Catholicism in Chester

ST. WERBURGH'S

ST. FRANCIS'S

A Double Centenary

1875-1975

CATHOLICISM IN CHESTER

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Acknowledgements

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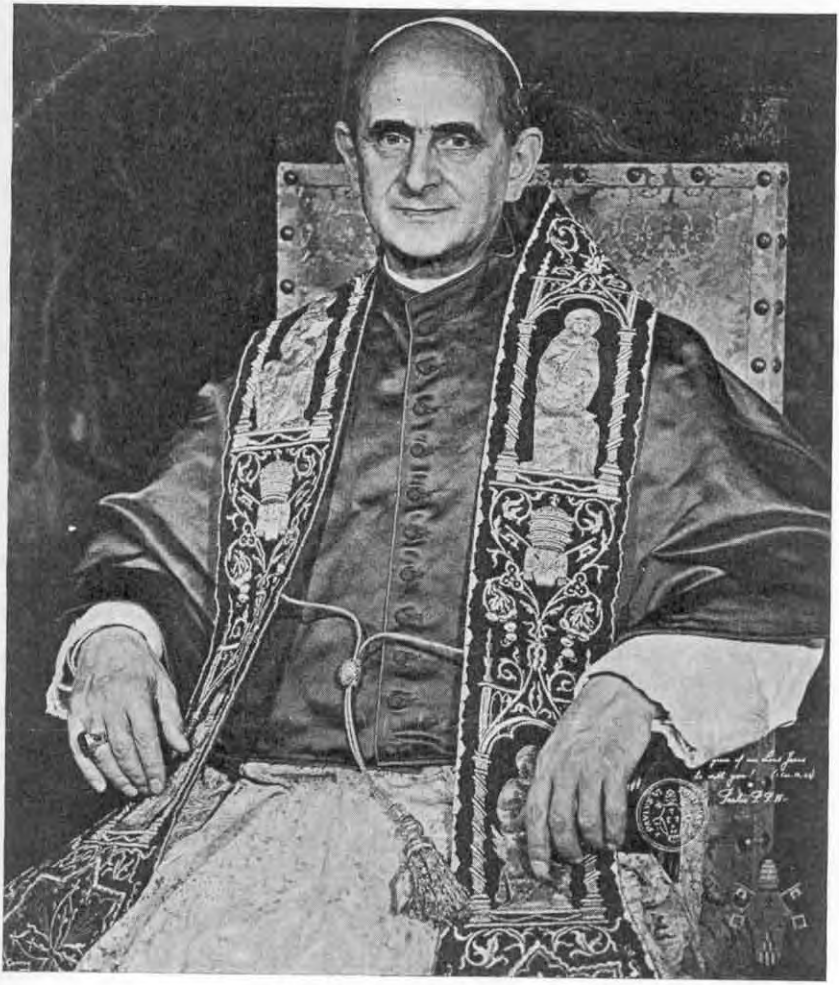
MARY WINEFRIDE STURMAN, O.S.U.

Christ's College, Liverpool.
February, 1975.



His Holiness, Pope Paul VI

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Right Rev. W. E. Grasar, Bishop of Shrewsbury

Right Rev. J. Brewer, Auxiliary Bishop of Shrewsbury

Preface

Instead of the inevitably short and amateur souvenir we had planned for this Centenary occasion, we have this worthwhile and professional record. For this we are indebted to Sister Mary Winefride Sturman, O.S.U., M.A., PH.D. Its long bibliography gives some idea of the amount of time and skilled research she has expended on its production. We are—as indeed will be many who will come after us—truly grateful to her.

It is worth recording that this year is also the 11th centenary of the transferring of the mortal remains of St. Werburgh from Hanbury in Staffordshire, to Chester. That event resulted in attracting here the numerous pilgrims, the various communities of friars, and especially the Benedictines, whose Abbey Church which is now the Anglican Cathedral, enshrined her relics behind their High Altar. Until the Reformation, that Abbey Church was known as St. Werburgh's. She was also Patroness of the city. Indeed, a direct sequel to her being brought here was the development of the medieval city.

It will be clear from these pages that things Catholic really began to happen again in Chester when the famines of the last century in Ireland forced so many to emigrate. The industrial development of this country at that time attracted its quota of them. The Penal Laws had not long been repealed in Ireland, so they were uneducated, unskilled, and many of them could speak only Gaelic. Jobs were scarce, very impermanent, and the wages pitiful. Moreover, the bigotry against both their Faith and nation was rampant here, so that the struggle to survive, let alone keep the Faith, was an unending challenge. Indeed, their condition was little better than what obtains in so much of the "Third World" today. Qualities can really be said to exist only when they have been put to the test, and it is surely an enormous tribute to their characters, and worth recording, that from such poverty and adverse conditions, they gave so much and so regularly not merely for churches of the elegance of St. Francis's and St. Werburgh's, but also for schools and presbyteries, and enough to staff and maintain them.

The majority of the Catholics in Chester today are their descendants, and so much of the vitality of their loyalties is due directly to what they have inherited. We thank God that the Faith of their Fathers is living still, and sincerely hope and pray that a perusal of this book will give it a new stimulus.

F. MURPHY, P.P.
S. DENTON, O.F.M., Cap.

INTRODUCTION

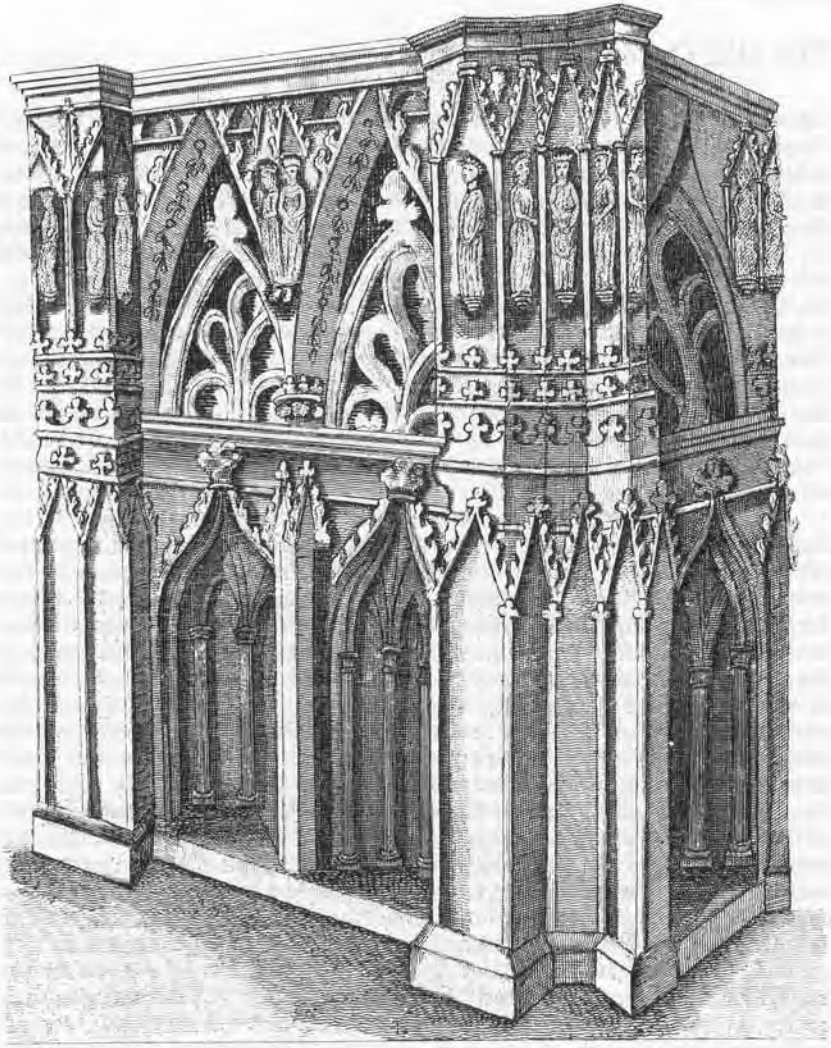
The Old Order passes away

Chester, like all medieval towns, was well provided for spiritually.[1] Though it could not boast of possessing as many parish churches as some other towns, it had nine for a population of some three thousand souls. St. Oswald's, the parish church attached to St. Werburgh's Abbey, and St. John's, lying outside the city walls, were the earliest and largest. Indeed, for a time during the eleventh century, St. John's had ranked as a Cathedral for the diocese of Lichfield. St. Peter's is mentioned in Domesday Book, while the six others, St. Mary's on the Hill, the Holy and Undivided Trinity, St. Michael's, St. Bridget's and St. Olave's, all built by the Norman Earl of Chester and his barons, date back to the twelfth century. In addition, three Orders of Friars had their churches and convents in the city: the Franciscans or Grey Friars, and the Dominicans or Black Friars near the port in the Watergate area, and the Carmelites or White Friars. Today, only the street names recall the site of their fine churches, all of which were destroyed after the dissolution of the monasteries.

The religious and economic life of the town was dominated by the richly endowed Benedictine Abbey of St. Werburgh's. This had begun its life in Anglo-Saxon times, when a small group of canons guarded the relics of St. Werburgh, but under the patronage of the powerful Hugh Lupus, Norman Earl of Chester, it had been converted into a Benedictine monastery by no less a person than St. Anselm. By the fifteenth century, the great monastic church and the conventual buildings grouped around it, which occupied a large area within the city walls, must have been the most imposing buildings in Chester. At the same time, its considerable property and privileges constituted a perpetual challenge to the independence and wealth of the citizens. In earlier times, however, it had been the domination of the Earl of Chester which had threatened the freedom of the townsfolk, and when once this was thrown off they did not transfer their resentment to the Abbey. The generous hospitality of the monks and their patronage of the Mystery Plays helped to keep their relations tolerably friendly, though tensions and economic rivalry did exist.

In addition to the churches, there were a number of chapels in and around the town: St. Chad's on the site of the present Royal Infirmary, St. Nicholas at the north end of St. Nicholas Street, and St. Thomas Becket outside the Northgate. The nuns of St. Mary's Priory had a chapel in Edgar's Field south of the river, and the Cistercians of Basingwerk in North Wales had one in Overleigh. There was the chapel of St. James in Handbridge, and another in Little Parson's Lane, while the Guild of St. Anne had one in St. John's Churchyard.

It has been calculated that by the end of the fourteenth century the number of clergy serving all these churches and chapels amounted to about thirty five. The monks of St. Werburgh's were by then reduced from the forty of the previous century to twenty, and there were between



Shrine of St. Werburgh in Chester Cathedral—as published in *The Gentleman's Magazine* of 1793

thirty and forty friars, though much of their time was spent evangelising the surrounding countryside, rather than working in Chester itself.

It seems fair to say that the Church in Chester produced no outstanding priests in the period immediately preceding the Reformation. Though it was common by then for all clergy to receive some University education, it was mainly the canons of St. John's who had Degrees, and in Law rather than in Theology. They, however, were frequently non-resident, and it was the ordinary parish priests who played the most significant part in moulding the spiritual and religious life of the people. Many of them came from Chester itself, as their surnames show, though some were from landed families in Cheshire. The smaller merchant families, tradesmen and craftsmen are all represented among their number. As vicars of the parish churches, their living standards were those of the parishioners among whom they lived and worked. The churches they served were not wealthy, St. Mary's being the richest with an annual income of £52. Consequently, their stipends were worth no more than £5 a year, lower than the £6 to £7 of the average artisan. There is very little evidence among them of pluralism or absenteeism, the most frequent abuses in the Church of the later Middle Ages. The majority of them lived all their life in their parish, devoting themselves to their pastoral duties, and when they died leaving bequests to their church in their wills. They themselves were remembered in the wills of their parishioners with gratitude and affection. Many of them were vicars of the churches appropriated to St. Werburgh's Abbey, and would therefore have been appointed by the monks. Their lives indicate the care with which the monks made their choice, and make a sharp contrast with those of unbeneficed clerks, whose enforced idleness often made them trouble-makers in the town.

The presence and authority of the Church pervaded the life of the city in ways which our modern secularised society finds hard to imagine. Though a man belonged to a particular parish, to which he owed certain obligations, no church was more than a few minutes' walk from his home. He knew each one, and he, with his life's joys and sorrows, was known to it. Church bells rang out to call him to Mass and his other religious duties, he met priests, monks and friars in the narrow streets, The great feasts of the Church were public holidays, especially Corpus Christi with its processions, and Whitsuntide with its performances of the Mystery Plays, both high-lights of the year. The Church in Chester was indeed the community of God's people!

The upkeep of the parish church and, in particular, the maintenance of the nave was the special responsibility of the parishioners. All over England, the fifteenth century was a time unprecedented in church building. In this Chester had its share, as naves of churches were enlarged and beautified, and bequests were made for sacred vessels and vestments.

One would hardly have thought, therefore, that at the beginning of the sixteenth century, the old order in Chester was about to pass away. That it did so raises the question, what brought about so apparently sudden a collapse and was it totally unforeseen? The answer may lie in too great a familiarity with, and insufficient appreciation of spiritual values. Mediocrity, even lethargy, seems to have settled down on the official Church in Chester. Her lack of apostolic commitment lost her the

goodwill of the people she served. The abbey ceased to be the power-house of prayer which medieval society expected it to be. Possessed of an income worth £1,030, it had become worldly and comfortable; and unable, therefore, to justify the privileged position it enjoyed. Few objections were raised to its dissolution, though there were strong protests against the suppression of the friars.

The people of Chester in the reign of Henry VIII were not anti-clerical or anti-religious. Any tensions which existed were economic, rather than religious or spiritual. The ordinary parish clergy living and working among them, and the small houses of friars retained their esteem. Unfortunately, it is the abuses and maladministration which tend to make history, while lives of devoted service lie hidden or are easily forgotten. At a time of great social change, the activities of the official Church were no longer confined to what men considered to be her primary function, the salvation of the world through the celebration of the Mass and the administration of the Sacraments. She possessed great power and wealth, and this no longer seemed acceptable. In stripping her of these superfluities, men brought down the whole structure of the medieval Church.

Two other factors have to be taken into account, in any attempt to explain the destruction of the medieval Church, not only in Chester but throughout the land. If they had not dominated the situation, a long awaited and badly needed reform might have been achieved, instead of the violent and complete disruption which in fact took place. One was the sheer materialism, the desire for wealth, whether in land, in money, or in high places, which was so marked a characteristic of the age. Apart from rare exceptions, like Thomas More, John Fisher and the Carthusian martyrs, Englishmen of the 1530's were singularly lacking in high ideals. Coupled with this, indeed part of it, was their attitude of obedience and submission to the king. When Henry VIII severed England from the See of Rome in 1535, by making himself "Supreme Head of the English Church", everything else was easily accomplished.

CHAPTER I

Penal Times

By the opening years of the reign of Queen Elizabeth, Chester was, to all intents and purposes, a Protestant city.[2] The intervening period, from 1541 to 1559, must for many people have been a time of uncertainty and confusion, as the official religious policy swung to and fro with the change of monarch. The vast majority of the clergy, who seem to have been "quiet and submissive", retained their positions, some as late as Elizabeth's reign. A few even improved them. Richard Walker, the last Dean of the Collegiate Church of St. John's, was appointed Dean of the new Cathedral, while William Wall, the last Guardian of the Franciscan Friary became Subdean, a post he occupied until his death in 1573. He was buried under the West Wall of the Cathedral, which used to bear the inscription:—

> "Under this window lies William Wall, late Prebendary of this Church and formerly a Minorite, son of William Wall, a poor hermit who after the death of his wife . . . led a solitary life in prayer, fasting and meditation."

How strange an exchange for the son of a poor hermit and spiritual son of the humble St. Francis!

Nicholas Bucksey, the ex-prior of St. Werburgh's, died in his old home in 1567, as a canon of the Cathedral, and Robert Bower, perpetual vicar of St. John's, retained his post there until 1559. Certainly some of the religious and especially the friars, found the pensions they received from the government insufficient to support them in their new life. In 1549 the churchwarden of Holy Trinity gave 3d. to a poor priest who may have been a monk or friar, and two years later he lent 10s. to "Sir Rafe the curate", who was also described as "frere Rafe".

