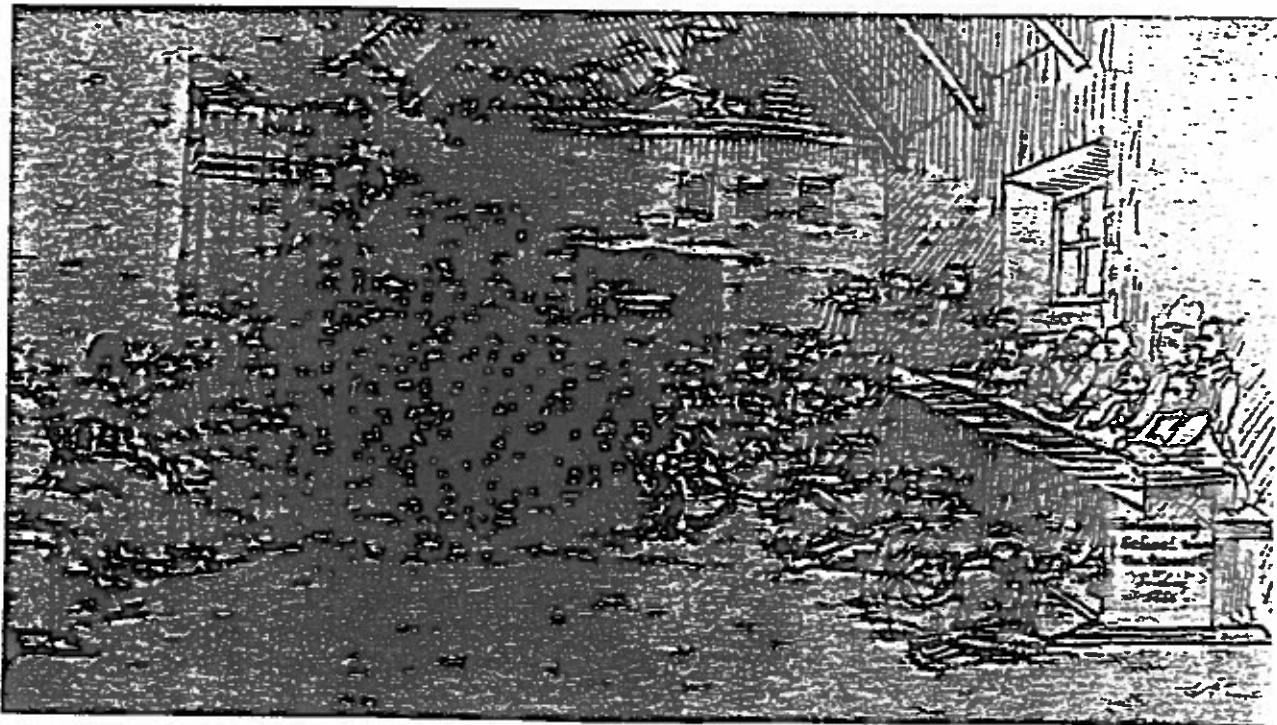
persecution unjustly transferred those Catholic treasures to others, who, instead of complying with the charitable intentions of the original donors, revel in the profligate enjoyment of their sacrilegious plunder.

Should the faithful have placed any charities at your grace's disposal, as there is now absolute necessity for external aid to carry on the ordinary duties of the mission, I presume to express the hope your grace will be so kind as to appropriate some portion of them to meet the extraordinary spiritual and temporal wants of this part of Connemara. In fact, I think the deplorable state of all Connemara should be brought under the notice of the Society of the Propagation of the Faith, in order, if possible, to check the wicked course of these evil men.

I can assure your grace that a mile of the public road cannot be travelled without meeting a dead body; as the poor are houseless and daily turned out of the poorhouse whenever they exhibit any symptoms of sickness, There is not a hut without fever and dysentery, the sure precursors of cholera, which I fear is the next ordeal through which the poor Irish must pass.

William Flannelly, Catholic Curate.

(Dublin Diocesan Archives, Murray Correspondence 121.)



National Famine Commemoration.

