

EDWARD HOSP

## FIRST REDEMPTORIST MISSIONS IN IRELAND

According to Father Joseph Prost's diaries

### SUMMARIUM

Inter principaliores artifices expansionis prodigiosae Congregationis SS. Red., saeculo elapso, iure merito connumeratur P. Iosephus Prost, natus die 11 I 1804 in vicolo Hinding, paroecia Freinberg, dioec. Linz, Ober-Österreich, et mortuus plus quam octuagenarius die 19 III 1885 in conventu Puchheim. (De P.e Prost cfr AG Cat. XI 1, 13 n. 87; *Litterae annales Prov. Austriacae* 1885, 18-21; MADER, *Congregation in Oesterreich*, 1887, 509-511).

An. 1827, studiis humanioribus in Linz absolutis, nomen dedit Canonici S. Norberti in Schlägl, et post annum in urbem Wien missus est, ut studia academica perficeret. Anno secundo studii theologici ob venerationem P.is Passerat admitti in nostrum noviciatum petiit et die 23 I 1830 veste S.i Alfonsi indutus est; die 24 III 1831 in Mautern vota religiosa emisit et anno sequenti, die 29 VII 1832, in Graz sacerdotio auctus est. Studiis laudabiliter peractis, postquam per duos annos in Austria munia Congregationis obiverat, an. 1835 tamquam superior in Americam Confoederatam missus est, eo expresso munere ut ibi Congregationi domum stabilem obtineret. Spem in seipsum positam non fefellit, et gravissimis difficultatibus feliciter superatis iam an. 1836 primam domum aperuit in Rochester, cui mox alias fundationes adiungere potuit: 1839 Pittsburgh, 1840 Baltimore, 1842 New York. (De opere P.is Prost in U.S.A. cfr WUEST, *Annales Prov. Americanae* I, 1888, 27 ss., et *Supplementum* I, 1903, 3-238).

An. 1842, rebus americanis feliciter constitutis, in patriam revocatus est, ac per 6 annos, praesertim in Tirol, missionibus operam dedit, usque ad an. 1848, quando, rerum politicarum motibus angustiat, in Angliam emigravit, unde opus missionum nostrarum ad populum in Hiberniam induxit.

Per 3 annos (oct. 1851 - fine 1854) P. Prost, qui erat superior communitatis in Bishop Eton, Liverpool (*Cat. CSSR Transalp.* 1852, p. 32), tamquam superior missionum in Hibernia laboravit, ubi etiam primam domum

hibernicam fundavit, quae mense iunio 1853 aperta est in Limerick (Bank Place; sed an. 1854 a suo successore P.e Bernardo Hafkenschaid translata in locum, qui dicitur Mount St. Alphonsus). Quantum laborem P. Prost in missionibus hibernicis sustinuerit, quomodo cum episcopis, cum clero paroeciali, cum fidelibus altioris et inferioris conditionis egerit, quomodo missiones secundum conditiones temporis et loci aptatas dederit et cum quo fructu, in sequenti articulo legi potest. Sine dubio opus P.is Prost magni faciendum est pro renovatione vitae religiosae in Hibernia, utpote quae missionibus valde promota fuit.

An. 1855 ex Anglia in Austriam reversus, primo collegio in Mautern et postea collegiis in Puchheim et Katzelsdorf adscriptus est et curam animarum in patria egit. Sed mox tertio in campum apostolicum exterum vocatus est: die 11 I 1858, quae erat dies anniversarii, ex Katzelsdorf iter in Insulam S. Thomae in Indiis occidentalibus (Mare Caraibicum) aggressus est. Per duos annos (1858-1860), primo solus (usque ad diem 11 V 1858; cfr *Spic. Hist.* 6 [1958] 454), strenue adlaboravit ut etiam inter animas earum regionum, revera maxime derelictas, apostolatus alfonsianus constitueretur, et quidem cum optimo successu. Fundamenta iecit futurae Vice-Prov. Belgicae Antillarum (erect. die 5 VI 1902), quae deinde (die 4 V 1918) in Vice-Prov. de Roseau (ad Prov. Belgicam pertinentem) et Vice-Prov. de S. Juan (ad Prov. de Baltimore pertinentem) divisa est.

Post reditum in Austriam, collegio in Puchheim denuo adscriptus, et mox Minister constitutus (*Cat. CSSR 1863*, p. 22), minime otio se dedit, sed per alios 20 annos, concionando et Confessiones audiendo, sive domi sive in Missionibus et Exercitiis, quod tot tantisque laboribus pro Deo perfectis in eo virium supererat, hilari animo salutem animarum impendit. Ultimis vitae annis († 19 III 1885) lumen oculorum adeo ei diminutum est, ut — quod sagaci eius ingenio crux maxima erat — legere et scribere amplius non valeret.

P. Prost de suis peregrinationibus et laboribus *Diaria* extensa et copiosa confecit, pretiosum fontem historiae nobis constituens (*Tagebücher* in III vol., et *Erläuterungen* in V vol.). His diariis, quae in archivio Prov. Austriae in urbe Wien conservantur, sedulus historiae CSSR indagator P. Hosp usus est, ut adumbrationem biographicam P.is Prost texeret. Haec biographia ab auctore nondum publici iuris facta est, sed illam partem in qua actusitas P.is Prost in Indiis occidentalibus describitur, lectoribus foliorum nostrorum ante aliquos annos, occasione centenarii apostolatus CSSR in illis regionibus, exhibuit (*Spic. Hist.* 6 [1958] 425-470).

Occasione huius *Spicilegii* numeri, de missionibus tractantis, nobis benigne obtulit aliam partem, capitulum scilicet in quo exponitur actusitas P.is Prost in primis missionibus hibernicis (1851-1854). Ad expositionem complendam et iudicio aequo ex omni latere ponderandam (ex.gr. circa opus P.is Bernardi Hafkenschaid eiusque agendi modum versus P.em Prost) absque dubio etiam alii historiae fontes consulendi sunt, qui forte fortuna in archivis Prov. Belgicae (Bruxelles), Prov. Anglicae (London), et in archivio generali non desunt. Sed descriptio operositatis P.is Prost ex solis

ipsius diariis desumpta iam suum valorem proprium habet, uti lectori certo patebit.

Notandum adhuc restat, studium P. is Hosp scriptum fuisse lingua germanica, sub titulo: *Die ersten Missionen in Irland*. Versionem in linguam anglicam curavit P. Iosephus Gredler, Prov. Baltimorensis sodalis, membrum communitatis Domus generaliciae. Pro hoc labore in utilitatem nostrorum lectorum linguae anglicae, praesertim Prov. Hibernicae, suscepto, P. i Gredler debitas gratias agimus.

A. S.

It was through the efforts of Fr. Friedrich Held that the Redemptorists came from Belgium to Ireland in 1851, the way having been paved for them by the great success of parish missions in neighboring England. William Monsell, later Lord Emly, a fervent Catholic of Tervoe, invited Fr. Held to visit Ireland in 1851 (1). During this visit, Fr. Held met Bishop Ryan of Limerick, and it was agreed that a mission should be preached in St. John's cathedral in October of that year (2).

Fr. Held entrusted this first mission in Ireland to Fr. Joseph Prost, an Austrian who had taken refuge in England when the Institute was banned in his homeland in 1848, and who had won fame as a mission superior. At this time Fr. Prost was rector of the Liverpool community. He had been Superior to the American Missions from 1835 to 1843, and founded the first three Redemptorist houses in the United States. In his diaries he has left a description of the first Redemptorist labors in Ireland which is worthy of note (3).

He first speaks briefly of the country in general, its people, and the situation of the Irish Church. His mission journeys to every part of the Island had given him firsthand information, particularly of the hardships that followed in the wake of centuries of religious persecution. England, after severing herself from the Church, won the political domination of Ireland through bloody struggles, the aftermath of which was not only religious duress but complete economic subjection of the Island.

Fr. Prost saw the country, with its fertile grain lands and mild climate, in a state of economic disaster. Most of it was in the hands of English gentry. Only in the less productive territories of the West (Connaught) were a few Catholic proprietors to be found. The large domains were leased out to middle-men, and brought handsome incomes to their owners in England and on the Continent. The middle-men, in their turn, sublet their holdings in small parcels to Irish peasants. Since there were no factories as in England, the poor had no choice but to rent a small piece of

(1) F. JONES CSSR, *The Redemptorists come to Ireland: The Redemptorist Record* 17 (1953) 162-165.

(2) *Fifty Years at Mount Saint Alphonsus, Limerick, 1853-1903*, Limerick [1903], I.

(3) The « Diaries » (*Tagebücher*) of Father Joseph Prost are in the archives of the Austrian Province, Vienna. He treats of Ireland in II, pp. 101-197 and III, pp. 1-35. Also in « Explanations » (*Supplements; Erläuterungen*) IV, pp. 25-44 and V, pp. 1-26.

land at any price, or starve. The resulting poverty in shelter, food and clothing was appalling to Fr. Prost. He had never seen the like in his own country, and was sure no one else had. Potatoes took the place of bread. Many people were too poor to own a change of clothing; and thus became a prey to vermin. The clothing they wore was little better than rags. No one made any effort to improve the soil, for if productiveness increased, so did the rent. An Irishman was not allowed to own a horse valued at more than five pounds sterling. If he had one that was worth more, any Englishman could take it from him on payment of that price. If a son became Protestant, he became the sole proprietor of his parents' goods. The situation of day-laborers was no better than that of the petty land-renters. In Fr. Prost's time, the once large families of the eight million inhabitants of the country had been reduced to half that number by emigration and the ravages of disease and hunger. Everywhere he witnessed the ravishment of the land, England's monstrous sin.

Following in the wake of misery was alcoholism. Strong drink was resorted to as a substitute for food and as a means of escape from the harsh realities of the situation. Since the price of good beverages was prohibitive on account of high import tariffs, the poor contented themselves with spirits home-brewed from grain, which were sometimes further cheapened by being mixed with a concoction made from potatoes. Against the evils of intemperance Capuchin Fr. Matthew of Cork raised his voice so successfully that he even attracted the attention of Queen Victoria (1837-1901), who had a yearly pension of 400 pounds assigned to him for the furtherance of his work of preaching and organizing of temperance societies. Unfortunately, according to Fr. Prost, his efforts did not produce lasting results, because they lacked the necessary spiritual foundation of a deepening of the religious sense through prayer and the frequentation of the Sacraments (4). Undernourishment brought on still another evil. It sapped the strength of the workers and lessened their will to work, thus leaving them open to the charge of laziness. Fr. Prost tells the story of a Scot who leased land in Ireland and put Irish peasants to work on it, promising them a shilling a day for a stipulated amount of labor. The peasants declared the stipulated labor an impossibility. Whereupon the Scot offered them a shilling a day for fourteen days on condition that they do no work at all, but use the money for food. To this the peasants consented, and forthwith began doing more than he had required of them.