Only one priest is recorded as suffering serious loss for his loyalty to the old faith. This was David Pole, a canon of St. John's. From St. John's he had moved to a Prebend in Lichfield Cathedral, where in Mary's reign he became Vicar General to the Bishop of Lichfield. In 1557 he was made Bishop of Peterborough, but Elizabeth deprived him of his office. Allowed freedom on parole, he spent his remaining years in London, "an ancient and grave person and a very quiet subject". He died in 1568.

In the parish churches, the attempts during the 1540's to carry on the old Catholic ritual side by side with the new ideas, and the rapid changes which followed in the 1550's are reflected in such Churchwardens' Accounts as have survived.[3] John Cotgrave, the churchwarden of Holy Trinity from 1537 to 1547, went on buying the old familiar things, "tapers, candles, and holly at Christmas, and frankincense", but in 1542 he added to his purchases 6s. for a Bible, together with the cost of its carriage from London and the making of a reading desk for it. Six years later, the altars in the church were removed, and in 1549 the tabernacle followed.

The same changes were taking place in St. Mary's on the Hill, in

obedience to the injunctions of the government. In the early 1540's, this church still possessed several sets of vestments, choir and processional books, bells including the "anthem bell" rung at the Elevation in the Mass, and candles burning before the statue of St. Stephen. At Christmastide 1544, the usual holly and the star appeared, and a purse was purchased "to carry the sacrament", but three years later the Rood was removed, and the paintings and the ornamentation on the walls obliterated by white-wash. More sweeping changes still came in the 1550's, as here also the altars were taken away and the floor tiled so that no trace remained and copes and vestments were disposed of by sale.

In 1553, churchwardens in all the churches were obliged to draw up lists of sacred vessels and vestments, showing what they needed to retain for the use of the parish, and what they were handing over to the King's Commissioners. Included among those at St. Mary's "kept in safety for the use of the parish" were a cope and chasuble of cloth of gold, while two other copes, four chasubles and two tunicles were handed over to the Commissioners. At the same time a quantity of church goods, including banners, hangings for the altars and two pyxes were sold for £3. £10 13s. 4d. had already been realised in an earlier sale, the largest sum paid in any church in Chester. At St. Michael's, the sale of copes, vestments and ornaments brought in only 15s. 9d., but the Commissioners allowed the church to keep a gilt chalice and paten, two vestments of green and red satin which were altered to be made into a carpet for the pulpit, altar linen, service books, three bells and two chests. In all this, Catholic practices, and in particular the celebration of Mass, were gradually being eroded away, and the more extreme services of the Reformers introduced.

With the death of Edward VI in 1553, however, and the accession of Mary Tudor, England was reconciled with the Papacy and the old religion was restored. What had been sold had now hurriedly to be repurchased. Roodscreens were rebuilt and gilded, the old simple things like the holly and the Christmas star and the Easter Sepulchre, all reappeared. The new churchwardens at Holy Trinity made a list of all the church goods they managed to retrieve: copes, chasubles, banners, two chalices, a brass censer, a Mass book, a statue of St. Anthony, and an unspecified book bequeathed to the church by a priest, Thomas Warmingham.

Then, once again, as the pendulum swung back, Elizabeth's Religious Settlement of 1559 began to come into force. By 1565, the final sales of everything papistical had been completed. We get a fleeting glimpse of the purchasers and the fate of this great plunder of church plate and furnishings. Some of them found their way to distant Spain, where in 1568 they were still being sold in Bilbao by Mr. Hardware, the Mayor of Chester, for the sum of 770 Royals. In 1573, the Chester merchant, David Chaloner, owed the churchwardens of Holy Trinity 40/- for a red velvet cope, which he was selling in Spain.

Much, on the other hand, must have remained in Chester. As late as 1570, a goldsmith of the town, named William Mutton, paid £7 17s. 6d. to the churchwardens of the same church for two chalices with covers, weighing 33 ozs. The ownership of plate made of precious metal was an important status symbol during the Elizabethan period, and the way in which the rising gentleman or merchant invested his wealth. Goldsmiths

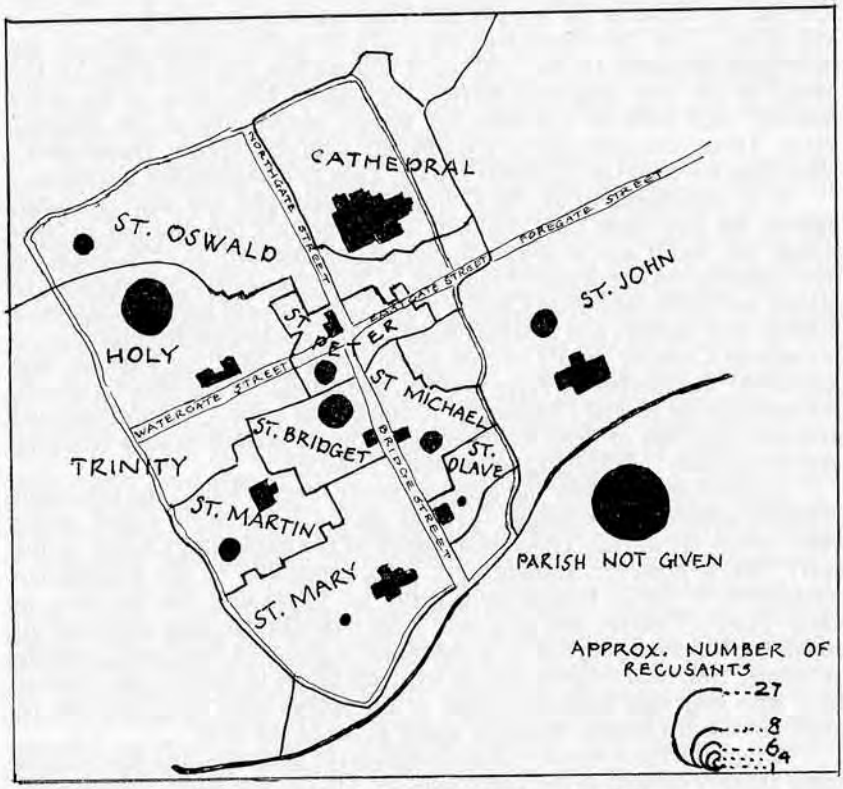
like William Mutton may well have been the source of supply for such people in Chester. In 1583, when he was Sheriff, he was ordered at the Metropolitan Visitation to take down the Crosses at the Bars, Northgate and Boughton. He died soon afterwards, and the rumour went round that "he had so offended the papists that they ascribed his death to what he had done". The churchwardens who sold him the chalices were at the same time spending £6 18s. 10d. on a communion cup and plate for the bread of the new Anglican service. Vestments also came in for more profane uses, such as costumes for actors, presumably in the Mystery Plays. Three vestments and a streamer brought 8s. into the parish chest, when they were sold to "Thomas Dycher's son to make players' garments".

It is impossible to say how much was salvaged and kept in secret, against the day when they could be safely brought out and put to their proper use, but it was undoubtedly happening. As early as 1559, while the new religious regime was still insecure, a Mistress Dutton was ordered to appear before the Bishop of Chester at his Visitation, for keeping "secreatly a Rode, too pictures and a Masse Boke". Mistress Dutton belonged to the prominent Catholic family of that name living in St. Peter's parish. She was either the mother of Peter Dutton, gentleman, or his wife Elizabeth, the daughter of Richard Massey of Aldford. The same Visitation revealed another case, that of Peter Fletcher, who "hathe certain ymages which he kepith secreatly", belonging to St. Mary's church.

Their citation before the bishop's court foreshadowed the treatment those recusants who remained loyal to the old Faith might expect in the years which lay ahead. The vast majority of the citizens of Chester in the early 1560's, however, showed very little opposition to the Elizabethan settlement. In 1562, boards were being set up against the windows in Holy Trinity Church, and a glazier from Handbridge was employed to repair broken windows, but no explanation is given for their being broken. A former friar was ordered not to wear his beads in future, and another man who may have been the porter at the Abbey was "enjoyned that he shall not use his beades hereafter under paine of the lawe".

After 1568 there was a radical change in the situation, and this became more sharply defined as the years went by. On the one hand, the constant reprimands for slackness which William Downham, the Bishop of Chester, received from the Privy Council, and his subsequent replacement in 1579 by the stricter William Chadderton, led to more thorough and severe Visitations of the parishes, while the Chester Justices of the Peace in Quarter Sessions became much more active. At the same time, the publication in 1570 of the Papal Bull, *Regnans in Excelsis*, declaring Queen Elizabeth deposed, and formally releasing her Catholic subjects from their allegiance, aggravated the situation. Catholics everywhere came to realise that they could no longer remain "Church-going Papists". They must either conform to the new religion and attend the services of the established Church, or openly reject it and face the consequences.

The result in Chester was the growth of a hard core of recusancy, which no amount of persecution could break. It was never so powerful or so notorious as in Lancashire, but together with two other centres, Malpas and Bunbury, it constituted a formidable stronghold of opposition in Cheshire. From the people who had to appear at diocesan and metropolitan



Distribution of Recusants in Chester in 1590

Visitations and at Quarter Sessions, between the years 1570 and 1590, and were fined for non-attendance at church, a certain number began to emerge as "obstinate recusants". They were drawn from all walks of life; the gentry, the professions, tradesmen, craftsmen, the poor. They came from every parish in the city, and their family connections, parent and child, husband and wife, master and servant, mistress and maid, strengthened the bonds between them.

A strenuous attack on them was made by the authorities, in an attempt to wipe them out. At first, fines were imposed on them for non-attendance at church, which rose from 1/- a week to £20 a month. When fines did not deter them, they were imprisoned as well in the two gaols of the city, the Castle and the Northgate. The authorities came down most heavily in the beginning on men of substance and influence, reserving women and the poor until later. Among them, the name of the lawyer, Ralph Worseley, from St. Oswald's parish, frequently occurs. He was probably the son of another Ralph who had migrated from Lancashire into Chester, and whose bequests to poor clothmakers in the city were still being administered a hundred years later. Ralph the lawyer was expelled from Gray's Inn, London, in 1577 on religious grounds, and four years later appeared at Quarter Sessions with a number of other recusants from Chester and elsewhere in the county. He tried to raise legal objections against the charge but lost his case, was fined £120, and imprisoned in Chester Castle. Except for a period in the New Fleet prison at Salford, he spent the next thirteen years a prisoner there, finally either dying there in 1594, or being transferred elsewhere. While he was in prison, the jailer used him to read chapters of the Bible at meal times each day to the other recusants, "whereunto the whole number of the recusants do repaire and heare diligently". If this was an attempt to win them over to Protestantism it had no effect, for the jailer had shortly to admit "they doe still continue in their former obstinate opinions".

Fear of the coming of the Spanish Armada in 1588 filled Chester Castle with recusants. In many ways, however, the castle was the weak link in the campaign against them. It stood too near the sea coast to be secure. Amazingly, the recusants had liberty "to go and ride abroade at their pleasure and not anie offence taken thereat". It was possible to bribe the keeper, not only to make the prisoners' lot easier, but also to carry on practices which in the eyes of the law were highly treasonable. On one occasion at least, a young Welsh priest penetrated into the castle and celebrated Mass in the room of John Whitmore, a "dangerous practising papist" gentleman from Thurstaston. An account of what took place was given later to the authorities by the niece of a recusant woman from Chester, Alice Cheswis. The priest, dressed in a white surplice, said "the service in Lattin and ther bred was such as was used in the popish time. And Mr. Whitmore's younge sonne did help that preste and did put the wine into the cup, and the preste lifted it up over his head". Several prisoners received communion, including Ralph Worseley and Alice Cheswis, with her two sons, William and Richard.

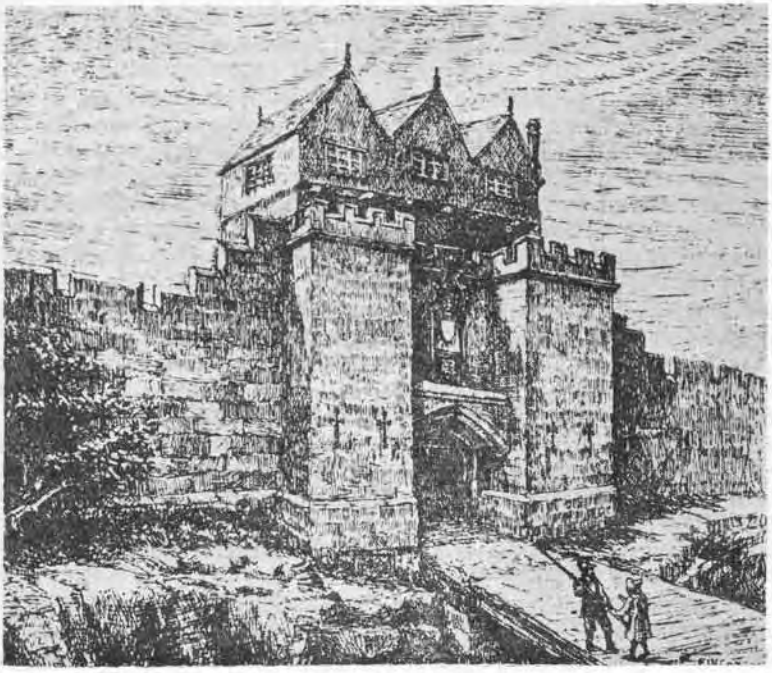
Even the priests who were captured and imprisoned in the castle were able to carry on their ministry there. The names of several have come down to us. Two of them, Davis and Stone, had been saying Mass at

Christleton, in the home of a yeoman family named Cotgreve. The whole family was staunchly Catholic and owed fines to the tune of £960, an impossible sum to pay. The names of the two priests were given to the Justices at the Quarter Sessions of 1592 by a nephew of the family, Randolph Cotgreve, who conformed. Two other priests, Richard Sutton and John Culpage, both old men, were described as "very wilful and obstinate". Sutton died in the castle about 1579, but John Culpage, who had been at the Collegiate Church at Manchester with Lawrence Vaux, lingered on until 1584, when he either died or was exiled. By then he would have been eighty five years old.

The most daring of the priests was Venerable Thomas Holford. A Cheshire man by birth, he was arrested at Nantwich in 1585, and brought before Bishop Chadderton, disguised as a dandy. He refused to go into exile, declaring that "either Tyburn or Boughton should have his carcase".[4] During the time he spent in Chester Castle, he said Mass several times for the other prisoners, converted the wife and two children of the jailer, conducted the marriage ceremony between Jane Primrose, the daughter of a prominent Chester recusant and the son of John Whitmore, and baptised their children. He was taken by the pursuivants for trial in London, but escaped by acting as a madman. Evading arrest for another year, he was eventually caught again in Holborn in 1588, and suffered martyrdom shortly after. He was forty seven years of age.

Though he never worked as a priest in his own home town, Chester produced one other martyr at this time, Venerable Robert Wilcocks. Born in Chester in 1558, he studied at Rheims, and after his ordination was sent on the English Mission in January 1586. Within two months he was arrested either on the Kentish coast or in Sussex, and sent to the Marshalsea prison. After the defeat of the Spanish Armada, he was taken to Canterbury, and there hanged, drawn, and quartered, together with two other priests and a layman. In his *Memoirs of Missionary Priests* Challoner[5] wrote how Wilcocks was the first to go up the ladder, and as he did so, smilingly told the others that "he was going to heaven before them, where he should carry the tidings of their coming after him". It was young men like this, trained in the new seminaries abroad in which Cardinal Allen, himself a Lancashire man, played a leading role, and prepared, as Edmund Campion the finest of the English Martyrs said, "either to win you heaven, or to die upon your pikes", that the Elizabethan Government came most to fear.