On Sunday, May 20, the Irish American Home Society will participate in commemorating the victims of the famine by having a Mass at 9:00 followed by a breakfast, a non-perishable food collection for the needy and a display of several of the details of the famine.

Those of us who are Irish born or of Irish descent, whether we are aware of it or not, have had one or more of our immediate ancestors suffer and probably die from starvation during the famine years, 1845-1851.



Some Famine Facts:

- ... The Sultan of Turkey sent the equivalent of \$10,000 to help with the famine relief effort. Half of that amount was returned to the Sultan since Queen Victoria (who then ruled Ireland) decreed that no other person would donate more than she donated.
- ... The Native American Choctaw Tribe collected \$170 which they donated to Irish famine relief. In 1992 a group of Irish people returned the Choctaw kindness by walking the "Trail of Tears" and raised \$170,000 which they donated to the Tribe. See reverse side.
- ... Though vehemently denied by authorities, some starving Irish, who spoke only the Irish language, were denied food from the soup kitchens because they wouldn't (couldn't) ask for food in English!
- ... An estimated 5,000 victims of the famine are buried, coffinless, in a single mass grave in Abbeystrewry Cemetary, Skibbereen, Co. Cork.

20x

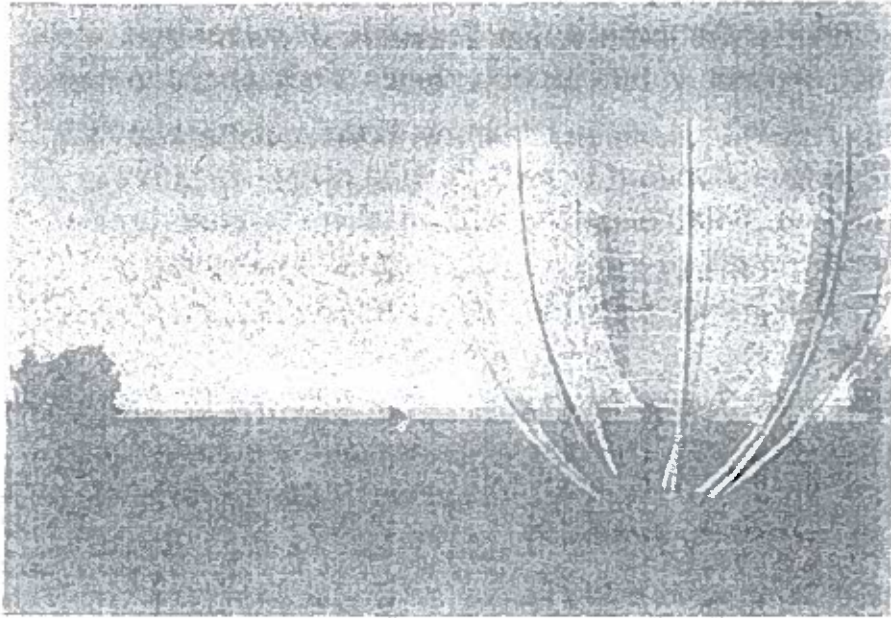
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National Famine Commemoration.

A sculpture of nine eagle feathers will be installed in Bailie Park, in Middleton, Co. Cork to thank the native American Choctaw Tribe for their kindness and support during the Great Irish Famine, An Gorta Mór.

The sculpture, consisting of nine giant, stainless steel eagle feathers (a significant part of the Choctaw culture) is currently being completed by Cork sculpture Alex Pentak.

The \$111,000 sculpture will be officially unveiled later this year and invitations to attend the unveiling have been sent to Choctaw leaders.



National Famine Commemoration.

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In 2008 the Irish Parliament, Dáil Eireann, unanimously passed a resolution that the victims of the Irish Famine, An Gorta Mór, of the mid 1800's be commemorated annually.

The National Famine Commemoration Committee was established and was directed to set guidelines for the annual commemoration. Briefly, the following guidelines apply:

1. A town / community that was severely affected by the Famine will be selected as a focal point for each annual commemoration.
2. The location for the annual commemoration will rotate around the 4 provinces of Ireland.
3. The date for the annual commemoration in Ireland will be the weekend of the SECOND Sunday in May.
4. The Irish communities abroad are encouraged to participate in the commemoration on the weekend of the THIRD Sunday in May.