Fr. Prost saw the religious situation in Ireland in a transitional stage. The steadfastness with which Catholics clung to the faith of their fathers was the glory of the country. Apostacy was an unusual phenomenon. In reply to the Protestants who offered them food for apostacy Catholics declared themselves ready, rather than renounce their faith, to drag themselves before their altars and die there of hunger. Finally, toward the end of the 18th century, after the experiences of the American War of Independence

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(4) « Diary » II, p. 133.

and the French Revolution, England was forced to mitigate the discriminatory laws, although the unhampered development of the Irish Church became legally possible only after the Catholic Emancipation of 1829. Illegally, however, the struggle went on. To assure their continued domination of the country, Protestants formed into secret societies known as Orangemen (from William of Orange). These societies were backed by much wealth and prestige. Catholics countered with their own secret organization called the Ribbonmen, which, however, fell under the ban of the Church. The Ribbonmen, by their own authority, avenged offenses against Catholics. They held kangaroo courts whose sentences were executed by chosen henchmen. A Protestant's cattle would be found dead, his buildings burned, or he himself slain. The purpose of the Ribbonmen was to intimidate the Protestants, and to some extent they succeeded. The symbol of Protestantism in Ireland was the yellow lily, whereas the white lily was the symbol of Catholicism. Fr. Prost never saw a yellow lily growing in a Catholic garden.

After Emancipation, Catholics were confronted with vast problems. First, they had to build churches, for during the years of persecution not only had all their churches been confiscated, but they were forbidden to build new ones. Protestant bishops were installed in their cathedrals, and Protestant pastors in their parish churches, and it was these who drew the ecclesiastical incomes even if there was not a single Protestant in the territory. The first churches were often, understandably, makeshift in character. Before 1829, religious services had only been held in Catholic homes. In such a dwelling in Dublin, the floors had been cut away and galleries built in. One day, when it was filled to capacity with worshippers, the beams gave way and the whole edifice collapsed, and there were many dead and injured. This event aroused the sympathy even of the Protestants, and Protestant journals advocated the erection of Catholic churches. In a short time, thanks to the great generosity of the people, many new churches were built throughout the country. Schools, likewise, had to be erected, for these, too, had been confiscated. Indeed, all instruction of children, even in reading and writing, had been forbidden to Catholics under the heaviest penalties. Those who could afford it had sent their children to France to be educated. In the country itself, hedge-schools were set up where, under constant guard to elude the ever-present government spies, instruction was given. Fr. Prost was shown a tower in the northern part of the country which had served such a purpose, and he remembered how, while in America, he had become acquainted with an old Irishman in Utica, New York, one of whose sons became bishop of Chicago and another a pastor in Jersey City, after receiving their elementary education in just such a school. Now, therefore, there was need for still more generosity, since new schools had to be built, equipped and staffed.

And yet, observes Fr. Prost, the truth of Bishop Millner's saying that a lessening of persecution means a lessening of religious fervor was exemplified in Ireland. Whereas formerly there were many who journeyed long hours to attend Mass and receive the Sacraments, in secret and amid

dangers, now even those who lived near the churches neglected their religious duties. In Limerick there was a street almost exclusively inhabited by Catholics, of whom almost no one attended the nearby church. Yet — and here was something Fr. Prost particularly disliked — the Irish, with a bravado worthy of the Tyrolese, claimed to be the world's best Catholics. Irish and Catholic went together, they said, like English and Protestant, and for proof they pointed to their fidelity to the faith of their forefathers. The truth, of course, was that while the persecution had helped many into heaven, it had also left some quite earthly evils in its wake.

The hierarchy had held fast in the storms of persecution. Bishop had followed bishop, and each had his priests, even if only a few, and even if their ministrations had to be performed in secret.

To Fr. Prost, the Irish clergy was not above criticism. He observed a certain cleavage between them and the people. The bishops were given the title of lord and often lived up to it. Priests frequently lived in genteel surroundings, while the churches, for the most part, presented a woebegone appearance. Fr. Prost is careful to emphasize that there were exceptions, but this was the rule (5). Almost without exception, priests heard confessions only during the day, many leaving their evenings free for visiting and dining with well-to-do Catholics. As a result, workers and poor folk often found it almost impossible to go to confession. Besides, the French-educated priests were often tainted with Jansenistic rigorism. The government sought to discourage foreign studies by subsidizing Maynooth College, and by paying theologians monthly salaries. But Fr. Prost heard complaints against the Maynooth priests: they were indeed learned, but lacked piety and kept themselves aloof from simple folk. Since there were no churches during the persecutions, priests were forced to reserve the Blessed Sacrament in their residences. To be ready at all times to administer the Sacraments, they also carried It on their persons. These things were still being done in Fr. Prost's day. He observes also the rough and unfriendly manner of many priests toward the poor, contrasting with their politeness and consideration for the rich. He criticizes the harshness with which they demanded contributions, and admires the patience of the common folk in even permitting themselves to be struck by their priests.

Yet, the generosity of the people was beyond praise, as was the reverence in which they held the priest, whatever his shortcomings. To them, the priest was always the persecuted father. When the government offered salaries to the clergy in exchange for a right of veto in episcopal nominations, it was the faithful who opposed the idea most vigorously, even though some of the bishops were in favor of it. What they wanted above all was an independent Church.

Pope Pius IX sent his personal friend, Dr. Paul Cullen, as a reformer to Ireland. A native of Ireland, he had been rector of the Irish College in Rome for many years (1832-1849), and was thus permeated with the

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(5) « Diary » II, p. 106.

Roman spirit. He was named archbishop of Armagh in 1849, was transferred to the see of Dublin and appointed nuncio three years later. Eventually, in 1866, he became a cardinal. He began his task in Ireland by convening a national council, at which important decisions for the reform of the clergy were made. As the bishop of Limerick put it to Fr. Prost, on that occasion all the clergy were gathered together to hear and accept what their primate had brought from Rome.

Dr. Cullen was to pay special attention to monastic life in Ireland. In this phase of its discipline, the Irish Church had suffered considerably. The archbishop ordered the religious to wear their habit in the monastery and in church, to dismiss secular and especially female servants. He also insisted energetically on regular observance.

In the matter of episcopal appointments, Dr. Cullen wielded great influence. The pastors of a diocese, on the death of their bishop, would choose three candidates for the succession, and send their names to the Pope. More than once it happened that all three were rejected by the Pope in favor of a candidate suggested by Archbishop Cullen.

Of great importance for the success of this program of reform and renewal of the Catholic spirit was the profound influence exerted by the *Redemptorist parochial missions* (6).

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Though it was Fr. Held who, after the establishment of the Clapham house in 1848, began arranging for missions in Ireland, the actual evangelization of the country devolved upon Fr. Prost as mission superior of both England and Ireland.

Bishop Eton had scarcely been founded when, in 1851, Bishop Ryan requested a mission for LIMERICK, as we have seen. On this mission Fr. Prost took with him Fr. Van Antwerpen of the Bishop Eton community, and Fathers Petscherine and Douglas from Clapham. Fr. Vanderstichele also took part in the mission. A Mr. Sharpeles arranged for the Fathers' passage by steamer to Dublin. Fr. Prost was anything but optimistic about the prospects of the task confronting him. His companions were young and inexperienced, and he himself knew little of the land which was now to be the scene of his labors. He had, it is true, met many Irish in America, and learned to like them, but he felt some apprehension because of their national weaknesses. To these he could not close his eyes, much as he admired their liveliness and generosity. Fr. Petscherine was more optimistic, seeing in the Irish nothing more than a poor and downtrodden people.

The Fathers spent a sea-sick night on the Dublin steamer; the journey from Liverpool to Kingstown took eleven hours. Fr. Prost found Dublin a beautiful city, though he was shocked by the sight of its numerous poor. In a few hours, the missionaries were on their way straight across the Island, a journey that offered little in the way of scenery. Arriving toward evening

(6) « Explanations » IV, p. 6.

at a wretched station in Limerick, they were met by the bishop who, it turned out, had just alighted from the same train. On hand to greet them, as a result, were also all the priests of the cathedral. Without delay the bishop invited the missionaries to dinner, but first they were shown into their residence, a house specially rented for them, one of the many that had been left vacant by the heavy emigration. A servant had also been hired to cook and keep house for the missionaries who, needless to say, were highly pleased with these arrangements. Fr. Douglas was named economer, an office in which he was to prove his mettle not only on this mission but on those that followed.

But now it was time for dinner, and Fr. Prost and his companions were led to the bishop's table. Bishop Ryan, elderly and easy-going, was no longer very active, but content to see the good done by others. Politically, he was a Nationalist, thus belonging to the party which was not looked upon favorably by Archbishop Cullen. He belonged, rather, to that group which held that everything that is Irish is good, and that therefore there was no need of reform. The welcoming dinner was frugal enough, with nothing to drink but water. But when it was over, everyone went to the parlor, where all was in readiness — whiskey, hot water, sugar, teaspoons and glasses — so that, according to custom, each could make his punch as strong as he liked. Fr. Prost had already called the attention of the young missionaries to this usage, and pointed out its dangers, and all had promised to refrain from punch-drinking. They kept their promise, and the bishop was not pleased, but he took the abstemiousness of the missionaries in good part and had Spanish wine set before them. It was soon noised abroad that the missionaries did not drink punch, and so, on the missions that followed, they were frequently offered wine.

*St. John's*, the church in which the mission was preached, was the pro-cathedral, since the original see church, dating from medieval times and situated in the old city, was in the possession of the Protestants. Like many churches built immediately after the Emancipation, *St. John's* consisted of a single nave and transept. Behind its raised altar was the sacristy, over the altar, the choir-loft with its organ. Along the walls were the galleries destined, in general, for the well-to-do, on whose contributions the church depended for its support. The very poor usually stood in the rear of the church, the separation being necessary, it would seem, because many of them were insect-ridden. Besides being a parish church, *St. John's*, like *St. Michael's*, was also a mensal church, that is, the bishop drew his support from it as its real pastor, the actual pastor being merely his vicar. In the pro-cathedral, as in every other see church of Ireland except that of Dublin, there was no episcopal throne. The bishop, when in attendance, occupied an ordinary prie-dieu and chair in the sanctuary. Like most churches in Ireland, *St. John's* had its own walled court. In the dingy streets of the vicinity lived the poor, while the Protestants had their residences and villas in the choicer sections of the city.