Chester was all the more dangerous in the eyes of the Privy Council because it was the main port in the North West for Ireland and the continent. In the latter part of the sixteenth century, troops and supplies were continually passing through en route for Ireland, and it would not be difficult for messengers, recusant priests, or forbidden goods like Catholic books to be smuggled in and out. The Mayors of Chester were being continually warned to keep a look out for suspicious comings and goings, and "to serche for passengers into Ireland except they be knowen Merchants or suchlike". In 1609, for instance, a William Dugan of Lincoln's Inn who claimed that he was returning home to Dublin, was stopped and searched, and his trunk ransacked for "papistical books and superstitious relics",[6] and on another occasion about the same time, an



Recusant prisons in Chester
Above: Gateway of the old Castle
Below: Northgate

informer, William Udall, writing to Sir Robert Cecil to remind him of the services he had performed for the Chief Secretary, spoke about "the going of Wright the priest for Ireland and now about Cheaster to take shipping which is for the publishing of some bokes to be printed there".[7]

The port was also being used to get out of the country Catholic boys whose parents were forbidden by the law to send them abroad to be educated. Between April 1594 and July 1595, three parties of youths were caught. One, a group of ten had got as far as Dublin, only to be returned to Chester. They came from various parts of the country, from as far away as London, Cambridgeshire, Hampshire, Suffolk, Yorkshire, Lancashire and Tamworth in Staffordshire. They included the sons of gentlemen, merchants, a joiner and a farmer, several of whom were recusants known to the authorities. They must have been assembling at Chester preparatory to embarking for Ireland, one group under "the guide" Edward Scrope, and another under Bartholomew Wycham from Newcastle upon Tyne "naming himself their tutor". All were apprehended by David Lloyd, the Mayor of Chester, and their horses, pistols and money confiscated. The long correspondence which ensued between the Mayor and the Right Honourable Lords of the Council has survived[8] until finally, "in obedience to their Lordships' orders", they were sent up to London under guard, some on horseback and the rest on foot "for the sparinge of charges". One of them, Thomas Hall, finally got away to the continent, and was admitted to the English College at Seville. After his ordination in 1599 he returned to England and worked as a missionary until his death in 1606.

One group of people who drew suspicion upon themselves at times such as these and with good reason, were the innkeepers and their wives. Alice Barker, whose husband kept the *Unicorn*, was examined by the High Commission in 1592, as an absentee from church and a suspected recusant. William Bostock and his wife, Elizabeth, were suspected of harbouring priests, and Elizabeth was questioned about the guests who had lodged at their inn. They were not the only ones who were in trouble for this kind of offence. Henry Primrose, a tailor of St. Martin's parish and his wife, Margaret, whose daughter had already contracted a popish and therefore invalid marriage with the son of John Whitmore while a prisoner in the Castle, lodged at his house Catholic youths who were trying to escape overseas. He, together with William Bostock and William Aldersey, a linen draper, were all well known Catholics. As far back as 1562 Margaret Aldersey was cited before the High Commission, "concerninge the concealinge of an image about which she confessed she had sold and convayed it away bie a Spaniard". Ten years later she was ordered, "to bringe in a Latin Primer boke which she useth", and in 1592, when she was widowed, aged and sick, she suffered imprisonment as a recusant.[9]

In addition to Chester Castle, the authorities also made use of Northgate prison. This was over the Northgate which was removed in 1808. The entrance to the gaol was on the west side of the gate, and under the gateway there was a dungeon called "Little Ease" or "Dead Man's Doom". It was hewn out of the rock and the only access of air was through pipes. It was a foul place out of which a few managed to escape, and in

which one or two conformed and went to church. Ralph Langton was confined here after boasting that "he would never go to church for any man's pleasure in Chester".

The year 1592 has been called "The Harrying of the Catholics in the North", for it was the hardest year of all. Yet in spite of everything, recusancy was as active as ever in Chester. Though they were not numerous, the Catholics formed a tightly knit community, aiding one another in their difficulties, and easily recognisable. There were more than have been mentioned here, and probably many more about whom nothing is known. Before the end of Elizabeth's reign recusancy had developed a vitality which no penal laws could crush.

The Parish Register of Holy Trinity Church bears these two entries:—

> "1614. Katherine, wife of William Liverpool, joiner, who is a recusant and so was she. She was buried in the churchyard, 11 February by licence from Bishop Lloyd.
> 1628. William Liverpool, joiner, buried 30 January in the churchyard in the night, with licence of Mr. Stafford, Chancellor, because he was a recusant."

These two entries may be regarded as the link, for the Catholics of Chester, between the period which had just ended and the century which lay ahead. William and his wife were known in the later years of Eliazbeth's reign as Catholics. In the year of the Armada, they had both shared the same indictment for absence from church as William and Margaret Aldersey, William Bostock the innkeeper, Henry Primrose and his family, and others. The year of his death, William's name appeared on a list of recusants in the city.

In the early seventeenth century, out of one hundred and forty three recorded recusants from the whole county of Cheshire, only sixteen came from Chester, twelve from St. John's Ward, two from Eastgate Ward and two from Trinity Ward.[10] No doubt, there were others whose names have been lost, including, possibly, children of the earlier generation who had suffered in the Castle for their faith. It is clear, however, that by then the numbers of Catholics, in the total population of some 4,000, were small. To this must be added the deaths caused by the outbreak of plague between the summer of 1603 and 1605, which carried off 1,313 inhabitants of the city.

If the Catholics had hoped for some relief on the accession of James I, they were to be bitterly disappointed; indeed, in many ways the next hundred years must have been harder than what had already been faced, for the recusants were no longer upheld by their numbers and the sense of unity, even of heroism, which had bound them together in former times. After the ill-fated Gunpowder Plot, Parliament re-enacted all the Elizabethan penal laws. Recusants were obliged to receive communion at least once a year in the Anglican Church, or face a heavy fine, while in the parish churches, churchwardens had to report to Quarter Sessions the names of all absentees, together with their wives, children and servants. A new oath was drawn up, declaring "damnable" the Pope's claim to excommunicate or depose princes, and pledging the man who took it to report "traiterous conspiracies". Anyone indicted for recusancy was

obliged to take the oath, or incur the penalty of *praemunire*, i.e. the loss of his property. At the same time, a Bull from Rome forbade Catholics to take the oath. To reconcile anyone to Rome or to be reconciled was treason; anyone detecting a Catholic so doing could receive a reward of £50.

A convicted recusant found himself debarred from the professions. He could not practise as a doctor or lawyer. He had no right to carry arms beyond what a magistrate considered sufficient for his self-defence. His house was open to search for suspected books, rosaries or crucifixes. A convicted woman recusant lost her rights to inherit her husband's chattels which might therefore fall into the hands of Protestant relatives, and she was not allowed to act as executrix of a will or as guardian of a child. A marriage which had not been solemnised in the Anglican church was invalid, and the children of a marriage before a priest could be declared illegitimate. A fine of £100 was incurred if a child was not baptised in the established church, and one of £20 for a burial carried out secretly. The law forbidding parents to send their children abroad to be educated still held good.

It is true that the full weight of this legislation was not always or continuously applied, either through inefficiency or through good-will on the part of neighbours. None-the-less they created a feeling of insecurity, especially in times of crisis. One such time must have been the Civil War.

The merchant class of Chester, unlike those of towns in East Cheshire like Stockport and Macclesfield, remained loyal to Charles I, in spite of the harm being caused to their trade by the war. In this, they were at one with whatever Catholics there were in the city, and also with Catholic families in the area, like the Stanleys, the Masseys, the Hockenhulls, the Pooles and the Whitmores, all of whom were royalist. From November 1644 until February 1646, Chester had to face a long siege, or "leaguer" as it was called, at the hands of Sir William Brereton of Handforth, the Commander-in-Chief of the Parliamentary forces. During it, houses in and around the city, in Handbridge, Boughton and Christleton were either damaged and destroyed by the bombardment from cannons placed at Morgan's Mount, the tower of St. John's Church, and other vantage points won by the Parliamentarians, or by the "scorched earth" tactics of the Royalists. Eastgate and Watergate Streets suffered particularly badly, "The drawing dry of the cittie's stockes" wrote a Royalist, "plate, rentes and collections, not knowne, all of which losses, charges and demolishments, in the opinion of most, will amount to two hundred thousand pounds att the least; so far hath the God of heaven humbled this famous cittie".

At last, starving and demoralised, the citizens surrendered. Local sequestration committees were set up for compounding with the "delinquents", as the Royalists were called. The mere fact of professing the Catholic faith subjected the "delinquent" to the forfeiture of two thirds of his estates and goods.

With the restoration of the monarchy in 1660, Catholics might have thought that their loyalty would win them some respite. In fact, things became worse. Charles II was obliged to withdraw the Declaration of Indulgence he was prepared to grant at the beginning of his reign, and new laws against "our old enemye the Papists", as a Cheshire J.P. called them,

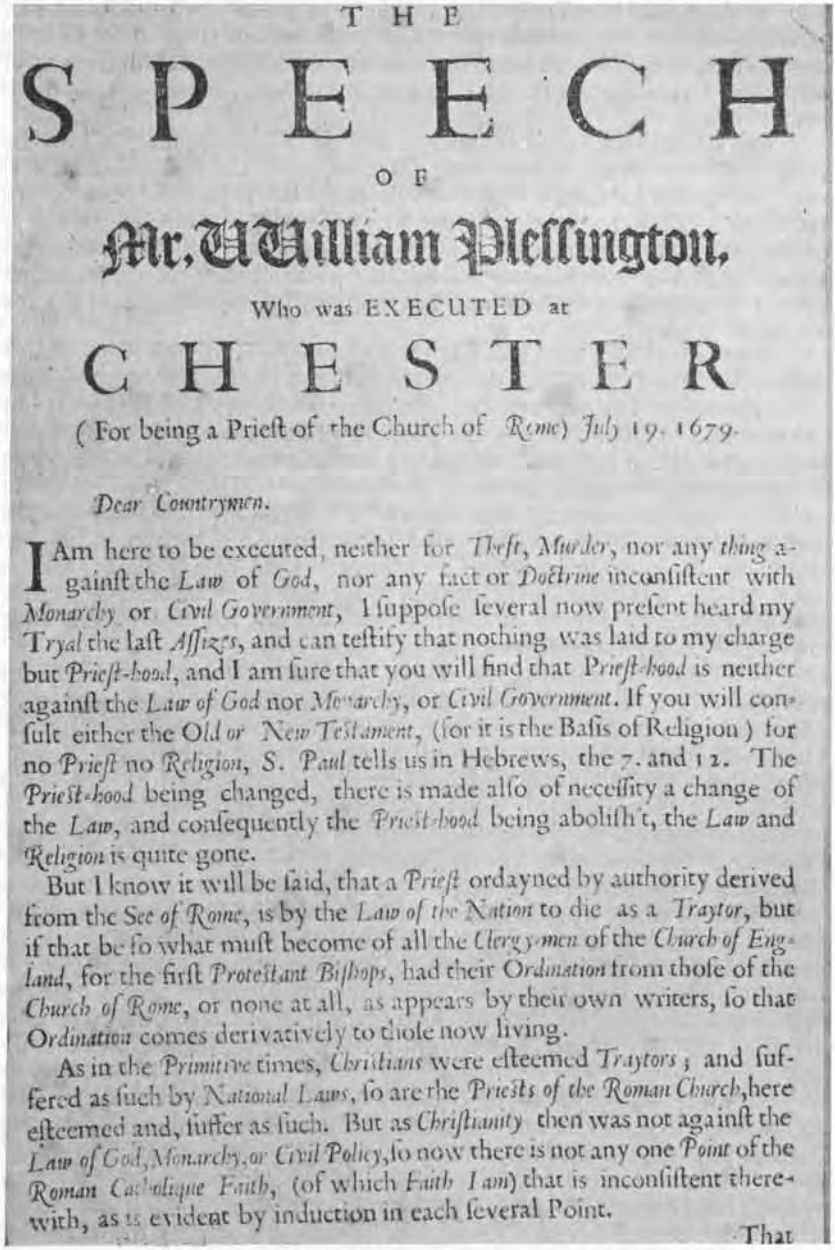
were set in motion. In 1671, in order to ensure that all recusancy fines were paid up, and thereby to increase the revenues of the Exchequer, and also because the lists presented by the Anglican clergy to their bishops were unreliable, Commissioners drew up, county by county, lists of convicted recusants. Only three appeared on the Chester list, and no names were given.[11]

The strength of the anti-catholic feeling of the Goverment can be gauged by the letters which were dispatched to the J.P.'s in Chester, "for the stricter execution of the laws against the growth of popery". In 1667, the J.P.'s were ordered by the Privy Council, "to use their utmost endeavours to apprehend all popish priests and Jesuits that endeavour to seduce or pervert His Majesty's subjects". In 1674, they received another letter telling them "to encourage and quicken the convictions of popish recusants in the city".[12]

The climax came for Catholics throughout the land with the so-called discovery of the Popish Plot, concocted by Titus Oates in 1678. A hurried correspondence ensued between William Williams, the Recorder of Chester, and William Harvey, the Mayor. Williams was in London a few weeks after the mysterious murder of Sir Edmund Berry Godfrey, the lawyer who had accepted the sworn "revelations" of Titus Oates. He wrote on 19th October, advising the Mayor "to examine Mr. Matthew Ellis for the discovery of the priests and Jesuits mentioned by him in his discourse at John Bridge's house".[13] Matthew Ellis of Overleigh, whose house stood on the site of the present lodge and gateway of Eaton Park, was a well-known person in Chester. He was not a Catholic, and it is impossible to say what rumours he had been circulating.

The following month, the mayor was asked for a complete and accurate return of all popish priests, Jesuits, recusants and suspected Papists in Chester, in obedience to an order from the House of Commons. There was panic in London, as well as suspicion of what might be perpetrated in Chester. The mayor complied with the request. At the same time he gave the information that he had arrested several Catholics making for Ireland without the passes they were obliged to obtain from the Privy Council, in its attempt to prevent the escape of persons believed to be implicated in the plot. The three persons apprehended by the mayor were Sir William Talbot, Captain Mark Talbot and Captain Patrick Sarsfield, who all claimed to be crossing to Dublin with passes obtained from the Earl of Derby. Their rapiers were taken from them by the mayor on account of their being Catholics. The mayor, however, seems to have over-reached himself, for they appealed to the Earl of Derby on the grounds that the king had allowed them to return home to Ireland, and presumably they were released.[14]

Far more dangerous to the Catholic cause, however, was the arrest of the prominent gentry in the area, all of whom had refused to take the Oath of Supremacy. Sir Rowland Stanley of Hooton, Sir James Poole of Poole, William Massey of Puddington and Michael Fitzwilliams of Hooton were all imprisoned, though for how long is not clear.[15] The other victim of the Plot was St. John Plessington, who was taken at the home of William Massey, Puddington Hall. Tried at Chester and convicted of high treason on account of his priesthood, he was hanged, drawn and



THE

SPEECH

OF

Mr. William Plessington,

Who was EXECUTED at

CHESTER

(For being a Priest of the Church of *Rome*) *July* 19. 1679.

Dear Countrymen.

I Am here to be executed, neither for *Theft*, *Murder*, nor any *thing* against the *Law* of *God*, nor any fact or *Doctrine* inconsistent with *Monarchy* or *Civil Government*, I suppose several now present heard my *Tryal* the last *Assizes*, and can testify that nothing was laid to my charge but *Priest-hood*, and I am sure that you will find that *Priest-hood* is neither against the *Law of God* nor *Monarchy*, or *Civil Government*. If you will consult either the *Old or New Testament*, (for it is the Basis of Religion) for no *Priest* no *Religion*, *S. Paul* tells us in Hebrews, the 7. and 12. The *Priest-hood* being changed, there is made also of necessity a change of the *Law*, and consequently the *Priest-hood* being abolish't, the *Law* and *Religion* is quite gone.

But I know it will be said, that a *Priest* ordayned by authority derived from the *See of Rome*, is by the *Law of the Nation* to die as a *Traytor*, but if that be so what must become of all the *Clergymen* of the *Church of England*, for the first *Protestant Bishops*, had their *Ordination* from those of the *Church of Rome*, or none at all, as appears by their own writers, so that *Ordination* comes derivatively to those now living.

As in the *Primitive* times, *Christians* were esteemed *Traytors*; and suffered as such by *National Laws*, so are the *Priests of the Roman Church*, here esteemed and, suffer as such. But as *Christianity* then was not against the *Law of God*, *Monarchy*, or *Civil Policy*, so now there is not any one *Point* of the *Roman Catholique Faith*, (of which *Faith I am*) that is inconsistent therewith, as is evident by induction in each several Point.

