

TWO ORIEL MEN IN IRELAND

TWO Fellows of Oriel walked daily in the calm and classic ways of Oxford. They were bosom friends, and, men said, kindred spirits, burning and shining lights of their college, then the leading Oxford college in culture, studies, and famous names. The elder, tall, strenuous, robust, talked didactically, rather pompously, but with precision of thought and word. He was an author of text-books on Logic and on Rhetoric, and on the Johnsonian principle, that 'who drives fat cattle should himself be fat,' was a living embodiment of the science and the art of accurate thinking and correct phrasing. He was Richard Whately (1787-1863).

The delicate, pale youth by his side, another Fellow of Oriel, listened and learned from Whately—and learned with lasting profit to himself and to the men of all time, logic and rhetoric. Both were parsons, staunch Protestants. In their walks several times they met poor strolling Irishmen, ragged, hungry Papists, toilers from the fields, beggars, ballad singers. The dons were almost heedless, unobservant of the poor human clods, their religion, their country. If any seer or sybil had told those master-thinkers that one of them would become a bitter opponent of the faith and fortunes of Ireland, as a leader of politics and religion in the fateful isle, and that the other would after a forlorn expedition come to love Ireland and be a prince of her faith—both Richard Whately and John Henry Newman would have laughed, logical and rhetorical laughs. Yet Fate destined the Oriel men to drift, to part, and to live in Dublin, not under the same roof as at St. Alban's Hall and at Oriel, but within five minutes' walk of each other's houses. In the Ireland of their day, each was a leader in religion: Whately in

Two Oriel Men in Ireland

Erastian, narrow Protestantism; Newman in the old religion. They never met, never renewed the old Oxford friendship.

Newman always retained the liveliest feelings of thankfulness to Whately, but Whately, who had given to his pupil companion the weapon of keen, sharp logic, was enraged by the use made of it. Reading the Fathers, studying the history of the Arians, the Donatists, the history of the Catholic Church led Newman, the Fellow of Oriel, the pupil and companion of Whately, to write with great dialectical and rhetorical force the *Tracts for the Times*. The *Tracts* and their results alarmed, dismayed, enraged Whately, who wrote feeble *Cautions for the Times*, an antidote from Dublin against Oriel's Romeward tendencies. In these and his other writings Whately was bitter, scornful, unfair to his old friend of Oxford days.

To Ireland, the fateful isle, the grave of so many reputations, Whately came in 1831—just a hundred years ago. In Oxford he was a liberal in politics, supported the Bill for the Emancipation of Catholics, and aided and abetted reform. His appointment to the See of Dublin by Lord Grey came as a surprise to him, and, although it carried immense prestige, great scope for patronage in Church and State, and a salary of £20,000 a year, Whately was not elated. He loved his Oxford life, calm, studious, with tried friends and associations; and probably he foresaw the chilly welcome which the crusty bigotry of Protestant Ireland was to give a liberal political prelate, who had supported reforms preached by their hated and dreaded enemy, O'Connell.

He never gained Protestant popularity, though he thirsted for praise and popularity. The clergy of higher rank and the nobility were wildly jealous to see an English clergyman imported and salaried richly whilst the ignoble noble families, the Beresfords,

Blackfriars

Stopfords, Trenches, Loftuses, Barnards, were, they knew, far more competent to lead the war against the Catholic Church in Ireland. The Protestant party had been administering school funds for all Ireland primary education. They insisted on all pulpits—Catholic and Protestant—reading the Bible in the Authorized Version daily. The Papists—priests and laity—clamorously and continuously protested, boycotted the schools, mauled the biblicals, and a Royal Commission deprived the bigots of funds. Whately approved of and became Chairman of the National Education Board, which was to give primary education without even a suspicion of proselytism! The Protestant clergy raged and ranted, called him Judas, refused to let such a system into their school-houses, refused teachers, salaries, grants, hoping for failure and collapse. Whately was firm in his allegiance to the scheme, but clung to Bible instruction, refusing the Douay version to be admitted, or lessons on Irish history to be printed in the school-books.

When in Oxford, he had written a book, *The Errors of Romanism*; so, the Catholic clergy were very vigilant, prompt in resistance to any compromise, appreciative of his fair-mindedness, his driving force. He had something which may be called the Oriel manner, which is nearly akin to, but not quite co-incident with, the Balliol manner, defined by the late Lord Oxford as 'the serene consciousness of effortless superiority.' The Catholic clergy fought hard for the safety of the faith of their pupils. With all his charm and subtlety, after years of checkmating, he resigned from the Board. His fair-mindedness (?) drew eulogy from Catholic priests and bishops. His condemnation of the buyers of the souls of Catholic children, his generosity to the poor, were rightly praised. But, the landlords, and Protestant clergy, the ascendancy gang hated and rated Richard of Dublin.

Two Oriel Men in Ireland

His treatment of Newman was shabby and mean. Newman, years after Whately's unfair and mean criticisms, in his *Apologia*, wrote long paragraphs, 'And now, as to Dr. Whately, I owe him a great deal. He was a man of generous and warm heart. He was particularly loyal to his friend, and, to use the common phrase, "all his geese were swans" He emphatically opened my mind and taught me to think and to use my reason.'

In Ireland and in England Newman's name is revered. The book he wrote in Ireland, *The Idea of a University*, is the guiding star of Catholic universities throughout the world. Poverty and the low standards of college education contributed mainly to the failure of his Irish university effort. Yet thoughtful Catholics, who now see his aims, his ideals, his noble self-sacrifice and labours, bless his name.

Poor Dr. Whately's name and fame are dead in Oxford; and in Ireland his name and fame might have been inscribed on the long roll of well-intentioned failures sent to help the Green Isle. The Psalmist told men of all time that the enemies of a man's house are his family. Dr. Whately's daughter, filially, wrote his 'Life'; it blighted, withered and killed his name and fame. She was an ardent, burning and shining light in the proselytizers of Dublin, a skilled army. She reveals that Richard of Oriel, the high-minded, honourable, transparently honest, was, secretly and actively, Judas against Catholic Ireland. He paid largely for the hirelings sent to pervert the poor in Connaught. He wrote, 'I believe that mixed education is gradually enlightening the mass of the people in Ireland, and if we give it up, we give up the only hope of weaning the Irish from the *abuses of Popery*. *But I cannot venture openly to profess this opinion. I cannot openly support the Education Board as an instrument of conversion. I have to fight the battle*

Blackfriars

with one hand, and that my best, tied behind me ' (Life vol. ii, p. 246).

Old Horace wrote that they change their sky but not their mind who run across the sea. The Fellow of Oriel changed his sky, but not his mind, full of the ' Errors of Romanism,' full of the old dread shouted long ago by the scribes and pharisees—' the Romans will come and take away our place and nation.'

E. J. QUIGLEY.