Next day, a Sunday, the mission opened. This was in accordance with Fr. Prost's custom of always beginning on a Sunday or Feastday, since it was his conviction that the success of a mission depended largely on the opening sermons. According to Irish custom, the principal Mass was at a late hour, so that it was after eleven o'clock when Fr. Prost began preaching, after receiving the stole and blessing from his Lordship who, vested in rochet and mozzetta, assisted in the sanctuary. The mission, explained Fr. Prost, consisted entirely of the preaching of God's Word, nothing new, but only Catholic truth as it had always been preached by the Church. Instruction would be given, but not as if the faithful knew nothing. Truths would be demonstrated, but not as they would be to people who had no faith. And the purpose of all this would be to instill into the hearts and minds of the people a deeper realization of the truths of Faith. In order to lay well the foundation of all virtue, which is the fear of God, a certain preference would be given to the sterner and less palatable truths. The scope of the mission was to restore order to everyone's conscience, to bring everyone into the proper relationship with God, which meant, of course, the bringing of one's actions into accord with the Ten Commandments. The mission, concluded Fr. Prost, was necessary for all, good, bad and indifferent. Though above all a work of grace, it was nonetheless a work of zeal which must be properly understood by the laity and the clergy as well. On future missions, in imitation of St. Alphonsus, he would have short fervorinos preached at all the Masses preceding the formal opening of the mission. His sermon over, Fr. Prost sang High Mass.

Each morning during the mission one of the Fathers gave a meditation on the subject of the evening sermon for that day. In the evenings the rosary was not preached, as in the Tyrol, but merely recited according to the prescription of St. Alphonsus; it was followed by a catechetical instruction. Since none of his companions were prepared for every office of the mission, Fr. Prost had to assign a special task to each. Thus, in the course of time Fr. Van Antwerpen became an excellent catechist, and his untimely death was a great misfortune. After the instruction the faithful were given a breather in the form of a hymn or of benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, after which the service ended with the great sermon. This was the order followed on all Fr. Prost's missions. As yet there was no special mission for the children, an activity which was to assume such great importance later on. Fr. Prost was still feeling his way and, besides, the great apostle of the children had yet to appear.

For the benefit of the poor and the workers, the Fathers heard confessions until late into the night. The confessionals were besieged by penitents. Fr. Prost had the church opened at four each morning, and work began soon after. On this mission and those that followed, the Fathers had six hours of sleep at night. At noon there began a three hour respite, which consisted of lunch, recreation, private devotions and a brief rest. On opening the church at four one morning, the sexton found the confessionals already crowded with penitents. Someone had succeeded in unlocking and pulling

up one of the windows by removing a pane, and so they had gained entrance. In hearing confessions, the Fathers made no distinction between the gentry and the poor, receiving all as they came. Every night they checked their clothing for obnoxious insects, which seemed to take readily to the missionaries, with the exception of Fathers Prost and Petscherine.

Already at this very first mission in Ireland, a cross was erected. One Sunday morning, after a High Mass, sung by Fr. Prost and attended by an immense throng, it was carried in solemn procession and blessed. The preacher of the occasion was Fr. Petscherine, who had special gifts for such a task. All were deeply moved, and the ceremony proved a veritable triumph for the cross. The mission lasted three weeks, Fr. Prost not wishing to burden his hosts any longer. But even then he began thinking of giving the missions at the expense of the Congregation, so as to be independent in the matter of their duration.

At table, Fr. Prost permitted the moderate use of wine. This, to his regret, was later forbidden by higher superiors. The Fathers also ate fowl, and against this, too, there were loud complaints, as being against the Rule. But Fr. Prost pointed out that fowl was far more common in Ireland than other meat, and therefore could not be considered a luxury, as in Naples. It was because the Fathers did not partake of strong drink, and therefore accepted no social invitations during the mission, that they were called « the holy Fathers ». Bishop Ryan remarked: « While they are here, we are quite useless ».

One day during the mission there appeared a gentleman of importance, complete in frock coat, stand-up collar and neckcloth. He turned out to be no more unusual personage than the Father Guardian of the Franciscans, who came to pay his respects to the missionaries. Later he was to make a retreat at Bishop Eton.

At the mouth of the Shannon, a few miles west of Limerick, lay the vast estates of Mr. Monsell, gentleman. A High Churchman together with his wife, he made every effort to bring his Catholic servants to give up the true Faith. Having succeeded in doing so as far as his coachman and housekeeper were concerned, he called together his Catholic sharecroppers and, with the aid of his minister, urged them to join the Anglican church. He tried to do this especially by showing them the absurdity of the invocations of the Litany of Loretto. But as each invocation was announced for discussion, every Catholic present murmured, Pray for us, and so the attempt failed. Later on he himself became a Catholic, and grew as zealous to spread the true Faith as he had been to propagate falsehood. As a Catholic he delighted to sing the Litany of the Blessed Virgin with his Catholic servants in the manorhouse chapel. But he did not succeed in bringing back to the true Faith his coachman and housekeeper. Neither could he persuade his wife, a sister to the Earl of Dunraven, whose estate was nearby, to enter the Church.

Mr. Monsell, after attending the mission on several evenings, finally succeeded in bringing his wife. Fr. Prost was pleased to see her in his

audience, and made a special effort in his sermon, which was on the Passion of Christ, to explain that Catholics look upon Christ as their sole Mediator, notwithstanding their great veneration for the blessed Virgin Mary, and that they place all their hopes in the merits of his sufferings and death. He learned later from a friend of the family, Henry Wilberforce, how little effect his explanations produced. She agreed with his general line of argument, but why hadn't he taken the occasion to exhort the people to read for themselves the Gospel story of Our Lord's Passion? To her this was just another proof that the Bible was being withheld from them. Henry Wilberforce was a son of the celebrated statesman and speaker in Parliament who won fame for his advocacy of freedom of conscience and the abolition of slavery. He had two other sons, one of whom died as Anglican bishop of Oxford, while the other, also for a while a dignitary of the High Church, was an ordained priest in Rome, but died on his journey home for his first Mass. Henry also had been a High Church clergyman, but had given up his Anglican rectorship to enter the Catholic church together with his wife and children. He had thereby lost a rich income, for which, however, he was compensated by inheriting the properties of his brother in western Ireland. Along with his friend William Monsell, he now worked zealously for the Catholic cause.

The Monsells invited the missionaries to visit their estate, and Fr. Prost and his companions found sailing down the Shannon with Mr. Wilberforce and other friends a charming experience. On their arrival, they were greeted cordially by Lady Anne. Each missionary was given his own room and, when time came to go to table, each found at his place a small Protestant bible, thoughtfully left there by the lady of the house.

Since Mr. Monsell had the privilege of reservation of the Blessed Sacrament in the manorhouse chapel, the Fathers, next morning, made their meditation there. Then, with their host acting as sacristan and acolyte, in the presence of Catholic servants and guests, they offered Mass. Mr. Monsell and others received Holy Communion. A meat breakfast was served at eight o'clock, but the Fathers, all of them except Fr. Prost, took only coffee, considering the more sumptuous breakfast a luxury. There now followed an excursion into the country. First they visited the ruins of the abbey, traces of whose ancient beauty were still visible despite Protestant vandalism. Mr. Monsell offered Fr. Prost the edifice for a house of the Institute, but seeing that it would be impossible to make anything of its crumbling walls, Fr. Prost declined. Besides, he explained, as owners of the estate, the Fathers would live on rents whereas, as Redemptorists, they were obliged to live among the faithful and gain their livelihood from them. Mr. Monsell did not press his point, so the party moved on, arriving in the afternoon at the castle of the Earl of Dunraven. Here, unfortunately, no one was at home. Hence, after visiting the estate, the missionaries were treated to a makeshift refectio rather than the full supper they had looked forward to. As a result, the meat breakfast next morning was treated with more respect.

The Dunravens were Protestant. Their eldest son and heir, brother to Lady Anne Monsell, was anxious to enter the Church, but hesitated out of consideration for his wife who was afflicted with heart trouble. It was said that his conversion would cost her life. Nevertheless, he did much for the Catholic population, restored an old church, built a hospital for the Sisters of Mercy, procured teaching Brothers for a school for boys. His wife was tolerant of his views and activities, convinced that one day her son would put an end to all this papism. In due time, however, her husband joined the Church.

That evening at six, there were devotions in the Monsell manorhouse chapel. Dinner was scheduled for seven. At the proper time all gathered in the reception room, a sort of library with books ranged along the wall for the benefit of visitors. When a servant entered to announce that dinner was served, Mr. Monsell requested Fr. Prost, to whom as the most important guest this honor belonged by custom, to escort the lady of the house to table. He was to proffer her his arm, no less. Alleging his complete unfitness for such a distinction, Fr. Prost begged off, and on the following evenings he was, in this respect, no longer treated as the principal guest. A study of such points of etiquette, he observes, might well be included in the curriculum of the Second Novitiate.

Already during this first mission, there was considerable talk of a Redemptorist foundation in Limerick, not only among the laity but also among the clergy. Chief among its advocates was Mr. Monsell. He rented a house for the Fathers at Bank Place, which Fr. Prost fitted out with the help of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd. In its chapel, which according to Monsell's plan was to be open to the laity as well, Bishop Ryan himself said the first Mass. Thus the way was paved for a house in Limerick by Fr. Prost and Mr. Monsell. The latter was childless, and there was danger of his property falling into the hands of relatives whose staunch Protestantism was well known to Fr. Prost. However, after the death of Lady Anne, Monsell married a Belgian Catholic, and hope revived for Catholic offspring. He was several times elected to Parliament, and at one time even held a Cabinet post; in these positions he fully lived up to his Catholic convictions.

The very Sunday that the chapel at Bank Place was dedicated, Limerick became the scene of religious violence. On that day a hundred preachers, sent by a Protestant missionary society, descended upon the Island. They were to preach simultaneously in the principal cities. Ten came to Limerick and took up their posts in various sections of the city. The trouble began when they started speaking against the Pope and the Blessed Virgin Mary. One would have been thrown into the Shannon had not a Catholic priest intervened. The preachers finally had to take refuge in the city hall. The Protestant bishop disclaimed all responsibility for their doings, and the Protestant mayor ordered them to leave the city, and provided them with a police escort to the railway station. To make sure they arrived there safely, the police escort was reinforced by the Catholic clergy. And so the hapless

preachers returned to England with the conviction that Ireland was not yet ripe for Protestantism.