That

Speech of St. John Plessington from the gallows at Boughton

That the *Pope* hath power to depoſe or give licenſe to *Murder Princes*, is no point of our *Beliefe*. And I proteſt in the ſight of *God* and the *Court of Heaven*, that I am abſolutely innocent of the *Plot* ſo much diſcourſed of, and abhor ſuch bloody and damnable deſigns, and although it be Nine Weeks ſince I was ſentenced to die, there is not any thing of that laid to my charge, ſo that I may well take comfort in *S. Peters* words, 1 Pet. 14, 15, 16. *Let none of you ſuffer as a Murderer, or as a Thief, or as an Evil doer, or as a Buſie Body in other mens matters, yet if any man ſuffer as a Chriſtian, let him not be aſhamed or Sorry.* I have deſerved a worſe death, for though I have been a faithful and true Subject to my *King*, I have been a grievous ſinner againſt *God*; *Theeves* and *Robbers* that Rob on Highways, would have ſerved *God* in a greater perfection then I have done had they received ſo many favours and graces from him as I have.

But as there was never ſinner who truly repented and heartily called to *Jeſus* for mercy, to whom he did not ſhew mercy; ſo *I* hope by the *merits* of his *Paſſion*, he will have mercy on me, who am heartily ſorry that ever I offended him.

Bear witneſs good hearers, that *I* profeſs that *I* undoubtedly and firmly believe all the *Articles* of the *Roman Catholique Faith*, and for the truth of any of them, (by the aſſiſtance of God) *I* am willing to die, and I had rather die then doubt of any Point of *Faith*, taught by our *Holy Mother* the *Roman Catholique Church*.

In what condition *Margaret Plat* one of the chiefeſt witneſſes againſt me was before, and after ſhe was with me, let her neereſt relations declare.

George Maſſey, another witneſs ſwore falſely, when he ſwore, *I* gave him the Sacrament, and ſaid Maſs at the time and place he mentioned, and *I* verily think that he never ſpoke to me, or *I* to him, or ſaw each other but at the *Aſſizes* week; the Third witneſs *Robert Wood* was ſuddenly killed, but of the Dead why ſhould *I* ſpeak? Theſe were all the witneſſes againſt me, unleſs thoſe that only declared what they heard from others. *I* heartily and freely forgive all that have been or are any way inſtrumental to my Death, and heartily deſire that thoſe that are living may heartily repent.

God bleſs the *King* and the *Royal Family* and grant his *Majeſty* a proſperous *Reign* here and a *Crown* of glory hereafter, God grant peace to the Subjects, and that they live and die in true *Faith*, *Hope*, and *Charity*. That which remains is, that *I* recomend my ſelf to the mercy of my *Jeſus* by whoſe merits *I* hope for mercy, O *Jeſu* be to me a *Jeſus*.

F I N I S.

quartered at Gallows Hill, now known as Barrel Well Hill, Boughton, on July 19th, 1679.

The list of papists whom the mayor was told to draw up has survived,[16] though it may not be complete. It contains twenty three names. Two of them were Lancashire gentlemen, William Houghton of Ditton and Mr. Standish of Standish near Wigan, who were included because they possessed property in Chester. Two others were the Earl of Shrewsbury and Sir James Poole, the latter already under suspicion for refusing to take the Oath.

By comparison, the five other men named on the list were craftsmen of the city. Two of them, William Bagley and Richard Rowland were carpenters, Richard Cowley was a webster (i.e. a weaver), William Arnett, a miller and Ralph Hulton, a watchmaker. If he is the same person a William Bagley, living in St. Brigid's Ward, was assessed for Hearth Tax in 1664 at the rate of four hearths,[17] so that he must have had a fairly substantial house for those days, whereas a John Cowley, possibly the father of Richard, was too poor to be assessed. It is impossible to identify the other three.

Among the fourteen women listed were Mistress Ann Massey of Puddington Hall and Mary Fitzwilliams of Hooton, both of whose husbands were already in serious trouble, together with Elizabeth, wife of Seth Mort of Preston, the aunt of William Massey. There were two other gentlewomen, Hester, the wife of Thomas Browne, who had considerable property in Eastgate Ward, and Ursula, wife of Thomas Salisbury, Gent. Joanna Bourlace was the wife of a Doctor Bourlace who had a large house in St. Oswald's Ward. In addition, there was a Margaret Parker the wife of a jeweller, together with three women servants of Mary Fitzwilliams and three other women living in the city. It is clear that the authorities in Chester were bent on rounding up all the recusants not only in Chester, but also in the Wirral area, which was regarded as "a nest of Papists".

One factor which emerges in studying the history of Catholicism in Chester during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries is the important contribution made to its survival by the recusant gentry of the Wirral; the Stanleys of Hooton, the Masseys of Puddington Hall, the Pooles of Poole. Later the Fitzherberts of Swynnerton Place, Derbyshire, who had a house in the Northgate Ward, emerge into prominence. These families remained loyal Catholics and their influence and protection kept their tenantry in the surrounding area faithful also. Their loyalty was essential to the Catholics of Chester, because the recusants in the city relied on the priests they supported. Without these priests, there could have been no Mass or Sacraments, and Catholicism would have died out in Chester. The priests operated from their houses, living there as servants or tutors to their children, and in fact being their chaplains, but they could also use the houses as the centres from which they could move out into the surrounding countryside, and into Chester itself.

The repeated commands of the central Government to the Mayors of Chester, to make a complete and accurate return of all Popish priests and Jesuits were built on solid fact, for Chester was an important mission of the Society of Jesus during these years. Together with Hooton, Poole and

Dutton Lodge, it formed part of the "Lancashire District" or "College of St. Aloysius". This was an arrangement made in 1622 by Father Richard Blount, the first Jesuit Provincial in England. Father Blount divided his Province into twelve districts or "Colleges", each with its own Superior and missionary priests. In this way, about one hundred and ten Jesuits were deployed all over England, twelve of them being in the Lancashire District. Such funds as they possessed were apportioned among them, and accounts had to be submitted to the Provincial once a year. Though the name "College" was purely fictitious in England, this organisation of the Society lasted for the next two hundred years.

Father Blount also wrote a set of instructions for his priests, called "The Mode of Living of the Missionary Fathers", which enables us to picture the kind of life they had to lead in such dangerous times. Some had to live a solitary life during the day, keeping to the upper storeys and attics of the houses where they sheltered, taking great precautions not to be seen, especially by the servants of the house who might be tempted to betray them. They emerged only at night to perform their apostolic ministry. Others again were constantly on the move, travelling in different localities either on foot or on horseback, and staying in one place only long enough to let Catholics know there was a priest available. By frequently changing their name, their dress and the direction in which they were travelling, they sought to escape detection and constant danger. The Superiors of the Lancashire District usually remained in the same place, at Scarisbrick, so that other members of the District could make constant contact with them. They had a house and a Catholic servant to look after their needs, but their life was extremely difficult because they had few means of support, apart from the generosity of the recusants.

The greatest prudence had to be exercised in speaking, or in writing to one another, lest an informer discover their presence and report them. The Lancashire District was always referred to under disguised names like "our factory", "Mrs. Lancashire" or "Mrs. Lancaster". The Superior was known as "the Head Factor" and the missionaries as "Factors".[18]

The earliest Jesuit we know about living this kind of life in the Cheshire part of the "College of St. Aloysius" was a Father Humphrey Leech.[19] He originated in Tollerton, Shropshire, and after studying abroad, returned to England in 1618. He resided with the Massey family until his death in 1629. His name does not appear in any Chester records, but he must have come into the city, to minister to the small handful of recusants living there.

A clearer picture emerges of a Father Grosvenor, who was in Chester in 1654. He used the aliases Henry Howard, Ireland and Arden, but in his reply to the usual interrogation put to students, on his entry to the English College in Rome in 1614, he said, "My true name is Robert Grosvenor. I am in my thirty third year. I was born at Rothwell, near Wakefield in Yorkshire, and my father is of the ancient family of Grosvenor of Bellaport, County Stafford. I have a relation called Grosvenor of Eaton Hall in the County of Chester".[20] After studying Law at the New Inn, London, for five years, he went to the continent, and was ordained at the English

College, Rome, in 1616. After four years' work on the English Mission, he decided to enter the Society of Jesus, and returned to the continent to make his novitiate. Part of this time was spent as an army chaplain to the English and Irish Forces in Flanders. On his return to England as a Jesuit in 1624, he was stationed for many years in the Lancashire District. No details of his missionary activities have come down to us, nor do we know where he resided when he was in Chester. He was certainly there in 1654, since he received a letter there from William Blundell of Little Crosby, Lancashire, asking for his advice on land tenure. There is nothing to show whether he ever went to visit his Grosvenor relatives at Eaton Hall, whose life of comfort and distinction he had relinquished for the sake of his vocation. He died in Staffordshire, an old man of 86, on 14th February, 1688, worn out from his missionary journeys and labours.

The connections between the Jesuits and Chester continued well into the eighteenth century. Father Stanislaus Green, a Londoner by birth, who entered the Society in 1682, resided at Hooton between 1701 and 1704, on a salary of £10 a year.[21] With him in Chester for part of the time, there was a Father Francis Mannock, who used the alias Arthur. He was the son of Sir Francis Mannock of Gifford's Hall, Suffolk, and acted as chaplain to the Fitzherbert household in Chester between 1701 and 1710. He managed to escape detection when recusant lists were drawn up in 1704, 1705 and 1706, even though the Fitzherbert family and their servants all appear on the lists. In 1710, he moved to Liverpool, becoming the first resident priest there since the Reformation.[22]

Father Mannock was succeeded in 1712 by John Maynard, or to give him his real name, John Cuffaud. Cuffaud came from a Hampshire family, and after taking his vows as a Jesuit, worked for a time at Scarisbrick Hall, before moving into Cheshire. In 1715, he managed, like his Elizabethan predecessors, to make his way into Chester Castle, where a number of prominent recusants lay, after the badly bungled invasion of the Old Pretender, James III. Among them was William Massey, the last male heir of the family, who had been seized at Puddington Hall after the battle of Preston, and thrown into the Castle, where he died soon afterwards of fever. The same fate struck down Father Cuffaud, who succumbed before the year was out, while tending the sick prisoners.[23]

The Jesuits continued to minister to the Cheshire Catholics for some years yet to come, operating now, it would seem, from the home of Sir Rowland Stanley, at Hooton. There is no further mention of Chester, except for one cryptic message, sent from the Superior to the missioner at Plowden Hall, Shropshire. He was asked to forward some tulips as soon as possible to a Mr. Barnston, wine merchant in Chester, who would send them at the first opportunity to Shrewsbury.[24] If they really were tulips, they must surely have arrived at their final destination in rather a bedraggled state; and one wonders whether, like "the factory" and "Mrs. Lancashire" they signified other things, more important than tulips, whose meaning has been lost.

Fears of a Jacobite Rising, first in 1715 in favour of the Old Pretender and later in 1745 in support of Charles Edward, Bonnie Prince Charlie, tended to bring harassment to the Catholic population, among

whom were Stuart supporters. As we have already seen, the Catholic gentry in the Wirral suffered imprisonment after the '15 Rising. In 1716, Catholics were obliged to go through the annoying and costly business of registering their estates with the Clerk of the Peace of the county in Quarter Sessions. The information which was then obtained could also prove useful to Parliament in drawing up a land tax, "for granting an aid to His Majesty by laying a tax upon Papists". It was only the lack of an efficient Civil Service which prevented Catholics from feeling the full weight of this legislation.

As far as we can tell, the career of only one Catholic in Chester was affected by the advent of Bonnie Prince Charlie; and he at the time of the Rising was not a Catholic. This was Charles Corn, the son of James Corn who came originally from Betley, Co. Stafford, but was in Chester at the time of his son's birth in 1716. Charles's mother was Elizabeth, the daughter of Charles Butler of Great Eccleston in the Fylde, whose family suffered greatly for their loyalty to the Stuarts in the '15. When he grew to manhood, Charles himself became a distiller in Chester. Bonnie Prince Charlie's landing in Scotland was the signal for him to take up arms and join his forces. After the defeat of Culloden he fled to Ireland, and there became a Catholic. Before long, he went to Louvain where he declared his intention of becoming a priest. His age—by then he was thirty—and his ignorance of Latin prevented him from being accepted at the College of Douai. He was, however, eventually received at St. Gregory's College in Paris, through the influence of Cardinal Stuart and of John Towneley of Towneley Hall, Burnley, who had been tutor to the Chevalier de St. George, James Francis Edward Stuart. John Towneley paid his fees of £600 a year, and supplied him with clothing. Ordained in 1756, he was very soon appointed confessor to the English community of the Immaculate Conception, or the Blue Nuns as they were called, in Paris, a position he retained until his death in 1777. His sister came as a lady boarder to the convent in 1767, and together they became generous benefactors of the Blue Nuns. In his will, Father Corn left the nuns a yearly annuity of £185 in shares in India and an annual rent of £432. He was buried in the convent chapel, before the high altar. Father Corn, therefore, never returned to work as a priest in his native town, but was called on, instead, to share the exile of English nuns abroad, to whom he gave great edification by the holiness of his life.[25]

Meanwhile in Chester, the survival of a number of documents enables us to build up a clear picture of the Catholic community there in the eighteenth century. On the turn of the century, in 1705 and 1706, "Accounts of Papists and Reputed Papists residing in the City of Chester"[26] were drawn up by the Justices of the Peace in Quarter Sessions. These give their names, station in life, dwelling place, and if they had any, the value of their estates. An analysis of the list for 1706, which is slightly fuller than the one for the previous year, shows one hundred and four Catholics. This is an increase of eighty three since 1688, possibly to be accounted for by the inclusion of wives and children. Because it was a list drawn up by the J.P.'s it arranges the Catholics in the Wards of the city, not in the parishes, as the Ecclesiastical records do. Eight Wards are mentioned with Catholics living in them, as follows:—

St. Giles	Northgate	St. John's	St. Olave's	Eastgate
28	23	19	10	8
	St. Thomas	Trinity	St. Michael	
	8	3	1	

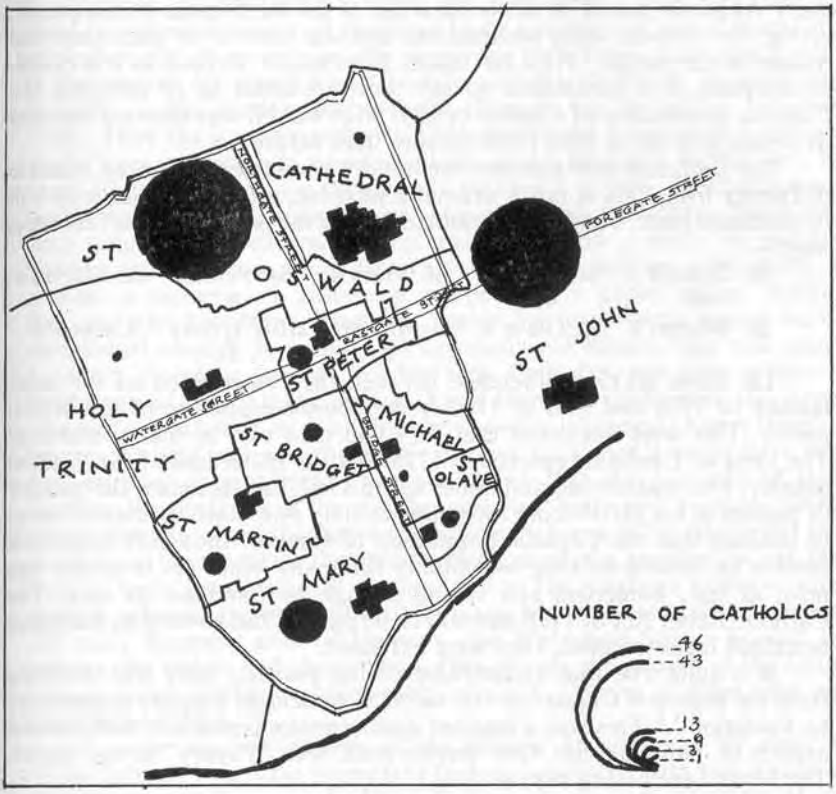
The most prominent Papists are still the Wirral gentry, although strictly speaking, some did not live in Chester, unless they had a town house there. Sir James Poole is placed in St. Martin's Ward, with an estate valued at £300 a year. William Fitzherbert, in the Northgate Ward, has estates assessed at £500 a year, and Richard Braithwait, Esquire, in St. John's Ward, is worth £200 a year. Two years earlier, William Fitzherbert's two horses and arms, including his sword, had been seized by order of Edward Partington, the Mayor. The two horses and swords owned by Richard Braithwait had not been taken, "because neither of them is worth £5", the sum fixed by the penal law.