The focal points of the commemorations to date are:

- 2009 Munster -- Skibbereen, Co. Cork
- 2010 Connacht -- Murrisk, Co. Mayo
- 2011 Ulster -- Clones, Co. Monaghan
- 2012 Leinster -- Drogheda, Co. Louth
- 2013 Munster -- Kilrush, Co. Clare
- 2014 Connacht -- Strokestown, Co. Roscommon
- 2015 Ulster -- Newry, Co. Down
- 2016 Leinster -- Sculptures at the Dublin Docks, Co. Dublin

Excerpts about the Famine

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... "as an excuse for action, the British government proceeded to convene committees of inquiry whose reports and recommendations for relieving the destitution and poverty in Ireland were not acted upon. In all, 114 Royal Commissions and 61 Special Committees of Enquiry were set up and reported on conditions in Ireland in the period 1800 - 1840". (More than one every 3 months for 40 years!)

(*The Workhouses of Ireland*, John O'Connor.)

... "Eviction in Ireland meant depopulation, as the evicted family had but two alternatives, starvation or emigration. Those who could escape the former chose the latter; and the country was depopulated in either case".

(*The Economic History of Ireland*, George O'Brien)

... "No other issue has provoked so much anger, or has embittered relations, between the two countries as the indisputable fact that huge quantities of food were exported from Ireland to England throughout the period when the people of Ireland were dying of starvation. ... death from starvation was not possible but an immediate fate."

(*The Great Hunger*, Cecil Woodham-Smith.)

... "Many of those who died chose to lie down in the corners of graveyards so that their skeletal remains would rest on consecrated grounds".

(Enda Kenny, Irish Prime Minister, at the Great Hunger Commemoration, Strokestown, May 2014.)

National Famine Commemoration.

The grave marker shown below has been placed at the Great Hunger mass grave in Newry, Co. Down (the focal point of the 2015 Great Hunger commemoration).

Similar markers will be placed at all Great Hunger mass grave sites in Ireland.



Epilogue

As an example of the total apathy toward the people of Ireland and disregard for conditions in that part of the realm, according to John O'Connor's book, *The Workhouses of Ireland*, (excerpt above), from 1800 - 1840, 114 Royal Commissions and 61 Special Committees of Enquiry (a total of 175) were established, all addressing the conditions in Ireland. ***MORE THAN ONE INQUIRY EVERY 3 MONTHS FOR 40 YEARS!***

The ultimate example of government in-action.



LY 274.171081

MACH²
35.

JOHN MAC HALE,

Archbishop of Tuam.

HIS LIFE, TIMES, AND CORRESPONDENCE.

BY

RIGHT REV. BERNARD O'REILLY, D. D.; D. LIT. LAVAL.

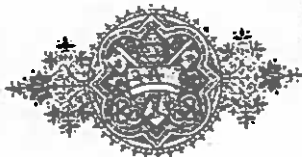
Domestic Prelate of His Holiness.

"Pro Ecclesie Dei libertate, populiq[ue] Hibernie incolumitate, haud modicum laboravi; hominesque fictos, fucatos, simulatos pro merito tractavi:—propterea morior diris rerumnis affectus, infractus tamen et ornatus."

"For the liberty of the Church of God, and for the preservation of the Irish people, I have labored not a little; the false, the hollow, the hypocrite I treated as they deserved:—therefore do I die amid bitter trials, yet unconquered and exalted by them."



VOL. II.



FR. PUSTET,

Printer to the Holy See and the S. Congregation of Rites.

Hr. Pustet & Co.,

NEW YORK & CINCINNATI.

1890.

"Should your Grace not have turned your attention to the Latin Address to His Holiness, by dropping me a line on the subject, I shall turn my attention to it, and draft the form, subject in the hereafter to your amendments.

"We have fallen upon unhappy times. God alone can save the people and the people's faith amid the trials they have to endure and the perils with which they are beset.