In the intervals between the missions that were now preached in various parts of the country, the Fathers either returned to Liverpool or stayed at the house in Limerick, where Fr. Prost installed a caretaker. Of the three very successful missions preached in DUBLIN, the one at St. Andrew's was significant in that both the clergy and the laity were at first quite opposed to the state instruction. On Fr. Prost's orders, it was given nevertheless, though some of the married did not attend, because of curious ideas on the matter. Its success was so great that when it was over both married and ecclesiastics tried, in vain, to have it repeated.

In the spring of 1852, while Fr. Prost was on vacation in Coblenz, Bishop Ryan of LIMERICK requested a mission in his other mensal parish, *St. Michael's*, insisting on Fr. Prost as superior, so that the latter had to hurry back to Ireland. Again the missionaries were together in the house in Bank Place. In introducing the missionaries at the opening, the vicar lavished such praise on the people, that the Fathers were somewhat perplexed. Was the mission really necessary for such saints? At this mission, each morning at eleven, a special talk was given for the more important folk of the parish.

Later on Fr. Prost returned several times to Limerick in the interests of the new foundation. For this three sites were proposed, the first among the very poor of the slums, the proper place, it was thought, for an Institute founded for the most abandoned souls. But, observed Fr. Prost in turning down the offer, the poor could be quite as well served even if the church were not located in the most squalid section of the city. Then Fr. Douglas was sent to Limerick. He was offered a pleasant location, but at too great a distance from the city, so that Fr. Prost again refused, knowing from Bishop Eton how disadvantageous was such a situation. It turned out that from the very beginning he had been holding out for the spot where the church and convent eventually were built, the heights overlooking the harbor, where the city seemed to be growing, and where as yet there was no church. But docks were then being built along the Shannon, and property values had skyrocketed, so that again he declined to buy. Eventually, the failure of speculation caused the prices to come down, and the negotiations were finally completed and the purchase made in November 1853, by Father Held (7), after which the temporary church and the house were erected by Fr. Hafkenscheld. It remains to the credit of Fr. Prost that this first foundation in Ireland, which was to spread its blessings far and wide, was made possible.

It is true that he wanted the first foundation to be in Dublin, which would have been a better location for a center for country-wide missionary activity. But Archbishop Cullen wanted the Redemptorists in Limerick. He seems to have thought, first of all, that they would help bring about

(7) C. DILGSKRON CSSR, *P. Friedrich von Held*, Wien 1909, 266 ff.; M. DE MEULEMEESTER CSSR, *Le P. Frédéric von Held*, Jette 1911, 198 ff.

a renaissance of religious observance among the relaxed Franciscans and Dominicans. Besides, it was in this part of the Island that his efforts at a general reform were most opposed. Bishop Ryan and a good part of the clergy were Nationalists, hence did not see eye to eye with the nuncio on various matters. The latter was anxious to abolish liturgical abuses, and to return to the strict practice of the Roman rite. And while many bishops were in favor of a more conciliatory policy toward the government, he forbade ecclesiastics to accept positions in the royal colleges. Thus even the hierarchy was divided. And somehow it was hoped that locating the Redemptorists in *Limerick* would help bring about a change of mind.

The bishop of Belfast, at this time, was not well disposed toward religious and toward parish missions. Nevertheless, his vicar general succeeded in getting his permission to have one in his parish at ANTRIM. The mission was quite successful, and it was on this occasion that Fr. Prost saw the spot where St. Patrick had been a slave and where, on the sea to the northeast, he had found his avenue of escape.

Also wishing a mission, the pastor of ENNISKILLEN applied to Fr. Buggenoms, rector of Clapham. Fr. Prost agreed to give the mission but not at the time proposed. Parliamentary elections were about to be held, and Enniskillen was a hotbed of Orangemen and masons who were violently opposed to the Church. There would be spirited political campaigning in the city, and it was no time for a mission. Fr. Prost wrote in this sense to the rector of Clapham, but received a brusque reply to the effect that other provisions would be made for the mission, unless he consented to give it at that time. Despite this, the mission was put off, and given at a time chosen by Fr. Prost.

In Enniskillen, which is picturesquely situated on a lake, the Fathers lived in the house of the curates, while these latter found lodging in private homes for the duration of the mission. The Fathers found the church unusually poor. In lieu of a sacristy there were large cases next to the altar in which were stored the vestments and sacred vessels. The church was also in need of a thorough cleaning, and this the missionaries took upon themselves as their first task. Knowing the poverty of such churches, Fr. Prost usually carried with him a quantity of woodcarved crucifixes, and Murillo Madonnas, besides a ciborium, a monstrance, vestments, chalices, a thurible, purificators and corporals. The pastor and dean of Enniskillen belonged to that number of older priests who had survived from the days before Emancipation, and who still clung to the rudimentary forms of worship in use during the persecution. Having been asked by Fr. Prost to introduce the missionaries to the parish at the formal opening of mission, the pastor appeared in church in a frock coat, cravat and standup collar. Turning to the people from the altar (there was no pulpit), he said it was a great honor indeed to present these reverend gentlemen to the parishioners. He then urged them to give generously in the collections, citing Londonderry as a mission which had netted 200 pounds sterling. Fr. Prost then gave the opening talk, though he felt more like sinking through the floor.

Admission to the church was free during the mission, though otherwise the collectors were always at the door.

The ceremonies of the mission were absolutely new to the people; they had never even witnessed benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, never seen incense rise from a thurible. But now the battered picture over the altar was replaced with a beautiful Madonna, there was a new crucifix, the tabernacle was newly arranged and ornamented. Besides, there was beautiful singing, Fathers Van Antwerpen and Schneider being excellent musicians. Each evening there was solemn benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, and on the day scheduled for the ceremony of the atonement, Fr. Prost arranged to have several hours of solemn exposition and adoration. The response to all this spiritual novelty was magnificent. The Catholic poor streamed out of their huts in such numbers that the Protestants marvelled. Some of them even came to hear what the missionaries would say against them, being unaccustomed to preaching that was not controversial. When they saw the missionaries intent upon converting the Catholics by explaining Catholic doctrine and inculcating purity, temperance and honesty, they not only made no difficulty, but twenty of them presented themselves for instruction, and several more followed their example after the mission was over. This was nothing new, for conversions followed every mission, their number ranging from twelve to fifty. The bishop paid a visit to the parish during the mission and was highly pleased. Accompanied by Fr. Prost, he also visited the residence of the pastor, which was outside the city, and which Fr. Prost found comfortable and well-furnished.

Here also, at Enniskillen, a large mission cross was erected in front of the church, and in its new Catholic school, Fr. Furniss and Fr. Vanderstichele conducted a mission for the children which proved to be an outstanding event. Early recognizing Fr. Furniss' special gifts in ministering to children, Fr. Prost left him complete freedom to develop them, with the result that the pale, sickly, and prematurely aged missionary (he was called an old man while still in his forties) worked marvels with the little ones. His eloquence could hold hundreds, even thousands of them spell-bound, inspiring them with his own devotion and enthusiasm. His power came from a great love for their souls, sheer supernaturalness of purpose, tireless effort, special pedagogical gifts and, doubtless, a kind of charisma. He never engaged in mere fun-making with them, as is sometimes done, but preserved a holy gravity. Like that of the adults, the children's mission at Enniskillen lasted several weeks. When all was over, the missionaries departed in two groups. Fr. Prost and Fr. Furniss set out for Londonderry, but had difficulty getting away. The whole square was filled with children who came to bid farewell to Fr. Furniss. They thronged around the carriage, so that the coachman had to proceed with great caution. The children, both small and grown, followed the carriage for more than an hour.

The next mission was at LONDONDERRY, on the northern end of the Island where a kind of fiord enters deep into the land. To the west lies the old city of Derry, presented by James I, son of Mary Stuart, to the city

of London; hence the name. London's overlordship meant oppression for the Catholics and the creation of a purely Protestant colony. The Catholics took up arms against William of Orange in favor of Catholic King James II, and would have taken the city had not a Protestant pastor fired his coreligionists to such resistance that they succeeded in remaining its masters. Hence it was called the Maiden City by the Protestants, and a special law forbade Catholics to live there; they were relegated beyond the walls. On the east bank of the Meeresarmes stood the new Catholic church, still being built at this time, its inside walls as yet unplastered. Yet the archdeacon of the diocese, who was erecting the edifice, was anxious that his people should have the blessings of the mission. A dignified yet modest priest, he was a survivor of the old days. Hence, though forty years ordained, he had to be taught how to give benediction of the Blessed Sacrament.

His presentation of the missionaries to the people was quite cordial, and the mission was off to a good start. Next day, a Londonderry daily informed its readers of the three papist preachers who had arrived. In a heavyhanded play on words, it remarked that Prost should be put into the Coffin and thrown into the Furniss. Despite such Protestant venom, the missionaries were left in peace. Both by letter and personal contact, Fr. Prost had arranged with the pastor that there would be no admission fee for the exercises of the mission. Fr. Prost noticed, to his chagrin, that money was being collected anyway. Yet the mission was well attended. The bishop of Londonderry himself officiated at the more solemn ceremonies. There was a great demonstration of faith at the blessing of the sick, who were brought in from far and wide, many on stretchers. In memory of the blessings of the mission the archdeacon had a beautiful cross erected in front of the church which, standing on high ground, could be seen from far away.

In Londonderry, below the church in the direction of the sea, was a park in which stood the home of the Mehans, a well-to-do Catholic family. The father had died shortly before the mission, and the estate was occupied by the widowed mother, two sons and a daughter. After the voiding of the law forbidding Catholics to live in the city, the Mehans had been the first to move back. Their entrance had touched off a riot. Greeted with a hail of stones, they took refuge behind the house. But they refused to be dislodged and, in the end, the city paid the damages. After this, other Catholics settled in the city, among them a sisterhood, which built an attractive school.