William Fitzherbert came from the distinguished Derbyshire family who gave a Martyr to the Church in the person of Thomas Fitzherbert. The family estates lay in Swynnerton in Derbyshire. William never lived there, but on the death of his father, Basil, allowed his eldest son to take over the property there. He himself continued to live in a house in Northgate Street, which he either owned or rented. A map of Chester, drawn by Alexander Lavaux in 1745, shows it lying on the west side of the street, between Princess Street and King Street, and marked as "Mr. Massey's house". Richard Massey was William's grandson, and as such appears on the list of recusants with the other members of the Fitzherbert family. As a child, he lived with his grandparents in Northgate Street after his parents, Jane Fitzherbert, William's eldest daughter, and Richard Massey of Rixton, County Lancs, had died.

Katherine Wright, the wife of John Wright of Brewer's Hall also appears on the list, but for some reason not John himself, although in 1717, he was registering his estates as a Papist.[27] Possibly in the intervening years, he had become a Catholic. Ann Crompton is also named. She was the wife of Richard Crompton, Esquire, of St. Martin's Ward, who is described in the list drawn up in 1705 as "a gentleman of very considerable substance".

The families and servants of these members of the gentry number in all twenty nine, i.e., they represent nearly 28%, or slightly more than a quarter, of the total number of Papists listed, showing how important the gentry were to Catholicism in Chester.

Because the Penal Laws still remained on the Statute Book, the professions were still virtually closed to Catholics. There were, however, at least two Catholic teachers in Chester in 1706, William Kingsley, a teacher of Mathematics, and Bartholomew Casey, a fencing master. Both, presumably, were attached to one or other of the different "Academies" which flourished in eighteenth century Chester. The trades and crafts of the growing city gave easier opportunities of a livelihood to the Catholics. In the clothing and textile trades, there were two weavers, one of them, Richard Arnett, probably the son of the miller, William Arnett, who appeared on the 1678 list, a tailor, and a woman engaged in bone lace-weaving. There were also a periwig maker, a tanner, a miller and a ginger bread maker. Among the poorer craftsmen were a cobbler, a carpenter



Distribution of Catholics in Chester in 1767

(a journeyman, not a master), and three labourers whose work is not specified. Four invalid soldiers, belonging to Chelsea Hospital, are also listed, and they presumably, were elderly men.

Some sixty years later, in 1767, the Government ordered the vicar of every Anglican parish to draw up a list of all the Papists in his parish, giving their names, ages, occupations, and the number of years they had resided in the parish.[28] How far, again, this Papists' Return, as it is called, is complete, it is impossible to say, but it enables us to compare the Catholic community of Chester in 1767 with what it was like in 1706, and its details give us an even fuller picture than before.

The Catholics now number one hundred and twenty nine, an increase of twenty five. This is not a dramatic increase, and its implications will be discussed later. They are distributed among the parishes in the following way:—

St. Oswald's	St. John's	St. Mary's	St. Peter's	St. Martin's
46	43	13	9	9
St. Bridget's	St. Olave's	St. Michael's	Holy Trinity	Cathedral
3	3	1	1	1

The most striking difference between the composition of the community of 1706 and that of 1767 is the complete absence of the Wirral gentry. This does not mean that they had died out, or had conformed. The vicar of Eastham reported in 1778 that the household of Sir William Stanley, who was abroad and under age in 1767, had increased the number of papists in his parish from forty nine to sixty one. Rather, it would seem to indicate that the Catholic population of Chester, though it might still remain an inward-looking community for many years yet to come, was now, at last, numerous and strong enough to stand on its own. The Catholic Relief Act of 1778 had still to be passed, but so long as Catholics remained inconspicuous, they were left alone.

It is quite true that Incumbents of the parishes were still receiving from the Bishop of Chester, as late as 1825 "Articles of Enquiry preparatory to Visitation".[29] This was a detailed questionnaire concerned with various aspects of parochial life. One section dealt with "Popery" in the parish. The incumbent had to say:—

1) How many papists he had in his parish and what was their rank;
2) Whether anyone had been lately perverted to popery, and by whom;
3) Whether there was any place in the parish in which papists assembled for worship, and where it was situated;
4) Whether a popish priest resided in the parish, or resorted to it;
5) Whether there was any popish school kept in the parish;
6) Whether there had been any Confirmation or Visitation made by any popish bishop in the parish.

The wording of the questions has an unpleasant ring, but the answers are normally free from any invective. Only once did a vicar remark, "There is not a papist in the parish that I can hear of after strictest enquiry; consequently no popish bishop ever molests it". Moreover, the numbers given, we know from other sources, are incomplete.

By 1767 a wider range of occupations was open to Catholics, as they became more easily accepted in the city. There were two Catholic surgeons, named Bernard and Alexander Racketta or Raquet, probably a father and

son, though they were not Cestrians by birth and had not been resident for long. There was also a Catholic merchant, Francis O'Brien, who had been living in Holy Trinity parish for the last seven or eight years, and whose wife and children were Protestants.

During the eighteenth century and even later, Chester avoided any kind of industrialisation. It preferred to be a residential and cultural city, dependent for its revenue on the numerous trades and crafts which made it the market for north west Cheshire and North Wales. Its only large industry, as the number of tan-yards showed, was in leather and allied crafts. Here the largest number of Catholics found a means of livelihood. Eight were cordwainers or shoemakers, seven belonged to the very old craft of glover, one was a skinner and another a tanner. The clothing and textile trades, as in earlier times, also attracted Catholics. There were four tailors, two weavers, a breeches maker, and a dealer in worsted. Among the craftsmen were two cabinet makers and an upholsterer, as well as a carpenter, a sawyer, a cooper and a paper maker. William Briscoe, who had been living in Chester for forty years, was a barber established enough to employ an apprentice of fifteen, who was also a Catholic. Domestic service absorbed eight Catholics, but none of them in the homes of the Catholic gentry. Apart from the tradesmen, the largest number of Catholics, as the table shows, were labourers. Apart from the pavior, nothing indicates the nature of their work, but it might have been road-making or repairing. The map shows that the majority of them lived on the outskirts of the city, beyond Northgate and Foregate Street, foreshadowing where the future Catholic parish was to lie. Moreover they must have been among the poorer element of the population, as they were to be in the nineteenth century, and as the Anglican vicars so often remark, whereas the more central parishes, like St. Peter's which covered the main shopping area of Eastgate and Watergate Streets housed the glovers, the tailors and the surgeon. One can see the pattern of the future already being laid down. (See table overleaf: "Places of Residence and Occupations 1767.")

A more detailed analysis of the Papists' Returns can be made to throw light on two other important factors connected with the growth of Catholicism at this period. These factors are the age-structure of the Catholic community, and the pattern of immigration of Catholics into the city.

The "pyramid graph" on page 23 shows at a glance what the age-structure was like.

There are several important points to be noticed about this graph. Its uneven shape will be immediately apparent. In addition, it shows that the male Catholics outnumbered the female by as much as 11.62%. Moreover, it was an ageing community. Men and women over fifty years of age made up nearly one third—32.55%—of the total, whereas children under the age of ten represented only 9.3%, four only of them boys. This latter fact may well reflect the heavy infant mortality of the time. In the child-bearing age group, the twenties to the fifties, unmarried men were twice as numerous as married ones, 70% as against 30%. Among the latter group was a widower of thirty seven, left with four young children, all under ten, and another man, probably a widower, aged thirty one,

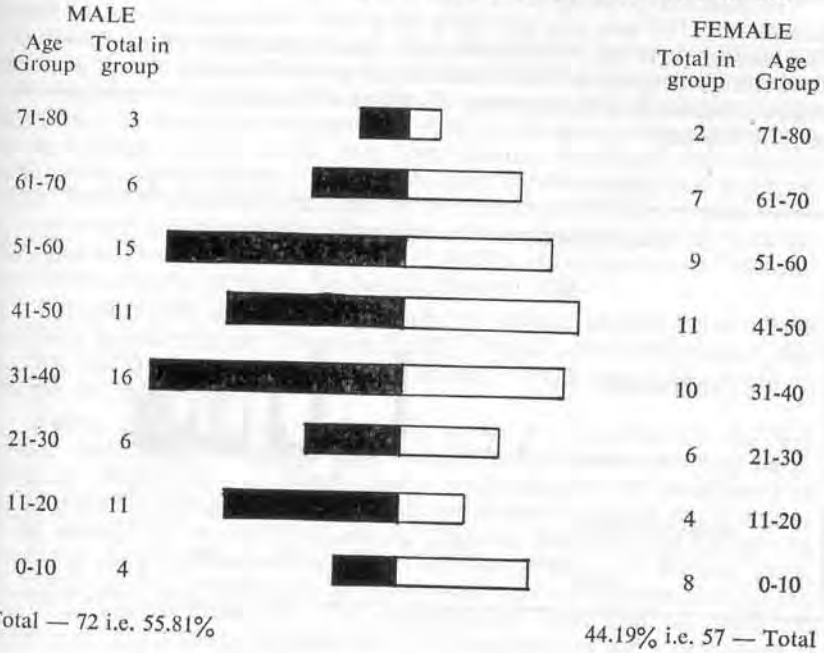
PLACES OF RESIDENCE AND OCCUPATIONS 1767

ANGLICAN PARISH		PROFESSIONS		LEATHER INDUSTRY				TRADES							
		Surgeons	Merchants	Cordwainers Shoemakers	Glovers	Skinners	Tanners	Tailors	Weavers	Breeches Makers	Dealers in Worsted	Travelling Spinners	Barbers	Bakers	Chimney Sweeps
St. Oswald's				3				1	2				2		
St. John's	Priest	1		4			1	1			1	1			1
St. Mary's				1	2	1				1				2	
St. Peter's		1			3			2							
St. Martin's															
St. Bridget's															
St. Olave's					2										
St. Michael's															
Holy Trinity			1												
Cathedral															
		3			17						14				

	NO. OF PERSONS	CRAFTS						DOMESTIC SERVICE			LABOURING			
		Cabinet Makers	Carpenters	Upholsterers	Sawyers	Coopers	Paper Makers	Gardeners	Male Servants	Female Servants	Husbandmen	Fishermen	Labourers	Paviors
St. Oswald's	46			1		1		1			1		6	
St. John's	43							2	1				5	1
St. Mary's	13											1	1	
St. Peter's	9													
St. Martin's	9	2	1		1					1				
St. Bridget's	3						1						1	
St. Olave's	3									1				
St. Michael's	1								1					
Holy Trinity	1													
Cathedral	1							1						
TOTAL	129			7					8			2	14	

with a child of two and another of nine months, a sign of the dangers of child-bearing for the eighteenth century woman. Married women in this age-group (60%) outnumbered unmarried ones (40%) by 20%. Finally, it will be noticed how small were the age-groups 11 to 20 and 21 to 30, i.e. the marriageable ages. All in all, it can be said that the Catholic community in 1767 was in an unhealthy state. Its growth could, at best, be slow and precarious. Indeed, if it had continued like this, it might have died out altogether. It was only the immigration of Catholics into the city, the injection of new blood into the Catholic body, which saved the situation.

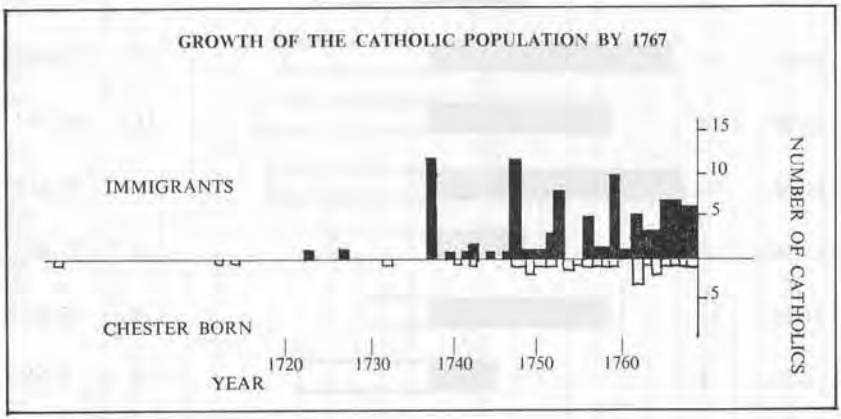
THE AGE-STRUCTURE OF THE CATHOLIC COMMUNITY IN 1767



As far as we can tell, only three families, named Keay, Williams and Wareing, survived the vicissitudes of the first half of the eighteenth century, and remained true to their faith. The oldest was the Keay family. William Keay, who was a cordwainer or cobbler living in St. Oswald's parish, was born in 1696. He was summoned in 1721, to appear before the J.P.'s of the city, together with five other "Papists, dangerous and disaffected to His Majesty and his Government"—though there is nothing to show it. He was ordered to take the oath prescribed by the Test Act, but refused to do so. He was still alive in 1767, at the age of seventy one, and had a son, also a Papist, who was then aged thirty five, and a cobbler like his father. One of William Keay's companions in 1721 was a "hus-

bandman" named Thomas Williams, who was already known as a Papist in 1706. He also lived in St. Oswald's parish, and was probably a farm labourer, rather than an owner of land. His son and grandchildren were all Catholics in 1767. The third family was the Wareings. Peter Wareing, a gardener, with his wife and five children, were alive in 1706. A John Wareing, either a brother or a son, and described as a glover, came before the J.P.'s in 1721 and refused to take the oath. One of Peter's sons, a gardener like his father, was living in St. John's Parish in 1767 and was a Catholic. There were, therefore, as far as we can tell, only six Catholics left in 1767 who could call themselves real Cestrians. They represented just under 5% of the total Catholic population. The remainder were all immigrants into Chester.

In addition to telling us the ages of the Catholics they list, the Papists' Returns of 1767 also say how long they have been resident in the city. This enables us to see not only the rate, but also the pattern of growth of the Catholic population. The following diagram illustrates this. It at once makes apparent how vital immigration was to the survival of the Catholic body in Chester.



It is clear from this diagram that Catholics moving into Chester outnumbered those born there by nearly four to one, while the parents of several born there were not themselves Chester born. Judging by their surnames, some of the newcomers into the city were of Welsh extraction; for instance, a family named Davies who by 1767 had been living there thirty years, a gardener named John Jones and his wife, Anne, and a young paper-maker named Luke Lloyd and Dorothy, his wife.

The greater number, however, have Irish names, and except for the merchant, Francis O'Brien, they were among the poorer labourers in the city. This is borne out ten years later, by the enquiry made by the Bishop of Chester, preparatory to his Visitation of his diocese. In answer to the question, "Are there any Papists in your parish, how many, and of what

rank?" the Vicar of St. John's replied, "the few Papists we have are all of the lower class of people". Similarly, those in St. Martin's are described as "very poor people", and the Vicar of St. Olave's gave the information that "sometimes the lodging houses receive by accident an Irish labourer of the Popish sect". Only in St. Mary's parish were there said to be "six Papists of a middling station of life". Thus, we can already discern, years before the Famine of the 1840's, the beginnings of the Irish settlement, which was to play so important a role in the future St. Werburgh's parish.

Some of the people moving into Chester came as family units, made up of husband, wife and one or more children, but they were outnumbered by single men, presumably coming to find work, often as "labourers". Until about 1760, moreover, they came in "waves" rather than in a steady flow. This is particularly true of the years 1738 and 1748, as the diagram shows.