"Sincerely hoping to find your Grace in the enjoyment of good health at our approaching meeting, I have the honor to remain, etc., etc.,

"E. MAGINN."

The suggestions made in this letter were attended to by the Archbishop. The unceasing calls upon his time made during these eventful months left him, apparently, but little time to give to such compositions as those mentioned. But they were deemed by him to be, under the circumstances of his Church and country, an essential part of his duty. The manuscript copy among the MAC HALE MANUSCRIPTS of the Address of the Irish Hierarchy to Pius IX. is evidently not the work of Dr. Mac Hale.

But the letter to Cardinal Fransoni, which accompanies the Address, is by the Archbishop of Tuam, who writes in the name of the entire hierarchy. It is a masterly document, dated "Dublin, October 27th, 1847," written in the Archbishop's classical Latin, and dwells on the condition and prospects of Ireland, the general feeling of gratitude with which the first Rescript on the Queen's Colleges had been received by both people and clergy; it mentions the determination of the bishops to carry out the design of erecting a Catholic University, as well as the efforts made to mar this project by getting the Government so to amend the Statutes of the Queen's Colleges as to make the latter unobjectionable to Catholics.

The second part of the letter dwells on the renewed attempt of the Imperial Government to establish diplomatic relations with the Court of Rome.

"With regard to this matter," the Archbishop says, "it would be absolutely necessary to write more at length, in

order to enable you (in Rome) to understand the true state of affairs here, the condition in which our Church is placed, and to set forth clearly the weighty reasons which we all have for looking with suspicion on the schemes of the British Government, whenever these bear in any way on Irish ecclesiastical affairs or on the rights of our Church in this kingdom.

"I shall, at present, merely mention a few things which will throw light on the reasons we have for being alarmed. In the first place, no lapse of time can blot out from our memory all that, during the last three hundred years, has been done against the Church in Ireland. We cannot repose any trust in those who have confiscated the property of Catholics, or transferred it to Protestants, and who have persecuted to the death our people. To be sure, the penal laws enacted during that period have been partially repealed; but the spirit which enacted them is still alive and active. What shall I say of the systematic exclusion of Catholics from nearly all public offices, and of the bestowal of these on the Protestant minority? What shall I say of the schools opened in the Colonies for the education of the orphan children belonging to the army and navy, and in which the children of Catholic parents are brought up in the Protestant religion? What shall I say of the efforts made, during these last years, under the patronage of the British Government, to destroy the very existence of the Catholic Church, to strip her of all liberty, and to open the flood-gates of all religious errors, in the Kingdoms of Spain and Portugal, as well as in other countries?

"These are things which excite our just alarm, lest religion should also be ruined in the country placed under the paternal sway of the Holy See, and by the intrigues of British agents. It would not be possible to introduce into the Papal States the constitutional forms familiar to the British Empire, without grievously wounding the rights of the Church and of her supreme head on earth. The experience of countries which admit British ambassadors' goes to demonstrate that these are perpetually endeavoring

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MAC HALE MS

to introduce there British institutions. Hence the rebellious movements continually excited against the legitimate sovereigns."

The Archbishop then enumerates the barbarous and fanatical acts of religious persecution against Irish Catholics during the last twelvemonth:—the destitute poor allowed to die of starvation unless they consented to conform to the Protestant Church, and the very alms collected from indiscriminate charity exclusively employed to pervert the souls of the famishing.

He concludes by enumerating the outrageous relics of the Penal Laws which still disgrace the Statute Book, and the blasphemous form of oath imposed upon all public officials.

"I have written all this to your Eminence," Dr. Mac Hale says, in concluding, "in order that with your ordinary kindness you may take on yourself the care of protecting our Church from every hostile intrigue, and, should you deem it needful, that you also make known our fears to His Holiness, and that he should use his supreme authority to prevent British agents or other Englishmen from interfering with our Church affairs." †

Of the suggested memorial to the Lord-lieutenant, touching especially on the Irish Land-laws, and the rights of property *versus* the right to live, the Archbishop was not unmindful. We shall speak of it and of his correspondence with Lord Clarendon further on.