The Mehans invited the missionaries to their home. Their youngest son was a lawyer, while one of their daughters had entered the Ursulines in the south of Ireland. The other felt called to do the same, but remained at home to care for her aging mother. She died after a few years. The sons had taken over their father's business. The elder had been on the point of marrying when his fiancée decided to enter the convent in Londonderry. She made her profession during the mission. The other son had lost his intended wife in the same way; she had become an Ursuline. The room in which the father died had been changed into a chapel in which it was permitted to offer Holy Mass. Here the missionaries spent quiet days, undi-

sturbed except in the evenings when they were called to dine with the family. Of course, punch was never served to them, nor even in their presence, so that they would retire early to the parlor, and wait until the others came and tea was served. Then Fr. Coffin would take his place at the splendid piano, while Fathers Petscherine and Van Antwerpen would put their considerable vocal talents to good use, to the delight of all present. Once they gave a rousing rendition of the Marseillaise, which greatly impressed Fr. Prost, who had never heard it before. Near the Mehan home stood the fortress-like ruin of the convent of St. Columba, which even commanded the respect, though superstitious, of the Protestants. It was said that if but a stone of it were removed, the whole massive structure would collapse. In the country round about the Fathers saw many hiding places where divine services had been held during the persecutions, and the archdeacon showed them a shed on the waterfront where he himself, before 1829, had celebrated Mass.

Occasionally during the mission, the Fathers offered the Holy Sacrifice in the Sisters' convent. The Sisters had a servant who suffered from a breast ailment. One day, while one of the missionaries was there, she took a cloak that hung in the hallway and reverently crossed herself with it. She was cured, though the cloak did not, as she thought, belong to the missionary, but to one of the local priests.

Fr. Prost now returned to celebrate Christmas with his community at Bishop Eton, while Fathers Petscherine and Furniss stayed on at the Mehans, and Fathers Coffin, Vanderstichele and Van Antwerpen boarded the steamer « Maiden City » bound for Liverpool. During the hours that it took to get to the open sea, the captain became very friendly with them. Afterwards a great storm came up, so that everyone, including the captain, feared for the ship and for their lives. But many prayers were being offered for them, both in Londonderry and Liverpool, and so they arrived safely, though ten hours late. After this experience, it was all the more pleasant to spend Christmas at home. Brother Stephen was an artist, both at the organ and the piano, and the Fathers sang hymns and songs. After the holidays they returned to Ireland and new labors.

Before Christmas, while still at the Mehans, the missionaries had been visited by the bishop of Raphoe-Letterkenny, who wished their services. The original see city had been Raphoe, but when it dwindled to a mere village, the bishop moved to Letterkenny. Fr. Prost had persuaded the bishop to agree that at least the poor should be permitted to attend the mission free of charge. Now, at LETTERKENNY, the bishop gave the Fathers a royal welcome. He placed his whole residence at their disposal, reserving only a parlor for himself. The house was surrounded by a garden through which a path led to the sacristy. Rough-hewn and honest, Dr. Patrick MacGettigan, though a bishop thirty years, still looked the country pastor. His priest-nephew lived with him. Relations with the bishop began somewhat unfavorably when the Fathers declined the welcoming drink of punch, though the situation was helped by the fact that his nephew, too, was an

abstainer. The cathedral, in which the mission was held, was a spacious edifice, galleried, like most Irish churches. One day, in one of the galleries, something happened that irritated the bishop. As he shouted and waved his cane menacingly, frightened people nearby dispersed in all directions.

At the very opening of the mission, a determined Fr. Prost went through the church looking for collectors. He found none and was glad. But the very next day Fathers Furniss and Van Antwerpen found them, instead, at the gate of the churchyard, through which the people had to pass to enter the church. As a result, the poor were climbing over the wall, and already one young girl had injured herself trying to do so. The news reached the city and did no good. Doubtless the bishop believed he was keeping his promise when, in announcing the mission, he offered free attendance tickets to all who applied for them. But for fear of the bishop very few applied for them, and thus once again Fr. Prost saw his efforts come to nought. He determined to fight back.

He announced that next day the great service in honor of the Blessed Sacrament would be held, and placed Fr. Coffin in charge of the preparations, which were to be as elaborate as possible. At such things Fr. Coffin was an expert, with the result that greater magnificence was never seen in the cathedral of Letterkenny. The bishop assisted in full pontificals at a special throne set up in the sanctuary, and the church was filled to overflowing. Solemn exposition was something quite new to the people. Fr. Prost spoke on the duty of gratitude toward Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. He emphasized that giving in the collections meant showing gratitude to Christ, and he appealed to the rich to be especially generous so as to permit the bishop and his priests to allow the poor to attend the services without paying entrance fees at the church gate. There were rich Catholics present, and Fr. Prost's meaning was lost on no one, least of all the bishop. The people were moved, as the rest of the service came off magnificently. Afterward, the bishop went into the sacristy, took off his vestments and hurried home without a word. But after him went Fr. Prost, catching up with him just as he reached the door. « My lord », said Fr. Prost, « I am exhausted, and would greatly appreciate a glass of punch ». He had found the lightning-rod to conduct away the high voltage of the bishop's wrath. « You shall have it », said the bishop, and with that he went into the cellar himself, brought forth the whiskey (10 year old), sugar and hot water, and prepared the punch, which was thereupon enjoyed by both, to the accompaniment of a pleasant conversation which touched on everything but what had just happened in church. After that, the mission was a greater success than ever.

It was successful especially in one respect. Letterkenny was the headquarters of the Ribbonmen, the secret society, so called from the silk ribbon insignia worn by its members, which was banned by the Church. Such was the effect of the sermons that members of the organization came in crowds to abjure their error and receive the Sacraments. Even a freemason came and handed his insignia and diploma to the bishop. At that the old man

wept, saying: «In all my thirty years as bishop I have never seen the like». The leaders of the Ribbonmen sought to win back the converts. But not only did they persevere, but others followed their example after the mission was over. The backbone of the organization was broken. As a result of this mission, also, a son of one of the principal families of Letterkenny entered the Congregation.

Again Fathers Furniss and Vanderstichele worked wonders with the children and young people. Fr. Furniss's missions were attended not only by children but also by adolescents up to twenty years of age.

From Letterkenny the missionaries went to OMAGH, which is situated to the south of Londonderry, and where Fr. Prost had gone to arrange for a mission while still preaching in this latter place. By now Fr. Prost was worried more than ever about the collections, which were a problem more difficult of solution in Ireland than in England. Even though the very poor always had standing room in the rear of the church, almost no one went there, to avoid becoming infested with insects, if for no other reason. Besides, as is always the case, the poor were ashamed to appear as poor and unkempt, and so they stayed away altogether. This meant that sinners for whom the mission was especially intended stayed away because they had to pay to enter the church. The burden was particularly heavy where families were large, since each member had to pay every time he went to church, making the total cost of a week's mission prohibitive.

On the other hand, it was only by means of the collections that the money to pay for the maintenance of the missionaries could be obtained, to say nothing of their travelling expenses. The bishop of Letterkenny, for instance, did not reimburse the Fathers for the cost of their journey. Fr. Prost was forced by these circumstances to avoid long missions, lest priest and people be burdened unduly. Often he brought the mission to a close when much good could yet have been done for souls. This pained him, and he saw no solution to the problem except compliance with the Rule and the prescription of St. Alphonsus that missions should be given at the expense of the Congregation. But how? His own community of Bishop Eton was poor and entirely dependent on Clapham, which itself was far from prosperous. He had been vexed when Hanley Castle and Great Marlow were abandoned for Bishop Eton, which had cost 6000 pounds sterling. How much better it would have been to put that money into a fund for the defrayal of the expenses of the missions! At Letterkenny he had discussed this matter with the others, and all had agreed that the missions among the poor of Ireland would never succeed, unless the Rule requiring that they be given free of charge were strictly observed. For only then could they be prolonged sufficiently to satisfy the needs of all the people. Father Furniss had responded by immediately offering Fr. Prost the sum of 200 pounds sterling from his private patrimony to defray the expenses of missions. Thus, for the time being at least, the problem was solved, and Fr. Prost was overjoyed to be able to start putting his plan into effect.

He began here at Omagh, which was the first mission given at the

expense of the Fathers. Fr. Prost had come to precise agreements with the pastor. In return for the full use of the church and sacristy, he would pay the travel, room and board of the missionaries. The usual church collections would be omitted during the mission. While the poor would keep their customary place in the church, a penny, the smallest coin possible, would be paid for access to the galleries. Besides this, Fr. Prost wished the collection basket to be passed around each evening after the instruction preceding the great sermon. Once a week, on Sundays, the proceeds of this collection would go to the pastor. As it turned out, the latter actually profitted financially by his arrangements with Fr. Prost, for though he gave over his house to the missionaries, he lodged free of charge with a private family for the duration of the mission. His house, however, proved too small, and a man who was a freemason and a Presbyterian, but whose wife and children were Catholic, came forward to offer free lodging for two of the missionaries; for this generosity he received the grace of conversion to the true Faith. Fr. Coffin was appointed economé, and arranged to have the meals prepared and brought in by an innkeeper. But his openhanded generosity in giving tips soon brought a deficit to the coffers of the superior, at which, however, Fr. Prost prudently connived, not wishing to expose his financial system to criticism at so early a date.

At this mission in Omagh, Fr. Petscherine vested in the scapular the father of a young man who drank heavily and roamed the streets at night. All remonstrances failed to bring him to a better mind. He went from bad to worse, and finally was sent to jail for threatening to kill his father. After his release he seemed to have reformed, but one day when he was in church, kneeling directly behind his father, at the very moment of the consecration of the Mass, he plunged a knife into his back. The knife pierced his clothing but was halted by the scapular as if by a shield of steel. As a result of this event, the scapular came to be held in high honor in Omagh. When the young man's case came up for trial, the second mission in Omagh was in progress, and the scapular in question was produced as evidence in court.

Naturally, Father Prost sought to exploit this event for the good of the mission. He spoke of the necessity of avoiding the proximate occasions of sin, and of using the means of salvation. He pointed out particularly the protection which the Blessed Virgin grants through the devout use of the scapular. As a result, many of the faithful were enrolled in the scapular during both missions in Omagh; it was usually the brown scapular of Carmel and only by way of exception the so-called fivefold scapular. The reason was that the missionaries could not obtain or bring along enough of these latter, whereas the people themselves could easily secure the scapular of Carmel. Fr. Prost would explain to the enrollees that by reason of the powers granted to him he commuted the usual scapular obligations into the following: 1) Abstinence from whiskey on Saturday evenings; 2) Avoidance of all public houses and taverns serving whiskey from Saturday evening to Sunday evening; 3) Recitation of the rosary once a week, though not necessarily at one time. These obligations, he made clear, were not binding

under pain of sin, but if observed, they would assure the protection of the blessed Virgin. So effective was this popularization of the scapular by Fr. Prost, that on Saturday and Sunday evenings during the mission, the proprietor of a nearby public house could be seen standing in his doorway reading a newspaper. There was great contentment, too, in the homes, for oftener than before the breadwinner brought home all his weekly earnings, and remained at home with his family. Despite all this good, Fr. Prost was accused to higher superiors of introducing innovations, and without further ado he was forbidden to enroll in the scapular. The prohibition was later lifted, it is true, but by that time Fr. Prost had already returned to Austria, and the good that had been possible remained undone.