Finally, and most important of all, by 1767 Chester at last had a resident secular priest, Father John Cooling. During the seventeenth and early eighteenth century, as has already been seen, the Catholics of the city relied, for their spiritual needs, on Jesuits who were acting as chaplains to the Catholic gentry of the area. This practice continued well into the eighteenth century, when a Father Michael Tichburn and later a Father James Farrar[30] were both chaplains to the Stanleys of Hooton, who had a private chapel in their Hall. A Benedictine, Dom Lewis Laurence Fenwick, stationed at Woolston Hall, the home of the Standish family near Warrington, visited Chester at least, for he died here in 1746.[31]

Between 1741 and 1747 the names of several secular priests have survived, James Meston, Thomas Lydell, Tindall and Richardson,[32] and in 1750 the Obituary Notices of the Secular Clergy record the death in Chester of "Mr. Preston".[33]

Father John Cooling, or Cowling as he is also called, is the first secular priest about whom we have some details.[34] He was born in 1711, either at Wrightington or Wigan, and was educated for the priesthood at the English College in Rome. After his ordination, he spent the first part of his priestly life serving the Catholic Chapel at Singleton, in Poulton in the Fylde. A mob attacked the chapel in 1746, crying "No Popery", and for a time he had to carry on his missionary work in private houses. He was transferred to Chester in 1758, and remained there until his death ten years later. The Papists' Returns for 1767 describe him as "a gentleman", living in the parish of St. John's, with his housekeeper, Ann Abram. As they are both stated to have been resident for nine years, it is possible that she had accompanied him from Lancashire when he moved to Chester.

Father Cooling was succeeded in 1770 by Father John Kitchen.[35] With Father Kitchen, there began that long line of missioners, trained in Douai and later in Ushaw, who built up, by their apostolic zeal and pastoral care, the nineteenth century Church in Chester. Like Father Cooling, he was a Lancashire man, born into an old recusant family from Stone Bridge, in Barton near Preston. He went to Douai at the age of fifteen, and on the completion of his studies, was ordained in 1768. The next two years were spent in teaching in the College, until on May 15th, 1770, he was sent on the English Mission. He seems to have come im-

mediately to Chester, where he was usually known under the name of Marsden.

Though he may not have opened it, it is under Father Kitchen that we hear for the first time of a Catholic Chapel, a sure sign that the Catholic population was beginning to expand. It was situated, in the words of the earliest Directory for Chester, compiled in 1789, "in the part of Foregate Street, opposite Love Lane, under which is a house where the priest of that (Romish) persuasion usually resides". Writing a hundred years later, Mgr. E. Slaughter described it as "a room over Mr. Parry's coach-house, close to Parry's Entry", though some older inhabitants had told him "it was in the Entry itself".[36] The site of the house and Parry's Entry have long since been demolished, to make room for modern shops, but it was here that Mass was said openly again, and the Sacraments administered to the hundred or so Catholics who made up the congregation. The choice of Parry's Entry for the Chapel is not without significance. It lay outside the city walls, in an inconspicuous place, and in an area where the Catholics were most numerous. Possible also, Mr. Parry was a Catholic.

By 1774, Bishop William Walton, the Vicar Apostolic of the Northern District came, and confirmed sixty three people, though some may have come from Cheshire. In October, 1793, when Father Kitchen died, the Catholic community in Chester could look forward with more confident hope towards the emancipation which lay ahead.

CHAPTER II

The Priests of the Nineteenth Century

The story of the growth of the Catholic Church in Chester between the years 1794 and 1882 must rightly begin with an account of the priests who devoted their lives to furthering that growth. The secular priests working during those years, in what was to become St. Werburgh's parish, numbered ten. Several of them were men of outstanding character and ability. Two became Vicars Apostolic of the Northern District. All of them were zealous and devoted pastors, who faced and overcame enormous difficulties of every kind in their labour for souls. The modern Church in Chester is built upon the foundations they laid. To their number must also be added, after 1858, the Capuchin Friars, who founded the Church and parish of St. Francis in Grosvenor Street.

The first among them was Father James Lancaster, who was in charge of the Mission, in succession to Father Kitchen, from 1794 to 1796. Like his two predecessors, he was born in Lancashire, in the year 1765, and at the age of sixteen he entered the seminary at Douai. Here, as will be explained later, his career was rudely interrupted by the outbreak of the French Revolutionary Wars, and the attack on the College by French troops. He was in the group of students who managed to escape imprisonment, and he arrived safely back in England, to be ordained at York in December, 1793. Chester was assigned to him as his first Mission, but he remained only two years, from 1794 until 1796, before moving back to his own county of Lancashire. He seems, however, to have returned before the end of his life, presumably as assistant, for he died in Chester in October, 1827.[1]

James Lancaster was succeeded by Thomas Penswick, one of the most remarkable priests of this period, who was eventually to become Vicar Apostolic of the Northern District. He was born in the Manor House, Ashton-in-Makerfield on March 7th, 1772, the second son of Mr. Thomas Penswick, who was then Steward to the Gerards of Bryn. He received his early education at Haighton House, near Preston, a boarding school which had been established a few years previously by Peter Newby.

Peter Newby, who had himself tried his vocation to the priesthood at Douai, was a teacher of great distinction. His obituary in the *Preston Chronicle* describes his school as "the only Catholic establishment of any repute in Lancashire at that time", and it continues, "many Catholic gentlemen are indebted to him for their classical acquirements".[2]

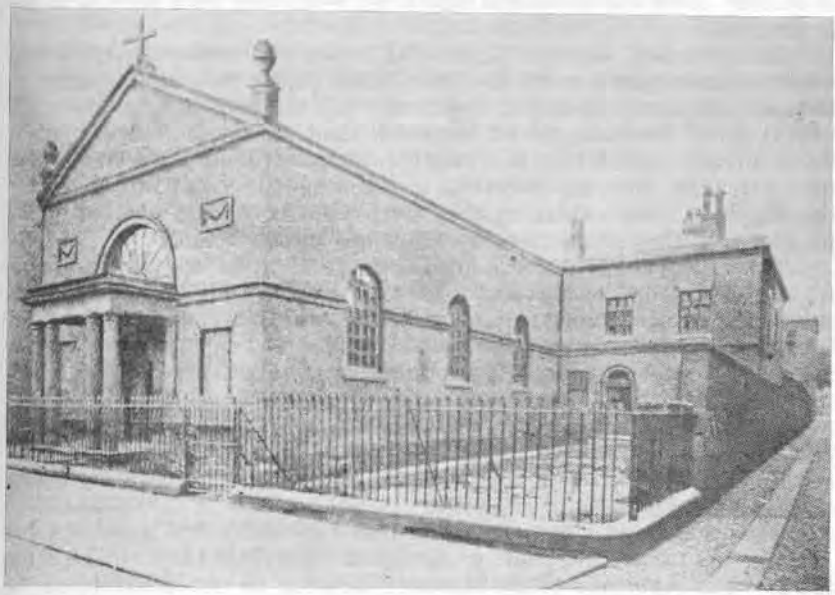
It was under his inspiration and guidance that more than one of his pupils found their way to Douai and the priesthood. Among them was Thomas Penswick, who arrived there on January 26th, 1788, when he was sixteen years of age.[3] He would have been received by William Gibson, who was then President of the College. The College was already two hundred years old when he entered it. It had been founded originally by Cardinal Allen in 1568, as a seminary to supply priests for the English

Mission. By the time Thomas Penswick commenced his studies, it also included a grammar school for Catholic boys, whose parents were prevented by the penal laws from educating their sons as Catholics in England. The content of the studies in the school was similar to that taught in an English Grammar or Public School of the period, with the addition, of course, of instruction in their Faith. Since the staff was much larger than in any English school, the education it provided surpassed its equivalent in England. The boys of the same class remained in a self-contained unit, called a "school", with their own classroom and master. The number in a "school" rarely exceeded twenty, so that the boys must have been receiving virtually private tuition. After their Humanities, as their studies of the classics were called, at about the age of twenty, many stayed on for the two-year Philosophy Course, which gave them the equivalent of the University Course, from which they were debarred by the Test Act. It was only after this that students intending to go on for the priesthood, i.e. about 25% of the total, proceeded to their Theology Course.

It is possible to follow Thomas Penswick's career in the Register kept by the Prefect of Studies,[4] from his arrival until 1793, when, as will be seen, it was abruptly altered. First of all, he was placed in the top "school" of Rudiments where the Latin he had begun under Peter Newby stood him in good stead, and to which he added the learning of Greek. In 1789, he went up into the Grammar "school", but before the year was over, he was promoted to the "Syntax school". During the next four years, his career can be traced, as he moved up the different "schools", until at the age of twenty, he was among the "high" philosophers, whose goal was philosophy and some physical science. Then comes the entry in the Register for 1793, "Thomas Penswick. Went October 12th". What, then, had happened, to bring about so sudden a departure?

The story of the preceding months in Thomas Penswick's life is worth relating, because it illustrates so vividly the character of the man whom the Catholics of Chester were to know as their priest. It was marked by the daring, the stubborn determination and the energy which are the features of Lancashire folk. In 1792, the political situation in Europe was dark and threatening. In France, the Bourbon monarchy had fallen before the onslaught of the Revolutionaries, the Reign of Terror was sending hundreds to the guillotine, and all Church property had been nationalised. Though English parents had already been withdrawing their boys from Douai, the town still seemed safe enough, since it was situated in the Netherlands, and therefore under Austrian rule. But by the end of the year, the French armies had over-run the Netherlands and in January, 1793, England declared war on France. The five British religious establishments in Douai were trapped. Armed guards were placed in the College, the entrances were closed, and the rooms sealed.[5]

The guards, however, had not counted on the Lancashire students! Thomas Penswick and three other students, all chosen for their prudence and daring, scaled the College walls, and secreted some of the College property in the town. Then they buried the church plate in the College grounds, and the refectory plate under a classroom floor.[6] Meanwhile, the staff and students, including Thomas's brother, John, were moved from one place to another, until they were finally imprisoned in Doullens,



Chapel of St. Werburgh, Queen Street
Above: Exterior
Below: Interior, with Daniel O'Connell lying in state

in Picardy. Here they remained until 1794, when they were allowed to go to England.

On Saturday, October 12th, 1793, while the students were being marched under guard to the Scottish College before their final transfer to Doullens, Penswick managed to escape, with the help of a countryman who supplied the College with firewood. Hence the note in the Prefect's Book, already quoted. With him went six others, including James Lancaster, then a deacon. Evading detection, they reached the coast in safety, but the English Consul, thinking they were French, refused to give them passports, so they crossed over to England without them.

By February, 1794, twenty one Douai students, including six destined for the Northern Vicariate, had made their way to Old Hall in Hertfordshire. Relations, however, between the southerners and northerners became strained, and expressions like "Cockney impertinence, before which the blood of the North did not quail" and "Lancashire blackguards" were bandied around.[7] In the end, the Northerners, including Penswick, petitioned their own bishop to take them away. According to Ushaw tradition, Penswick and three others set out on foot, with their luggage in a wheelbarrow, heading north for Crook Hall, Durham. It was here that he was ordained on April 1st, 1797.

The Mission in Chester was Thomas Penswick's first appointment. He was just twenty five years of age when he arrived there. In his later life as Vicar Apostolic of the Northern District, he was described as "a handsome man, affable, generous and diligent".[8] Now, the experiences of the last four years must have matured him. He took up his new missionary labours with an energy and enthusiasm which soon became apparent in the Catholic life of Chester.

As a bishop, one of his great aims was to develop the urban chapels of his Vicariate, and doubtless in this, he was able to make use of his own experiences in Chester and also in Liverpool. One of the first tasks he set himself in Chester was the building of a proper chapel and presbytery. With the influx of Irish immigrants, the Catholic population was rapidly expanding, and a new chapel was urgently needed. By now, the prohibition against saying and hearing Mass had been lifted, though chapels had still to be registered at Quarter Sessions. Father Penswick obtained land in Queen Street, and by April, 1799, only two years after his arrival, he had the chapel open and registered.[9] No details have survived to show how he obtained the money or purchased the land. A list of "Masses to be said in perpetuity", which now hangs in the sacristy of St. Werburgh's Church begins with "Twenty four Masses a year for the Irish merchants". They may well have been the benefactors who came to his assistance.

The chapel was built on the west side of Queen Street, and it was evidently regarded by the inhabitants of Chester as a building worthy of their city. Shortly after its erection, it was described in a Directory as "a small but handsome brick building, with an elegant doric portico, supported by four pillars". We do not know what the interior looked like in 1799. In 1850, it was said to be "of chaste appearence, with the altar beautifully decorated, and an admirable painting of the Crucifixion over the cross".

This chapel was to become dear to many generations of Chester

Catholics right down to modern times, first as their chapel, and later, when the present St. Werburgh's church was built, as the school where they were educated. It was demolished as recently as 1966 and today the site is used as a car-park. The cross which once surmounted the gable end has been preserved by the present parish priest, and has been re-erected in the grounds of the new Catholic Social Centre in Brook Street.

When Daniel O'Connell, the famous "Catholic Emancipator" died in Turin on his way to Rome in 1854, in accordance with his wishes, his heart was sent to Rome, and his body to Ireland. On its way to Glasnevin, the coffin rested overnight in the chapel in Queen Street.

The choice of Queen Street was a wise one. It lay back from the busy thoroughfare which traverses the city, but was near enough to it to be accessible and its pleasant, airy situation must have been a welcome change from Parry's Entry. The prejudice against building a papist chapel was still there. While it was being built, it was frequently demolished during the night, until ultimately volunteers from the Connaught Rangers, stationed at Chester at that time, guarded it regularly until well after it was completed. The new presbytery was built at right angles to the chapel, with its entrance on Union Walk. Beyond them both lay the small Catholic burial ground. The house in Union Walk must, at first, have been rented, since in 1836 Penswick's successor, John Briggs, listed among his expenses, £2. 10s. for "house rent in Union Walk".

In addition to the building of a chapel, where his flock might at last hear Mass and receive the Sacraments unmolested,[10] his zealous care is reflected in the number of their children whom he baptised on the day of their birth or almost immediately afterwards. We know this from the earliest Baptism Register, which he began.[11] This bears on its flyleaf the statement, "Begun by Thomas Penswick", and as the first entries go back to 1794, he must also have copied up names of children baptised by his predecessor, James Lancaster. The meticulous care, as well as the elegant penmanship, with which all the details of the entries are made, bring out clearly his zeal as a priest, and the diligence which those who knew him remarked on.

The esteem in which Thomas Penswick was held by his fellow priests, and also the importance in his eyes of the Chester Mission, is illustrated by an incident which occurred in 1810. There was question of transferring him to York, in order to release the priest there for the Ushaw Presidency. With the support of the Lancashire clergy, he wrote to his bishop, refusing "to budge until he knew the name of the man who would succeed him".[12] Clearly, he had lost none of the forthright spirit which characterised him in his younger days. He may have been afraid, also, that Chester would be left without a priest. He was allowed to remain on, but not for long. In 1814, he was appointed to the new chapel of St. Nicholas, Copperas Hill, Liverpool, later to become the pro-cathedral for Liverpool. Twelve years afterwards, he was consecrated co-adjutor to Bishop Smith, the Vicar Apostolic of the Northern District, whom he succeeded in 1831. As bishop, he did not forget his first congregation, but "sent his compliments to all his friends at Chester", when there was occasion to write. He died in 1836, aged sixty three, in his old home at Ashton-in-Makerfield, where his brother, Randal, had brought him in his failing health.