In the midst of the despair and gloom of that memorable autumn and winter of 1847, the British Government were busy,—profiting by the prostration of the people, and the lamentable divisions existing among their political and religious guides,—to push forward with redoubled activity their plans for University Education and the renewal of Diplomatic Intercourse with Rome. The Government, as we shall see, were but too actively seconded in these intrigues,—in this conspiracy, rather,—by some members of the hierarchy and others of the inferior clergy.

† MAC HALE MSS.

But such men as Drs. Mac Hale and Maginn were fully conscious of the danger, and fully impressed with the necessity of warding it off by every means in their power.

In the last days of that fateful year, Dr. Maginn wrote as follows to the Archbishop:—

“BUNCRANA, 28th December, 1847.

“MY DEAR LORD:—I beg to acknowledge the receipt of your esteemed favor of the 23d inst., and to express to your Grace my high gratification at finding that my hurried address to Stanley has met with your approval. Had I understood that your Grace was coming out on the same subject, I should not have ventured to write upon it. But, not seeing any notice taken of the cool, deliberate calumnies ushered into the world with all the weight and authority of such a man as Stanley, I believed it to be a duty not to allow them to pass unnoticed.

“Your beautiful, forcible, and convincing letters to Lord Arundel and Surrey, and to Lord John Russell, were more than sufficient to remove the unfavorable impressions produced by our calumniators on the public mind in England, if English prejudice against Catholic Ireland could be removed by any amount of truth or argument.

“Our lot, your Grace, is being cast on truly perilous times. The most insidious, crafty, unprincipled Government that ever swayed the destinies of this empire, playing into the hands of the inveterate foes of our country,—both influenced by the same malicious feeling towards our people and our religion; the prostrate energies, moreover, of our country,—all conspire to make the present times more pregnant with danger to the independence of our Church and the remaining liberties of our people than any period in the sad annals of Ireland.

“Unfortunately we are forced to meet them with broken ranks, when we should be united against the common foe. Division in Church and state; treachery within and with-

out; our mock bidder; and even the onslaught of stars the benevolence of things has no of Jerusalem un-

“God, however can, in His own and frustrate the

“Would it not the prelates, and each diocese to that Ireland ever with an authentic are being made

“I should like I am afraid that with anything in England against advantage of it

ed. The answer, not the if it were could firm the nation—been induced to to them, as it was the Queen's name

“A meeting of my mind, silence

Praying the good health and the honor to be

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The letter to Maginn is one Archbishop of

* A most eloquent letter addressed by the Prelate to the then Secretary for Ireland.

out; our mock patriots selling themselves to the highest bidder; and even traitors in the very sanctuary to applaud the onslaught made upon our people, and to extol to the stars the benevolence of our truculent rulers:—such a state of things has not existed in almost any land since the siege of Jerusalem under Titus.

“God, however, who has hitherto permitted such things, can, in His own good time, bring order out of this chaos, and frustrate the new but too high hopes of our enemies.

“Would it not be well, your Grace, to force a meeting of the prelates, and have a deputation from and representing each diocese to give to the world a statement of the wrongs that Ireland endured for centuries and is still enduring, with an authentic refutation of the calumnies of which we are being made the victims?

“I should like to hear from your Grace on this subject. I am afraid that a deputation to the Queen would meet with anything but a good reception. The state of feeling in England against us is such that the Ministry would take advantage of it to have those whom they abominate insulted. The answer we should receive would be the Ministers' answer, not the Queen's. And I should not be astonished if it were couched in such language as would tend to confirm the nations of Europe in the bad opinions they have been induced to form of us by the British press,—coming to them, as it would in these circumstances, sanctioned by the Queen's name.

“A meeting of the Irish clergy, bold and frank, would, in my mind, silence Lord John and his menagerie.

“Praying that the Lord may preserve your Grace long in good health and spirits to our Church and Country, I have the honor to be,

“Your most faithful and devoted servant,

“E. MAGINN.”

The letter to Lord John Russell mentioned above by Dr. Maginn is one of the most telling ever written by the Archbishop of Tuam, all the more so, indeed, that the