It was during the mission at Omagh that a priest of the archdiocese of Armagh felt inspired to enter the Congregation. He had come as a simple visitor. Fr. Prost sent him to Bishop Eton where, under the direction of Fr. Lans he made a retreat to test his vocation, after which he returned to Ireland, arranged his affairs, and then went to Belgium to enter the novitiate. His name was Harbison, and in due time he became an efficient member of the Institute.

There followed now a series of successful missions in the southeastern part of the country. The first was at GOREY, near the eastern shore. The missionaries travelled south from Dublin through a picturesque region, with a central mountain range flanked by rolling hills. A Catholic landed proprietor had enabled the pastor to build a new church at Gorey. Adjoining it was a convent and a school run by the Sisters of Loretto, an institute of English origin which also possessed a convent in Dublin. Here too, the pastor gave over his residence, together with the services of his domestics, to the missionaries. Fr. Douglas was the econome here, while an elderly cook took charge of the house and did all that was needful for the Fathers. When the good people brought in dainties for the missionaries, Fr. Prost declined them, but said that bread and other simple food would be gratefully accepted. The result was that Fr. Douglas had very little to buy in the way of food, and not only was the Omagh deficit made up, but there was a balance after expenses were paid. And this was generally the case on the missions that followed. The pastor visited the Fathers frequently, and insisted on making his own contribution, a Mass stipend of one pound sterling. Some rich Catholics gave even larger stipends. Fr. Prost always made a point of thanking such benefactors at the end of the mission, especially the pastor, if he happened to be of their number.

At Gorey was the district poorhouse, which was not to be neglected during the mission. Here, at public expense, were supported both the committed poor and those who entered of their own free will. The regulations of the establishment were very strict. No one could leave at will. The inmates wore a special dress, and worked the fields and gardens belonging to the institution. Their food was very poor. From time to time religious services were held in the dining hall, and Protestants were strictly forbidden to attend

Catholic services, while Catholics were strictly forbidden to attend those of the Protestants. Here, in the dining hall, the Catholics had their own mission, preached with great love and zeal by Fr. Van Antwerpen, who daily set up his altar to say Mass and hold the services for the inmates. One day during the mission, one of the inmates, a Protestant lad of fourteen, made good his escape by hiding behind a corpulent tailor as he left the establishment. He came running across the fields to the Fathers house as they were at supper, and without further ado asked to be received into the Church. Against the rules, he had eavesdropped during Fr. Van Antwerpen's talks, and become convinced that salvation was not to be found elsewhere than in the Church, and so he had come, he said, to save his soul. Father Van Antwerpen had, indeed, dwelt upon this truth in his sermons. Asked if he had thought of the consequences of his act, the boy merely replied that he wished to save his soul, at all costs. It was evident that the Fathers could not send him back to the institution under the circumstances. So Fr. Van Antwerpen instructed him all that night, and was amazed at his knowledge of the Catholic Faith. Next morning he received him into the Church, and after a hearty breakfast, with not only his hunger satisfied but also his pockets filled with food, the lad returned whence he had come, to face the worst. He was seized at the door, given a caning, and locked up, but bore all patiently, thanking God for the gift of Faith.

Next day, a Saturday, the poorhouse committee held their regular meeting. The young man, at the Fathers' advice, requested a hearing, which could not be refused him. He asked that his name be struck from the list of Protestants and entered on that of the Catholics. Told that he could not become a Catholic until he was fourteen, he informed the committee that he had just turned fourteen, and that his age was no longer a hindrance. He was again locked up and whipped, and in his confinement the extra food the Fathers had given him was put to good use. His captors intended to keep him confined on Sunday that he might not hear Mass, but like many a prisoner before him, he made a rope of his bedsheets, lowered himself into a courtyard whence he succeeded in gaining access to the Catholic service. For this, of course, he was again punished corporally. Finally he became ill and had to be taken to the infirmary, where he received encouragement from a Catholic woman who kept saying to him: « They can whip your body, but they can't whip your soul ». Through the good offices of the Fathers he was eventually taken out of the institution and placed in a Catholic home, where he was cared for, and, in due time, he received his First Holy Communion and was confirmed.

The next mission was at WEXFORD. On his way thither, Fr. Prost stopped off at Enniscorthy to visit the bishop of the diocese. The see had once been at Ferns, famed as the city of the king who, betrayed into a war with the rest of Ireland, called King Henry II of England to his aid. The king came, occupied Ireland, and left it no more. But now Ferns was a poor village. At Enniscorthy, the bishop had just built a new cathedral, and

wished to inaugurate it with a mission. But this was not to be done until after Fr. Prost's return to Austria.

Meanwhile, the bishop himself prepared everything for the mission in Wexford, and then fetched the missionaries. A rich bachelor by the name of Devreux had offered him his residence and his servants for the benefit of the Fathers during their stay in Wexford, while he himself went to live with his brother. Wexford, a city with a charming harbor, just 21 miles south of Gorey, had at this time about 12,000 inhabitants. This meant a seven week mission with seven missionaries. Even so, it was difficult to hear all the confessions, and during the last week only three sermons were preached, the rest of the time being given over to the hearing of confessions.

Besides lodging, Mr. Devreux also wanted to provide the meals for the Fathers. But this Father Prost declined, on the plea that, in his charity, Mr. Devreux would doubtless treat the Fathers too well, whereas it behooved them as missionaries to avoid luxuries. They were to be satisfied with the essentials, and live like people of the middle class, no better. Besides, argued Fr. Prost, the mission must be prolonged until all consciences are satisfied, and since its exact length could not be foreseen, he did not wish to risk becoming a burden to Mr. Devreux, nor to be tempted to bring the mission to a close prematurely in order not to become one. However, concluded Fr. Prost, the Fathers would be happy to accept any other charity at any time from Mr. Devreux. Mr. Devreux was pleased with this line of argument and several times gave the Fathers money. The news of their austerity was quickly noised abroad, and they won the esteem and confidence of all. There was a house-chapel in the Devreux mansion, hence the Fathers lived as at home. Monday afternoons were left free for excursions or boat rides.

The church in Wexford — for there was but one — belonged to the Franciscans, but being a parish church, its pastor and curates were secular priests. The Franciscans had become lax with regard to wearing the religious habit, and had women servants in their monasteries. Two new churches were in the process of erection, but it would be some time before they could be used. The faithful, meanwhile, could attend to their religious duties in various chapels, besides the parish church. There were two Sisters' convents, a school and a hospital with chapels open to all. There was, besides, the chapel of the bishop's college, on the heights overlooking the city and harbor. At the moment the bishop was hard put to save this institution from the hands of the sheriff, because of debts accumulated by its rector, who had a great flair for building, but little financial acumen. It was one of the professors of this college who kept trying, in vain, to get Fr. Prost to admit that the Irish were the best Catholics in the world.

It became evident, especially at Wexford, that by now Fr. Van Antwerpen had become an accomplished catechist. Not only Fr. Prost thought highly of him, but he was also esteemed by the secular priests. Those who heard him would say: Anyone can thump the pulpit and talk sternly, but such instructions as Father gives demand not only talent but thorough

theological preparation. His presentation of a subject was lively as well as logical, and marked by a sincerity and unction that pleased and instructed all. It was therefore a heavy blow to the missions when he died, at the age of thirty-three. Fr. Prost, aware that his strength was failing, had sent him back to Bishop Eton for a rest. While there he fell a victim to typhoid fever. His death, incidentally, was the occasion of obtaining from the government permission for a mortuary crypt at Bishop Eton, at a cost of much time and effort on the part of energetic Fr. Lans, minister of the house.

The Wexford mission proved to be Fr. Prost's greatest in Ireland. Twenty years later, when another mission was being held there, the missionaries and the pastor wrote to him in Austria, assuring him that he was still remembered. The close was a grandiose affair. Invited to officiate at the procession and give the final benediction was Fr. Held, who had come to Limerick as Visitor. Fr. Prost, of course, preached the closing sermon. The throng was so great that, though the church seated five thousand, the ceremony had to be held in the open. Everybody from the surrounding country was there. Not only was the church square, which held 30,000, filled to overflowing, but people were everywhere, on the roofs, at the windows of the surrounding houses, while the trees of the Square swarmed with boys and young men. - Rain had been threatening and, just before the beginning, large drops started to fall. Fr. Prost immediately commanded saintly Fr. Douglas to pray for good weather, which he did, and his prayer was heard.

After it was all over, the pastor invited the missionaries to tea. On missions, as has been noted, Fr. Prost never accepted such invitations; as he put it, he did not wish to be seen at the table of the rich while preaching to the poor. Only for bishops would he make an exception. But now the mission was over and, after all, there was question only of tea, so he consented. To his great surprise and chagrin, there was a large number of guests, and many other things besides tea, which only strengthened him in his resolve never again to accept such invitations.

The departure of the missionaries was a triumph. People accompanied the carriage of the Fathers returning to Liverpool for many miles, while those going to Limerick were similarly escorted for a good distance. Fathers Held and Prost remained behind for a few hours to visit the bishop who was confirming in the vicinity. While they were at table after their return to the city, a large crowd assembled in front of the house, so they tried to depart through the back door, but found the rear just as crowded. In the endless leavetaking, they could hardly reach their carriage, and were fairly carried there. The carriage then moved forward at a snail's pace. Shops were closed along the street as if for a feast, while windows were crowded with people fluttering kerchiefs, waving, greeting, throwing flowers. The children from the orphan asylum were ranged along the road waving banners at the outskirts of the city. Crowds milled about the carriage for several miles, but finally heeded Fr. Prost's bidding and turned back, after which the carriage proceeded more rapidly. Looking back, however, the Fathers were astonished

to see themselves followed by an escort of some eighty vehicles, in which, as it turned out, rode the principal Catholics of the city, with the mayor at their head. The latter, having married out of the Church, had not been very favorable to the missionaries at first, but had finally been won over and converted. After about ten miles, Fr. Prost halted his carriage, and he and Fr. Held alighted. The column came to stop and the missionaries were soon surrounded. Fr. Prost expressed his deep appreciation for such great affection and respect, and then all knelt to receive his blessing. The mayor knelt, too, and wept. Even after this, several young men were not to be withheld from accompanying the Fathers to the nearest church, to offer a parting prayer for them there. Fr. Held confided to his companion that he had never experienced the like of this. So they proceeded on to Newross, where they arranged a mission for the near future, and then via Waterford to Limerick and the house in Bank Place. Fr. Prost immediately left for Cork, to arrange with Bishop Delany the mission to be held in his cathedral.