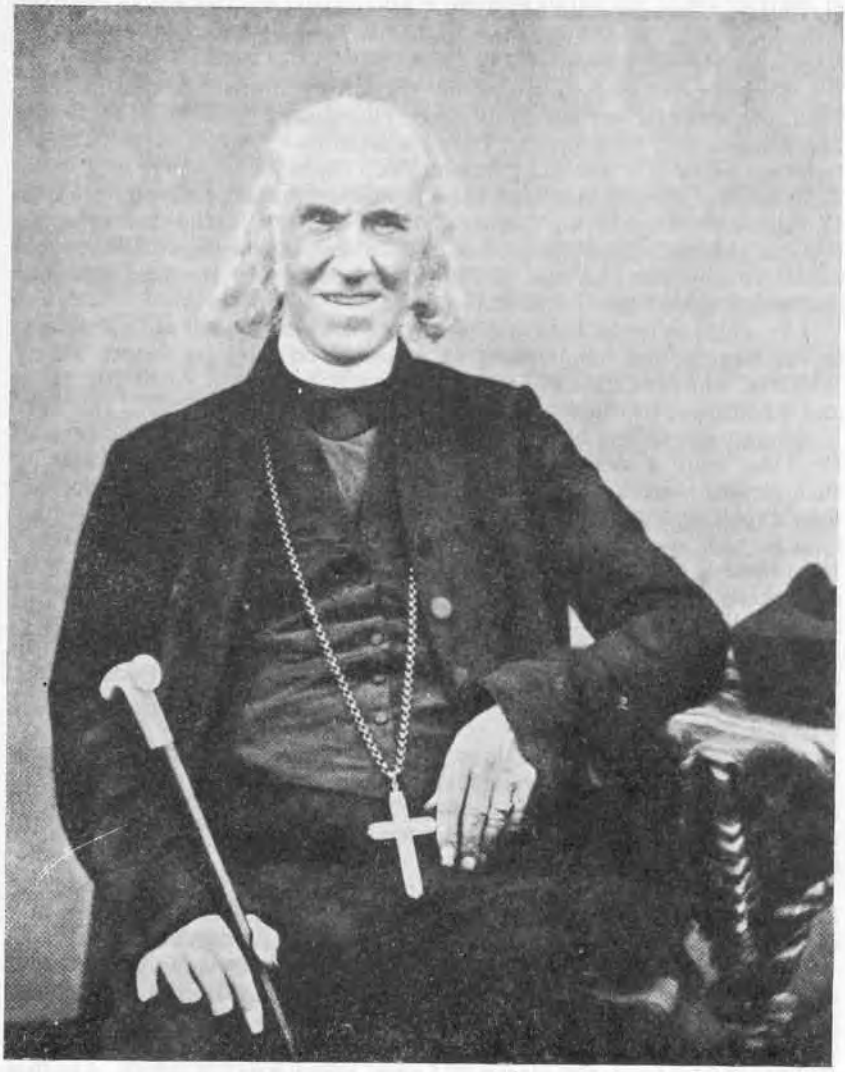
After Thomas Penswick's departure for Liverpool, John Ashurst came to Chester. His name appears in the registers during the three years he was in charge of the mission, but nothing more is known about him. In 1818, when he had gone to Manchester, he wrote to his successor, whom he addressed as "Dear Billy". He enclosed £30 for furniture, and asked that the books that he had left at Chester might be sent to him by "Mr. Magennis when he returns from the fair". He also sent his compliments to all his friends at Chester.

Perhaps Thomas Penswick left for Liverpool with less reluctance than he had shown about York, because he had received the assurance that John Briggs would eventually replace him. It was Father Briggs whom he later asked to be his co-adjutor, and who succeeded him as Vicar Apostolic in 1836. The son of William and Sarah Briggs, John Briggs was born on May 20th, 1788, at Barton on Irwell, outside Manchester. His family were farmers, owning land at Barton, Ripton and Woolston in Lancashire. He received his early education at the important Catholic school of Sedgley Park, near Wolverhampton, and it was here that he came to know boys who remained his friends throughout his life. At the age of fifteen, he went to Crook Hall, later transferred to Ushaw, to begin his studies for the priesthood. A number of letters written to him during this period of his life have survived.[18]

One of the first, written when he had only been at the College just over a year, was to tell him of the death of his father, which took place on November 30th, 1805. It was written by his former parish priest, Father J. Haydock, who had been asked by his family to break the news to him. It is a letter full of kindness and understanding, giving the young boy of fifteen the details of his father's last hours, of his reception of the Last Sacraments, and of his burial at Warrington. He reminds him of "God's adorable Will", even while he "indulges those feelings which nature and filial affection will not suffer you to repress". His mother and brothers, he is told, bear their distress with great fortitude, and he is asked to write to them as soon as he receives the letter. Underneath the stilted nineteenth century language, the priest consoles him, telling him how much he will miss John's father from his small congregation, and he sends him money to pay his fees and to supply his wants.

There are a number of other family letters, especially from his brother Thomas, which John must have treasured. Spelling was not Thomas's strong point, but as the eldest son of the family, he gives all the news. He tells him in 1807 about the gathering in of the hay, and adds, "I should be very happy if you would be so kind as to let me know when you go in to your new Couledg (i.e. Ushaw), in your next letter". He sends his mother's love, and says that "she intends to stay in widowhood". In the following year, Thomas wrote asking his brother to "send the small parcel by the mail coach", and passes on the message from his mother to get a great coat made for himself. John—who would hardly need reminding —is to "Remember father especially at Mass". He must have replied immediately, for there is an answer from Thomas in January, 1809, ending with the words, "remember hous in your prars".

In November, 1809, death struck the family again, when Thomas died intestate. His mother, Sarah Briggs was granted the administration of his



John Briggs, Missioner in Chester, 1816-1833

property in Barton. This time the news was broken to John by Mr. Brettargh of Trafford House, who promises to help his mother, in her loss. She must have been alarmed about John for he is questioned about his own "precarious state of health". He is also instructed about how to draw up a will, and to settle on his mother the property he had inherited from his father in Ripton and Woolston.

There is only one surviving letter from his mother, written in 1815, when she was married again, to a Mr. Hankinson. She begins by telling him details about his property. Then she continues, "Spare a few moments to let me know how you are going on. You cannot surely have forgot me. Shall we have the pleasure of seeing you this summer, as you will have time to dispose of? Your loving mother, Sarah Hankinson". Had their relations become strained, possibly because of her second marriage? We do not know. In any case, he was already ordained a year by then, and was teaching Rhetoric and Logic in the College.

In addition to the family letters, there are also several others, written in the large round handwriting of a school boy, by his friend, Henry Weedale, who was then at Oscott. The earliest is dated April 9th, 1805, and is addressed to Master John Briggs, Crook Hall, Gatishead, Durham. It is an answer to one of his own to Henry. His friend tells him how glad he is that John is so happy and contented at Crook Hall, and is making such rapid progress in Latin and Greek. They are obviously comparing their experiences at the two seminaries, for Henry continues, "Pray how long do you study the Greek Grammar before you begin to construe? Here there is generally a year's *drudgery* at that book, or what Mr. Potts calls sharp work, for you must know he is a great advocate for what he styles 'laying a good foundation' . . . I grow fonder of Oscott every day". He then tells John how other friends are progressing, and finishes, "Tell me likewise how Platt (i.e. Ralph Platt, later missioner at Puddington), goes on. Bucknall desires to be remembered to you. Have you got your bird safe?"

In another letter written three years later, when the students of Crook Hall had moved to Ushaw, Henry talks about "our little seminary in comparison with your stately College". Their correspondence continued as late as 1812, while some of his friends went on writing to him after his appointment to Chester.

John Briggs was a man of boundless energy, who as a bishop took as his motto "Non recuso laborem". He was remarkable for his tall and commanding stature, and in his later years for his patriarchal appearance. A complete extrovert, he acquired a reputation for writing and talking, even as a missionary in Chester. There is still in existence a folder of remains and draft copies of letters to newspapers on the controversial religious topics of the day. One is an answer to a speech made by the Bishop of Chester in the House of Lords, attacking the Church. Another is a draft letter in defence of the Irish, and signed "No Irishman". It is addressed to Father John Hall of Macclesfield, presumably for his comments, and on the back he adds, "The editor of the Man; (? the Manchester Guardian) had not the candour to reply. If it does not appear, I will insert it in a Chester Paper".

During the seventeen years he spent at Chester, from 1816 to 1833,

when he returned to Ushaw as its President, there was an enormous growth in the Catholic population. This was mainly due, as will be shown later, to the large immigration of Irish people. The baptismal register for the years when he took charge of the mission shows the rapid increase in numbers. It also illustrates his apostolic work among his people. In 1829, to take a typical year, out of the seventy baptisms, he administered nearly half on the day of the child's birth or within the week, and most of the remainder were within the next two or three weeks. No doubt, this was the result of strong Irish tradition, but it also shows his zealous work as a missioner. It was also he who began the first marriage register.[14]

The complete trust which the Irish members of his flock had in their pastor is shown by the way in which they entrusted their small savings to his care. A number of scraps of paper have survived, still pinned together, on which he wrote down the sums of money they had given him, and the directions about what to do with them. On one occasion at least, the man was dying, for the note reads:—

> "Edward McDaniel died in the Infirmary, 29th October 1825, leaving in my hands £13 10s. Gave to Catherine Donnelly £3 10s."

At other times, the man was on the move, possibly as a railway navvy or as a travelling hawker. For instance:—

> "John Luke Edward Hanley left in my hands £4 5s. 0d. September 8 1825. Reverend William Dolan P.P. Strokestown, Roscommon, paid the same Dec. 1825."

or:—

> "Thomas Kelly left £4 in my hands 2 June 1826. If not called in 12 months, to Lord Dillon's office, Mr. Maguire, for John Kelly, Kiltobanks, Loughlin, Roscommon."

or simply:—

> "Martin Mahoney left in my hands 39 sovereigns. 29 August 1827. John Briggs."

It was the custom for Irish immigrants to send back home, to parents or wife and children the money they saved from their earnings. One of them, John O'Donnell, gave explicit instructions to his priest about what he was to do with the money, and these too have survived:—

> "John O'Donnell has in Your Honours hands the sum of five pounds ten shillings on Thursday 10th Day of November 1824 and if the bearer was more than twelve months away I expect Your Honour would send it home to his Mother Mary Dillon in the parrish of Kilbeaugh and Borrorg Ballaughadarien Post Office County Mayo Ireland. Forward to Mary Dillon of Middle Tawnina parish of Kilbeaugh."

The parish priest was sometimes called on to act as executor of the will of his parishioners. Among the papers of John Briggs at this time of his life there is one undated, which possibly Thomas Penswick had asked

him to put into execution. It was drawn up by Mrs. Elizabeth Connor, widow. In it, she asked that all her household furniture, wearing apparel, and linen should be sold, and the money from it and all she possessed be given and bequeathed to "Reverend Thomas Penswick of the city of Chester and to Mr. Richard Gorst, cabinet maker, for the use of my two children, Martin Connor and Francis Connor, to enable them to bring up and educate them". Her articles of silver and silver plate were to be in the hands of the executors until the children were twenty one, and then to be distributed to them in equal shares. Father Penswick and Richard Gorst were made the guardians of the children. Elizabeth herself signed the will and made her mark, and it was witnessed by two parishioners, Joseph and Elizabeth Bramwell.

In 1825, Father Briggs was made the executor of the will of Thomasina Fennesly, a maiden lady living in Chester. She left all her estate, real and personal, to her nephew, John Wilkinson, then a student at the English College, Lisbon, and her executor was asked to attend to the sale of her goods and furniture.

Like his predecessors, John Briggs had to travel considerable distances to cover the wide area of his mission. During the early years of the nineteenth century, there were only seven missionaries, serving some three thousand Catholics, in the whole of Cheshire. Four of them were stationed in the extreme east of the county, at Dunkinfield, Stockport, Macclesfield and Congleton. The other three were at Hooton, where Mass was still said in the domestic chapel belonging to the Stanley family, at Puddington where Ralph Platt was stationed, and at Chester. The whole of south Cheshire, therefore, lay within the field of labour of John Briggs. This meant travelling as far south east as Crewe and Nantwich as well as to Wrexham. The railway to Crewe was built only in 1837, so the journey would have been made on horseback, or in a horse and gig, and in 1825, we find him spending £19 13s. 4d. on the purchase of a horse and gig. At Crewe, he said Mass either in a stable behind the Royal Hotel in Nantwich Road, or in an outhouse at the back of the Red Bull in Market Street. Once a month, he rode further south to Nantwich, to say Mass for five Catholic families, in an old farmhouse at Beam Heath, two miles outside the town.[15]

One of the greatest sacrifices for the missionaries must have been their isolation from one another and from their Vicar Apostolic, at a time when Catholic Emancipation and the very growth of the Church was creating new problems. Part of the problem was overcome, almost certainly through the initiative of John Briggs, by regular meetings, which were held at Chester, thus foreshadowing the Deanery meetings of later days. The first took place on April 19th, 1825.[16] Two months later, the priests met again at Chester, and drafted a letter which was published in 1826 in the Catholic Directory and circulated to all the important Catholics in the county. It was an appeal for financial help, "the wants of religion being very urgent". It asked each one to subscribe a penny a week, so that the priests would be able "to raise up (the church's) fallen altars and rebuild her demolished temples; give support to her ministers who may break the bread of salvation to languishing souls, who may be vigilant shepherds to reconduct many sheep that have strayed from the fold of

Christ". Their first meeting had made the priests realise that between them, they possessed £110 10s. 2½d. A weekly collection, they calculated, would bring them £600. This was probably the origin of the weekly outdoor collection to which frequent reference is made by later priests in their parish notices, and on which they had to rely so heavily in their financial needs.

John Briggs must have been put in charge of the money, for several small cash books have survived, headed "Cash Book, Cheshire Mission Fund". The highest sum it realised from Chester was £42 1s. 6d. This was made up largely of donations for instance, from the Tatlock family, for the chapel box brought in only small sums, like 3/- or 6/4d. Other methods had to be resorted to, like a "charity sermon" which in 1829 brought in £32, or a Christmas Fair which added another £2 4s.

From his own student days, Father Briggs was accustomed to keeping his own money affairs in order. He was careful to keep the bills sent to him for purchases he had made. For instance, in 1812, he spent £1 0s. 9d. at George Andrews, Bookseller and Stationer, on stationery, sheets of paper and History Questions. That same year, he drew up a statement of his expenses, which came to £189, and of his income, which was £206 9s. 9½d. Occasionally, we get a glimpse of his personal expenses as missioner at Chester. Just before his departure for Ushaw, he entered into his little account book:—

"Paid to Mr. Walsh for books, shoes, etc....	9s. 6d.
Sundries for going to Ushaw	11s 6d.
Shoes etc.	7s. 6d.

In 1832, he seems to have opened an account for Nantwich. The income from the chapel there came to £31 17s. 9d., £20 of which was accounted for by a legacy received from a Mr. Linford. At the same time, he purchased a number of articles for Nantwich, which look as though he was making arrangements to stay the night there when he went to say Mass. He bought two tables, one of which cost him 18s. and the other 4s. 6d., a mattress for £1 10s., a bedstead for £1, and an armchair for 12s. At the same time, he purchased the requisites for saying Mass, candlesticks for 18s., a purple vestment for 6s. (? possibly being mended), a new alb for 17s., a new surplice for 13s. as well as a Missal stand, books, and in addition a mat for 1s. 6d.

In 1836, John Briggs succeeded Thomas Penswick as Vicar Apostolic of the Northern District. When the Hierarchy was restored in 1850, he became Bishop of Beverley. The esteem in which he was held by the other bishops made them regard him as the most likely successor to Wiseman at Westminster, if the latter's promotion to the Cardinalate had required his recall to Rome.[17] This, however, did not happen, and he remained at Beverley. Finally, broken down in health, he had to resign his see in 1860, and he died the following year.

Another Ushaw priest, John Wilcock, came to replace John Briggs in Chester in 1833. His name, like that of John Ashurst, is known to us only through the baptismal and marriage registers. His death took place at Chester on May 18th, 1838, at Chester.[18]

John Briggs had been assisted for three months during 1825 by Michael Hickey, the first priest from Ireland to work in Chester. He was born in Kilkenny in 1801, and educated at St. Patrick's, Maynooth. After his ordination, he came over to Chester in August, 1825. His name appears several times in the baptismal register during the next three months as the officiating priest, and he must have been of great assistance to Father Briggs, working especially among the Irish members of his ever-increasing flock. In November, however, he was transferred to Garstang, in Lancashire, where he remained, doing great work there, until his death in 1871.[19]

The first Irish priest to take charge of Chester was Edward Carbery. Born in 1797, he was already forty one years of age when he took up his residence in Queen Street in 1838. During his long and busy life as parish priest, he saw and initiated several remarkable developments in the Catholic life of his adopted city. Nothing shows more clearly the esteem in which he was held than his elevation to the dignity of a Canon of the first Cathedral Chapter, when the new diocese of Shrewsbury was created in 1852.

Almost from the time of his arrival, Father Carbery began to announce in the Catholic Directory the times of the Sunday services in his chapel. This, in itself, is an indication of the growing importance of Chester as a Catholic centre, and a sign of the greater freedom of the times. There was still only one Mass, at 10.30 a.m., presumably to give him time to get to the more distant parts of the parish when it was necessary to say another Mass. From 1843 until 1847, he was saying Mass at Nantwich, in an old Methodist chapel which he had rented. For the next five years, Nantwich was served from Crewe, which had its first resident priest in 1844. Many years were to elapse before either place had a proper church. Vespers were at 3 o'clock, and as the chapel already had a good organ, they, and possibly the Mass, were sung. There was also Sunday school in the morning, afternoon and evening. Before long, the chapel was dedicated to St. Werburgh. It was fitting that the patron saint of the old Catholic city, whose shrine was destroyed so long before, should be remembered once again.