Shortly afterwards we find him and his companions preaching at STRABANE, a town between Omagh and Londonderry. Here the Fathers wept on hearing the news of Fr. Van Antwerpen's death. Here, also, Fr. Douglas labored for the last time as a missionary before being called to a new post in Rome.

From the experience of all these missions (and the others which he gave in various places in the North and South but does not mention), Fr. Prost had by now evolved a mission system peculiarly his own. The missions were given at the expense of the missionaries, and this could not but win favor, especially with the clergy. The avoidance of social visiting during a mission edified the people. Everywhere there was talk of the missionaries' unselfish zeal, the simplicity of their food and lodging, their spirit of sacrifice, and thus all, both priests and people, were drawn to them. Fr. Prost also proved the soundness of his financial system. The people provided the Fathers with so much food and money, that there was always a balance on the mission books. These books were kept exclusively by Fr. Prost himself, so that there was no idle talk about income or expenses, a thing which he could not endure. Everyone knew, of course, that there was no income except from purely free-will offerings, in the galleries, the collections, the poorboxes. Yet it was just through these free-will offerings that he succeeded in making attendance at the mission possible for the poor and for large families. Under existing conditions in Ireland, this was a great boon.

The missionaries were thus rendered completely independent with regard to the decision, how long the mission was to last; they could, without burdening anybody, prolong it until all consciences were at peace and everyone was satisfied. Thus all nervous haste was excluded from the work of the missionaries. Sermons were given only in the morning and evening, so that the people's workday was not interfered with, and everyone

could make the mission if he wished to. Besides, with this system, fewer missionaries were needed, and thus a saving of forces was effected. All of this was in exact accord with what St. Alphonsus had set down as essential to the success of a mission.

Fr. Prost's method, thus based on the ideas of the holy Founder, could not but produce results. But now, with the mission movement at its zenith in Ireland, there was to come the inevitable decline.

At the nominations of December 1853, Fr. Bernard Hafkenscheid, until then superior of the North American Vice Province, was named rector of Limerick. Since Limerick was destined to become the center of Redemptorist labors in Ireland, he also became mission superior. In fact, he took over Fr. Prost's place completely, being also appointed mission superior of England and Scotland. Fr. Bernard, as he was generally called, arrived at Clapham in January 1854, and in Liverpool shortly afterward. It was now up to Fr. Prost to introduce him to Ireland, to present him to the Irish bishops. This he did. He went with him everywhere, everywhere introducing him as the Roman doctor, the great missionary of Belgium and Holland. They were together at the mission in NEWROSS. Newross was somewhat smaller than Wexford, lying not on the sea but inland. The mission here was the last to be given according to Fr. Prost's system. Out of deference to Fr. Bernard, he did not act as superior, but got his blessings from him, as did, at his request, all the other Fathers. Fr. Bernard did not preach, and when the parishoners sent in a deputation to request him to do so, he refused, alleging insufficient knowledge of the language, although, as the members of the deputation observed, he spoke well enough in English to them. Father Prost was therefore compelled to preach all the great sermons, and as he did so, he had the impression that he was being watched and put to the test.

Not the least of the blessings wrought by the Newross mission was the complete disappearance of ill will which had existed among some of the people toward the pastor. A curate who had a considerable following among the parishoners for his energy and enthusiasm, had been removed by the bishop because of differences of viewpoint and temperament with the pastor, and as a result a number of his admirers had stopped going to Mass. They came back during the mission, and the dissension was healed.

An unusual conversion occurred during the mission. The daughter of one of the principal Protestant families of Newross, ill for some time, had gone to the seashore with a Catholic nurse, to recover her health. Learning about the Catholic faith from her companion, she conceived a special love and devotion toward the blessed Virgin Mary. It was particularly from the singing of hymns in honor of Our Lady that she drew comfort and delight, and in the end she determined to enter the Church. Her plan met with violent opposition from her parents. She was confined to her home, and her Catholic nurse was dismissed. But now she became ill in earnest, and her Catholic friend, learning of it, visited her secretly, with the help of the

sick girl's sister. Although comforted by the affection and charity of her friend, she became greatly depressed at the thought of dying without Baptism. So the Catholic nurse instructed her as best she could, received her profession of faith, taught her to say the necessary prayers, and then baptised her, none too quickly, as it happened. For she had scarcely made a hasty exit from the house, when the sick girl died, with the final invocations of Our Lady's litany on her lips, for such had been her last prayer. Then, while she was being given a splendid Protestant funeral, Requiem Mass was offered for her in the Catholic church.

Enthusiasm ran high during the mission, and both pastor and people wanted it to last as long as had that of Wexford. But Fr. Hafkenscheid took advantage of the authority relinquished to him by Fr. Prost to close the mission. And so it was done, to the great chagrin and disappointment of Fr. Prost, the pastor, and the people.

The next missions took place in CORK, a city with a beautiful harbor and some 120,000 inhabitants. It was the see city of both the Catholic and the Protestant bishop. The Catholics were divided into four large parishes. There were in Cork Capuchins and Dominicans who, like other religious of the day, had become somewhat relaxed. There were also two orders of teaching Brothers; one conducted a school which received support from the government, while the other, which was of stricter observance and which refused government support, also ran flourishing schools.

The first mission was held *in the cathedral*. Fr. Bernard took complete charge, and proceeded to change some of the arrangements that Fr. Prost had made. The missionaries were maintained at the expense of the bishop and of the local priests. The wine, whose rare use under Fr. Prost had been forbidden by higher superiors, re-appeared on the missionaries' table. And several other customs also re-appeared which Father Prost had banned; especially high-pressure money collecting and the undue shortening of missions. Fr. Bernard needed money to build the church and house in Limerick, and Fr. Reyners, Rector of Clapham and consultor to the Provincial Superior, Fr. Swinkels, burdened as he was with the maintenance of both the Liverpool and London houses, was in full accord with his ideas. So Fr. Prost's disagreement counted for nothing, and there was nothing left to him but to follow his principle of obeying superiors wordlessly rather than trying to talk them into something. He wanted, above all, to avoid conflict with Fr. Bernard, and so, at the latter's request, on the two missions in Cork he exercised no authority except that of rector over the missionaries from his own community of Bishop Eton. Nevertheless, conflict did develop between them.

When Fr. Prost took over the defrayal of the mission expenses, he had asked and received permission from Fr. Held that not only the missionaries of his own community, but those of the Clapham community as well, should say Mass for his intention. But now, with Fr. Bernard, all this was water over the mill, and so Fr. Prost's subjects asked him for whose intention

they were to say Mass. He told them to do as they had done until then, unless Fr. Bernard ordered otherwise. For this he was called to account, in Fr. Bernard's presence, by Fr. Reyners, who had come over to Cork; he was accused of forbidding his subjects to say Mass for the intentions of the mission superior. Fr. Prost was indignant, and matters were not helped when he learned that Fr. Bernard, without consulting him, had written to Fr. Lans, the minister at Bishop Eton, requesting another missionary for the work in Cork. This led to a passage at arms between Fr. Prost and Fr. Bernard, and some bitter words for which Fr. Prost, at Fr. Reyner's demand, humbly apologized to the mission superior. Thus the conflict ended, at least to all appearances.

The cathedral provided exceptional opportunities for Fr. Bernard's not indifferent missionary talents: a bishop, numerous priests, an excellent choir, although his need for such aids was greatly reduced by the quality of his sermons, which was quite above the average. In his preaching, also, the new mission superior differed greatly from Fr. Prost. He depended much upon the arousing of the emotions of his hearers, something that was always of secondary importance with Fr. Prost, who sought above all to influence the understanding through instruction and dispassionate presentation, so that good resolutions might grow out of a clearer perception of the truth. According to Fr. Prost, Fr. Bernard's type of preaching succeeded, indeed, in giving the mission a kind of external splendor, but the question was whether it operated in depth, whether, after the excitement subsided, there was any real fruit. He says of Fr. Bernard: « He wanted to win credit for the missions, but, in my opinion, such credit is ephemeral. The best credit comes from the superior quality of the work done; this is the credit which endures » (8).

The cathedral of Cork, though accommodating 7000, proved too small during the mission. Some of the people who could not get in listened to the sermons from ladders placed by the open windows. Gas-lighted and guarded by special watchmen, the church remained open at night, because penitents refused to leave, lest they lose their places at the confessionals. Old railway cars were rolled into the square to serve as confessionals, and, with the missionaries, forty priests heard confessions. A large mission cross, specially donated out of the inheritance of Daniel O'Connell, was erected.

More than once, but especially at the end of his sermon on the duties of parents toward their children, and again at the close of the mission when he spoke of perseverance, Fr. Bernard moved his audience to tears, and even loud sobs. An eye-witness relates: « I was present at the close of the mission in Cork. It was attended by the bishop and many ecclesiastics, who completely filled the choir. In order to make more room in the church, all benches and seats had been removed, and yet so great was the crowd that no one could move without causing a wave in the sea of faces. Ladders and scaffolds at the outside of the open windows were thronged with

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(8) « Diary » III, p. 23.

those who could not enter. No sooner had Fr. Bernard begun preaching than loud cries of assent began interrupting his sermon, so that thrice he appealed to his audience to remain calm. When, however, toward the end of his sermon and in the midst of its most moving part, he suddenly fell silent, standing there in the pulpit for some moments with his hands raised toward heaven as if in ecstasy, the effect was indescribable, as nothing could be heard but the sobs and cries of the people; even the bishop and the priests wept » (9).

The farewell to the missionaries was also touching, like that at Wexford had been. The mission had lasted only twenty-four days. Under Fr. Prost it would have lasted twice as long.

The second mission in Cork, which was preached at *St. John's* where the vicar general was pastor, was memorable among other things for the panic caused in the church one day when some one cried: «Fire»! The curate, who had been giving benediction at the moment, was already in the pulpit trying to calm the people when Fr. Prost came hurrying into the church, intent on doing the same. But neither his voice nor that of the curate was heard in the tumult. Finally Fr. Prost succeeded in getting the organist to start playing, and after the music he began praying with the people, and calm returned little by little. At this, Father Bernard suddenly appeared and summoned Fr. Prost to some one who was dying. But as it happened, no one was dying, only those who had fainted were lying in front of the church, some of whom, along with those who suffered sprains and bruises, were taken to the hospital. One woman, writhing with pain, was brought into the sacristy. Another was searching frantically for her two small sons, who later turned up in the hospital. Luckily there were no deaths, and no one suffered serious injury. What had happened was that some one had shouted on seeing a bit of mortar fall from a ceiling; he thought the choir-loft was collapsing. Or the whole episode may have been caused by some practical jokester. Something similar had happened in the cathedral during the women's instruction, but here, too, no great damage had been done.

During each of the missions in Cork, Father Furniss, with the assistance of Father Vanderstichele, preached to the children and youth of the parish in the church of the Capuchins. Here, as elsewhere, he succeeded so well, that his work proved a real highlight of the whole missionary venture of the Fathers. Great credit is due to Fr. Prost for putting Fr. Furniss's talents on the lampstand, and allowing them free development. His successor as rector, Fr. Lans, was far from imitating him; in fact, he wished to do away the children's missions altogether. But Father Prost insisted that this was the special vocation of Fr. Furniss, and the end of this would mean the end of him, and so the children's missions were allowed to continue. Fr. Bernard also was an opponent of Fr. Furniss's work, and even declared

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(9) G. SCHEPERS CSSR, *Der hochw. P. Bernard Hafkenschaid*, Regensburg 1884, 246 ff.; in this biography nothing is said of the misunderstandings between Fr. Prost and Fr. Hafkenschaid.

so at the General Chapter, where he deprecated such preaching to children as a mission within a mission. But says Fr. Prost: « I would have rebutted that it was just what St. Alphonsus prescribed ». The event proved Fr. Prost right, and Fr. Furniss's opponents wrong, for the greatest successes of the missioner of the children were still to come (10).

The mission in Cork was Fr. Prost's last in Ireland. Fr. Bernard's way of doing things on the missions aroused more and more ill will among the clergy and the people. Once he sent Fr. Petscherine to Wexford (as the latter himself related to Fr. Prost) on a errand of begging. Fr. Petscherine was very popular in Wexford, particularly in the home of Mr. Devreux, a man widely known for his benefactions. However, he refused to give a donation toward the building of the church and house in Limerick. Said he: « Since you have no more money to pay for the missions, I have none to give for your new foundation » (11). After the General Chapter of 1855, Fr. Bernard did not return to Ireland, where he had worked just a year; he went home to Holland.

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Besides the missions, Father Prost did *other apostolic work* in Ireland.

He preached a retreat to the Sisters of Mercy in Barklay St., Dublin. The Sisters of Mercy were an institute of native origin, founded in 1830. They chose the name Sisters of Mercy to distinguish them from the Sisters of Charity founded by St. Vincent de Paul. Besides the retreat in the Barklay St. convent, he preached another in Dublin to the Sisters and their charges. During the missions in Cork, Fr. Prost also preached to the Sisters of Mercy there, whose convent was just being built. And he became a familiar figure at the convent of the Ursulines of that city. It seems these latter could never hear him enough, for at times, with the permission of the bishop, he even attended and enlivened their recreation.

Father Prost preached and heard confessions quite frequently at the convent of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd in Limerick, an institution which at that time was still in a rudimentary stage, consisting of a mere wooden barracks and a barn which had been converted into a church. There were some eighty Magdalens, and it was through their manual labor and the benefactions of friends that the Sisters supported themselves. In their gratitude to Fr. Prost, the Sisters did many favors for the missioners when they were in Limerick. The superior was the daughter of Bavarian General Balligand. Though kind, she was energetic and, indeed, there was something military about her, so that in time the institution flourished under her direction. In her youth she had studied classical languages, and spoke French, Italian and English besides her native German.

It was while preaching a retreat to school Sisters and their pupils in Limerick that Fr. Prost met Dr. Cahill, the internationally famous lecturer

(10) Concerning Fr. Furniss, see M. DE MEULEMEESTER CSSR, *Bibliographie générale des écrivains rédemptoristes* II, Louvain 1935, 150 ff.

(11) « Diary » III, p. 27.

on the natural sciences. Besides being famous as a scholar, Dr. Cahill was Catholic to the core, and would use his lectures to inculcate and defend Catholic teaching, which he did so skilfully, that his lectures often led to conversions. He was taken ill in Limerick, and the bishop asked none other than Fr. Prost to take his place in the lecture-hall. It was a hazardous undertaking, but Fr. Prost consented, not without some apprehension, which increased the nearer the hour approached when, in the hall of the Sisters' school which seated about 400, he would take his stand not only before the pupils but the elite of Limerick as well.

When the hour came, he began in the usual way of such occasions, regretting the illness of the learned and justly popular Dr. Cahill, and the consequent disappointment of the audience, protesting his inability, etc. Then, said he, that they might not go away emptyhanded, he would say a few words, after the manner of a simple missionary, on the subject proposed. What is optics? he asked. Why, it is the science of seeing. But what we need most is the spiritual vision of faith and its meaning for life. What is acoustics? The science of hearing. But it is above all the Church that must be heard, the most essential hearing is the hearing of God's Word, preserved intact and infallibly explained by the Church. Chemistry, he continued, analyzes things, separates them into their component parts, examines them critically in an effort to discover new forces. So one should analyze one's conscience, to know it the better and thus be able to build up a virtuous life, through ever greater insight and strength. Astronomy teaches the movements of the stars and the laws governing them. But the stars of the spiritual heavens are the lives of Christ and of the Saints, which shine with varying splendor and power. We should study well the course of these stars, and search deeply into the laws of holy living. He concluded with an allusion to electricity, showing how, through meditation on the perfections of God and on Christ's Passion, the soul becomes inflamed, so to speak, electrified, by God's love. After this scientific mission sermon, everyone was serious enough and went away thoughtfully, and even the bishop was moved by the sheer rhetorical power of it. Afterward, however, the lecture became the talk of the town, and everywhere one heard tell of the optics, the acoustics, the astronomy and electricity of Fr. Prost. Informed of it, Dr. Cahill too was amused, and pleased that he had been so well replaced.

In Ireland at this time, the secular clergy were obliged to attend a common retreat every two years. One year the retreat would be for the pastors, the next, for the curates. When the bishop of Ferns-Enniscorthy invited Fr. Prost to preach the retreat, it was the pastors' turn. It was an invitation he could hardly refuse, though at this time he was in a state of near collapse from sheer physical exhaustion. Besides, he had never preached a priests' retreat in English, although he had brought with him from Bishop Eton the manuscript of one he had preached in German at Stift-Neustift in the Tyrol. But of this there was no time now to make a translation. Hence he feared greatly that he would fail, though, as he

says, he was ready to accept such a humiliation from the Lord. As he departed for Gorey, where he planned to spend the night, a certain mental numbness came over him. He received a royal welcome from the pastor of Gorey, where he had preached the great mission, and promised to say a few words at the eight o'clock Mass the next day, which was Sunday. But his mental numbness increased, and when the time came to preach he shocked both the pastor and the people, who recognized him immediately, by being unable to say a word. After breakfast he set out with the pastor for the bishop's college at Wexford, where the retreat was to be held. Here he received a cordial welcome from the bishop, who was to be one of his listeners, the vicar general, and the professors of the college. That night, Father Prost slept very little.

But next morning when the week-long exercises began with the Veni Creator and Ave to Our Lady, his mind suddenly became clear again. He preached the retreat without difficulty, and it proved a success, particularly the exercise of the way of the Cross, which some advised him against but which he never omitted, knowing from his experience of the missions how effective it was. When the priests came to thank him after it was all over, the vicar general was their spokesman. At the end he had a question to ask; why had not St. Alphonsus, of whom all present were great admirers, been quoted more often during the retreat? The Jesuits, who had given all the retreats until then, were continually quoting St. Ignatius. Fr. Prost replied that, since the whole retreat was, in fact, Alphonsian, the quotations would have been so frequent as to be tiresome. That ended the matter.

During a mission given by Fr. Bernard near Galway, to the north of Limerick, Fr. Prost preached a priest's retreat in nearby Tuam, whose archbishop was the famous John MacHale, called the Lion of Ireland, a man of extraordinary force in speech and action. An excellent Greek and Hebrew scholar with a reading knowledge of German and wide interests, including Catholic journalism, he was the first to defy the Bill of Titles, continuing to sign himself archbishop after its enactment. Fr. Prost was somewhat overawed by this man, but this feeling disappeared when the archbishop greeted and conversed with him with the gentle kindness and camaraderie of a country pastor. Though English was spoken in Tuam, Gaelic was the language of the surrounding country, which was one of the poorest sections of Ireland. The students of the cathedral college were given a vacation to provide lodging for the priests during the retreat. In a park across from the archbishop's house was the residence of the Anglican bishop, beside which the Protestant church, with its woebegone tower, seemed even smaller than it really was. People said it was never more than a quarter filled. But dwarfing everything in the vicinity was the imposing cathedral of Archbishop MacHale, which he himself had built, importing from Rome its high altar, which was a replica of the high altar of St. Cecilia's Basilica.

Although the Stations of the Way of the Cross had been erected, this devotion was scarcely ever held in the cathedral. So that during the retreat, with the edifice, except for one Mass in the morning, closed to the public,

it was something of a novelty when Fr. Prost read out the prayers of St. Alphonsus as he made his way from Station to Station. The archbishop was so impressed that he easily gave permission to Fr. Prost to repeat the exercise in a grand way, with the faithful participating. So, having chosen a priest with a clear voice to read the prayers, Fr. Prost arranged the procession. A senior ecclesiastic carried the cross, flanked by two torch-bearers. Then, two by two, came the priests, followed by the archbishop vested in rochet and mozzetta, with his chaplains. The effect of the priests thus making the Stations processionally and singing the Stabat Mater in the crowded cathedral was such that the archbishop, that very night, translated the hymn into Gaelic so that the people could participate more fully; afterward he had it printed and distributed to the faithful, for, on that day, the simple devotion of the Way of Cross had been transformed into a great witness to the Faith.

While in Tuam, besides two sermons from the pulpit of the cathedral, Fr. Prost also preached a retreat to a community of Sisters.

Fr. Prost returned once again to Limerick when Fr. Bernard invited him to preach a Holy Souls Octave. On this his last visit, he marvelled at the energy of the building contractors, for the new house and church were rising quickly alongside the temporary structures.

And with that his activities came to an end in Ireland, and he returned at last to his native Austria, leaving behind him in the Isle of Saints a record, to say the least, of remarkable achievement, for which he deserves to be remembered.