Throughout the 1840's and 1850's, as will be shown later, the Catholic population was increasing rapidly. Large numbers of Irish people were settling in the completely new area beyond Foregate Street, known as Boughton, and at the same time there was a fairly consistent flow of converts into the Church. In 1847, Father Carbery wrote to his bishop, saying that since 1842, he had received fifty into the Church. By 1851, he gave the average number of attendants at Divine service on a Sunday as eight hundred and sixty.[20]

It must, therefore, have been clear that a site for a new church was urgently needed. By 1854, through the generosity of the Catholics, an eighteenth century house in Little St. John Street—Dee House, as it was called—was purchased, together with its grounds. Bishop Brown, however, after considering the proposition, gave up the idea of building a church there. The decision must have caused disappointment, but in the light of the future, it was a wise one. Catholic Emancipation was well within living memory, and Catholics were only just beginning to emerge into the public life of Chester. To have built a church side by side with the old

Father Venantius, first Guardian of St. Francis's, 1858-1873

St. John's Church, and on land which had once formed part of St. John's property, might have roused antagonism. Indeed, the last inhabitants of Dee House had been a Protestant Minister and his family. He had fallen into disgrace with the Bishop of Chester for giving hospitality to a man named Gavazzi, who had gained notoriety in Chester by spreading scandalous stories about priests and nuns. Moreover, at that time, the old Palace of the Bishops of Chester, now the Y.M.C.A., was still occupied by the Chancellor of the Cathedral, who was alarmed by what was afoot. In any case, the site was not really suitable. It was a distance away from the areas in the city where Catholics were settling. If Dee House had been demolished to make way for a church, the builders would have struck the Roman amphitheatre, part of which, in fact, lies below Dee House; they might even have found themselves floundering in the rubble which filled its arena, with all the extra problems and expense which this would have involved.

Having obtained Dee House, a solution for its use was found which, in the long run, was to bring an enormous blessing to the Church in Chester. It was proposed to invite a teaching Congregation of nuns to take over the site, and on January 29th, 1854, four Faithful Companions of Jesus took up residence.[21] The story of the Dee House Convent rightly belongs to the chapter of this book which deals with education, since this was the contribution which the Faithful Companions of Jesus, and later the Ursulines, made to Catholicism in Chester. It must have brought considerable relief to Canon Carbery when the Faithful Companions of Jesus undertook the teaching of the poorer children, in addition to the boarding school they established. He himself then began to collect the £400 needed to defray the cost of a building behind the chapel which subsequently became the boys' school.

Meanwhile, the question of a new church was solved in a way which illustrates how very quickly Catholicism was growing in Chester. This was the opening of an entirely new Mission, made possible by the coming of the Capuchin Friars.[22] On 22nd December, 1858, the Superior of the Pantasaph friary, Father Seraphin, established the Mission, of which Father Venantius became the first Guardian. Taking up residence in two small cottages in Cuppin Street, the friars began their work at the opposite end of the town from St. Werburgh's, in an area where there was already a large section of the Catholic population. Mass was first said in a rented room in Bishop Lloyd's Palace, a house in Watergate Row, well-known even today for its sixteenth century architecture. However, it was large enough for only sixty to seventy people, and therefore, in 1860, the chapel was removed to a wooden shed at 25 Watergate Row, which could accommodate three hundred. Two years later, in 1862, the friars were able to purchase from the Ecclesiastical Commissioners a piece of land and a house situated between Grosvenor Street and Cuppin Street. Here, on 23rd September, 1862, the foundation stone of a new church was laid by Bishop Brown. The early setbacks of this Franciscan Mission, and its final achievement in the opening of the present church of St. Francis will be described later.

The death of Canon Carbery took place in 1861. Only one hundred years had elapsed since the Bishop of Chester was reporting the handful

of "Papists of a lower sort" in his Returns to the House of Lords; and yet, how much had been accomplished! There were now two flourishing Missions, with Confraternities to which the laity belonged, the education of Catholic children was safeguarded, and religious life had once more returned to the city where it had once been destroyed. Canon Carbery himself was known in the city, he was on the Governing Body of the Royal Infirmary; even the prison in the Castle was open to his visits. In the words of the *Chester Chronicle*, "he left behind the memory of a high and estimable character". It was no mean achievement.

Four priests followed Canon Carbery in quick succession, Father Hopkins from 1861 to 1865, Father Lahaye from 1865 until his death two years later, Father Walton in 1867 to 8, and finally Canon Eugene Buquet, who was parish priest from 1868 until his departure for St. Werburgh's, Birkenhead, in 1882.

Eugene Buquet was French by birth. His parents had settled in Edinburgh after the French Revolution.[23] Like John Briggs, he was educated at Sedgley Park School, before going in 1851 to Oscott College, the seminary for the Midland District. He was ordained there on June 3rd, 1860. He began his priestly life as a curate of St. Werburgh's, Birkenhead, and after five years there, was made Bishop's secretary. He took up his work as parish priest of Chester in July, 1868. Like Canon Carbery, he was made a member of the Cathedral Chapter, first as a Canon Penitentiary, and later, in 1883, as Provost, a post he retained until his death in 1898.

Canon Buquet's achievement in Chester lay in consolidating the work of his predecessors of the last hundred years, and in promoting Catholicism so that it might play its full part in the life of the city. In all the parish records that remain for the period when he was in charge, we can recognise his clarity of mind, his ability to organise and his energy. So extensive had the pastoral care of the parish become that assistant priests were now being regularly appointed. Five in succession helped him in his work. These were Father Thomas Mulvanny (1866-70), Edward Lynch (1870-71) who was to return as parish priest, James O'Brien (1871-75), Pacificus Capitani (1880-82) and Charles Cholmondeley. Canon Cholmondeley, who remained at Chester as assistant priest from 1871 to 1892, belonged to the prominent landed family of the Cholmondeleys of Cheshire. Educated at Rugby and Christ's College, Oxford, he was converted through contacts with Newman and the Oxford Movement. He completed his priestly studies at Oscott and was ordained, at the age of forty one, in 1866. After his death in 1897, it was said of him that "by nature and by grace he was a gentleman, and a Christian in the fullest sense of the word, generous to the Church and to the poor".

The most urgent need which faced Eugene Buquet when he arrived in Chester was the building of a new church, since by now the old chapel in Queen Street was totally inadequate for the increased numbers in the parish. Before long, through the generosity of two well-known benefactors to the diocese, Michael and John Harnett,[24] the site of the present church, opposite Grosvenor Park, was acquired. Unfortunately, the 1875 Ordnance Map of Chester must have been made while the church was being built, so that it is too late to show the use of the site before this date. Traditionally, it was a field used for the grazing of donkeys. The map shows it abutting

Original design of St. Werburgh's, showing tower and spire

St. Werburgh's Church. *Above:* Interior. *Below:* Exterior

on the gardens of a large house, Forest House, from which the present Forest Street took its name. Park Road had recently been made, but Edwards Court where a large number of Catholics lived, still lay to the north of the site. There seems to be no record of the person from whom the site was purchased.

Two letters have been preserved at St. Werburgh's from Peter Paul Pugin, requesting from Canon Buquet the sum of £364 5s., for services in drawing up plans for the new church, but misunderstanding, a not uncommon feature in the life of the Pugin family, may have occurred. In the end, a relatively young and less known architect from Liverpool, Edmund Kirby, was chosen. St. Werburgh's is, therefore, an early example of much work which Kirby was to do in many parts of the diocese of Shrewsbury. It was a period in nineteenth century Catholic architecture when medieval styles were much in vogue. Dispensing with superfluous ornamentation in order to make the church as spacious as possible, Edmund Kirby used the Early English style, which is exemplified so beautifully in the old parish church of St. John's. The position of the site obliged him to build the church on a west-east axis with the altar at the west end, instead of the opposite and more correct way, with the altar facing east. Grey Stourton stone, which possesses great durability, was chosen for the exterior, with blue Welsh slate for the high-pitched roof. Within, the church was given an apsidal sanctuary, and the nave of four bays was separated from the aisles by massive pillars of red sandstone. Want of funds prevented Kirby's original plan from being fully implemented—in fact, it has never been carried out. He had wanted a nave of six bays, and in particular, a tower and 200ft. spire, which would have been a conspicuous landmark at that time, specially as the church is built on slightly rising ground. It was only in 1914 that the east end, where Kirby had planned the tower, was completed as it is today. The modern roadway would now prevent a tower from being built, but in 1875, the front of the building stood a considerable distance back. It is unfortunate that the plan of the tower and spire was not carried out as the church was first designed. They would have given an added dignity to the exterior, and a balance and completeness which the height of the roof demands, but which are lacking. A Mr. Brandreth, a convert, arranged in his will for an entailed £1,000 to be given ultimately for the erection of a tower. It has not yet arrived, but there is no need to comment on the inadequacy of such a sum for such a project today.

The foundation stone of the new church was laid on October 15th, 1873, and through the hard work of the contractor, Mr. Hughes of Aldford, it was ready for use by the end of 1875. It was on Christmas Day, 1875, that the first Mass was celebrated by Cardinal Manning. No details of the occasion seem to have survived, and the Parish Notice Book for this year is missing. There is, however, a full account, both in the *Chester Chronicle* and in the *Cheshire Observer* of the solemn opening, which took place on Thursday, July 13th, 1876, from which it is possible to reconstruct this event.

No pains were spared to make the opening as solemn and as splendid as possible. Pontifical High Mass—the first in Chester for three hundred years—was sung by Bishop O'Reilly of Liverpool, in the presence of Bishop Brown of Shrewsbury and a large gathering of canons and priests

of the diocese. These were the days of elaborate church music, and we are told that "Haydn's Mass No. 1 was beautifully rendered by a selected band of fifteen performers and about twenty vocalists", and that "The cost of the band and extra chorus was defrayed by Thomas Wallington, Esq., of Latchford,[25] Miss Wallington singing very sweetly and with much expression, the soprano solos in the service". It was also the time when "charity sermons" gave an added grandeur to a great occasion. During the latter part of the nineteenth century, Jesuits were very frequently invited to preach at St. Werburgh's, so it is not surprising to find so well known a preacher as Father Clare, S.J.[26] being asked to render this service. His theme was the comfort and blessing which men received from the Church throughout their lives, and the sacrifices they should willingly make "to promote the external loveliness of God's Temples".

The writers of the two newspaper articles waxed eloquent on the rich and colourful scene inside the church, the profusion of rich flowers covering the altar, the crimson carpet on the altar steps, and the figured green carpet which covered the sanctuary. All this, together with the blazing lights of the candles, the incense, the vestments of the two bishops and their assistants, and the elaborate ritual of the full Latin Mass must have brought tremendous joy and pride to all present, and not least to Canon Buquet. To the modern reader, the only jarring note seems to be struck by the remark at the end that "the ceremony was witnessed by rather small numbers, owing probably to the somewhat heavy prices charged for admission". In any case, many of the poorer parishioners, of whom there were not a few, would have been at work on a Thursday morning at 11 o'clock, while the ceremony was in progress. Let us hope that "the similar service held in the evening when Father Clare again preached, and the special services held on the following Sunday" were for their benefit, and that even if they did not listen to Haydn's Mass, they did at least enjoy the "singing of the Hallelujah Chorus which brought the morning's celebration to a close".

St. Werburgh's church was not the only, nor indeed, the earliest building undertaken by Canon Buquet. The parish also had to thank him for the building of the Boys' and Infants' Schools in Queen Street. This was probably how he first came to know Edmund Kirby, whom he employed for the Boys' School in 1870. For this, a Chester contractor, Mr. Andrews, was used. The opening of the new church, and the erection, through the generosity of Mrs. Michael Harnett, of the presbytery beside it, freed the old chapel and presbytery in Queen Street. These now became the Girls' Department, and the caretaker's house.

Like his predecessors, Father Lahaye and Father Walton, Canon Buquet was a frequent visitor in the schools. He gave children religious instruction, and one reads in the Log Book of the Boys' School of his taking the boys of the Night School, who were often rough and noisy, into the old chapel in order to help them by his teaching. On one occasion, he brought a new map of Palestine into the school, and there were probably other gifts which have gone unrecorded. The schools and their work must have given the Canon great satisfaction, for there are numbers of entries in the Log Books, noting the visitors he took into them, especially soon after their new buildings were completed. On 30th April, 1875, he showed

Above: The exterior of St. Francis's Church
Below: Centenary Mass, June 1st, 1975

round no less a dignitary than Cardinal Manning, together with Bishop Brown and Father T. A. Bryan, to the excitement and curiosity of the children, one imagines, and the no less trepidation of the teacher, Mr. Ryder. All the same, the schools must have been a great financial worry to the Canon, partly because of the poverty of many parents who were unable to contribute even the 1d. a week asked from them, and consequently, kept their children away from school, and also because the Government grant depended on the results of the Inspectors' Reports. The new school had been built at a cost of £1,400. When one reads in the Log Book that total school fees for the year 1881 came to £96 5s. 3d. an increase of £36 on those of two years previously, such a debt must have seemed formidable. In spite of the considerable generosity of the wealthier members of the parish and of the Harnett family, there was the additional burden of the church debt to be paid. It is not surprising that Canon Buquet's successor, Edward Lynch, found when he returned to Chester, a total sum of £7,000 waiting to be paid off. Nowadays, when criticism is sometimes levelled against Catholic clergy in general for their too great preoccupation with money, it is well to remember the faith and courage with which nineteenth century priests faced poverty, sacrifice and anxiety over money, in order to give the twentieth century Church in England what it enjoys.

While Canon Buquet was striving to develop the parish of St. Werburgh's, the Franciscan mission was passing through unusually difficult times.[27] Not long after the laying of the foundation stone of the new church, in 1862, the contractor failed, and no-one could be found to complete the contract according to the original agreement. While negotiations were in hand for the continuation of the work, two unforeseen disasters brought the whole project to a halt. In October, 1863, an earthquake occurred, which shook the building so badly that the whole of the east gable had to be taken down. This had just been rebuilt, and the whole church, except for the sanctuary, re-roofed, when on the morning of December 3rd, a hurricane struck the building, wrecking it almost entirely. The City authorities condemned what remained standing as unsafe, and this too had to be pulled down.

Refusing to give in, the Franciscans erected on the site a temporary wooden chapel, which was capable of holding five hundred people. This was opened on June 16th, 1864, and continued to be used for Mass during the next ten years.

In 1873, Father Venantius, the first superior of St. Francis's, was succeeded by Father Pacificus. The new Guardian immediately set about the task of building a permanent church. As work proceeded, the wooden chapel had to be dismantled. In order to provide Sunday Mass, the friars used the Music Hall in St. Werburgh's Street, once a medieval church. On weekdays, Mass was said in their own private chapel, in their house at 13 Cuppin Street. On April 29th, 1875, the new church of St. Francis was solemnly opened, in presence of Cardinal Manning, Bishop Brown and a large number of clergy, as well as the Earl of Denbigh and the Mayor of Chester. Bishop Hedley, the Auxiliary of Newport, sang the Mass, and the Cardinal preached. The day ended with a solemn Benediction, given by the Cardinal, and Bishop Hedley preached.

During this period, the Franciscan community consisted of three members, Father Venantius Jansen, Father Engelbert Van Dieren and Father Nicholas Mazzerini. As yet, they had no permanent house, but were living in cramped quarters where, to add to their trials over their church, it was difficult to carry out their religious observances. To complete their foundation in Chester, where in pre-Reformation days the "Grey Friars" had been so popular, they needed a proper friary. The foundation stone of their new home was laid on August 3rd, 1875. The day itself was a propitious one, for it followed the great Franciscan feast of the Portiuncula, or the "little Portion" of St. Mary of the Angels, which St. Francis made the first home of the Order. It was fitting also that the foundation stone should be laid by Viscount Fielding, the Earl of Denbigh. The Viscount was a great friend and benefactor of the Capuchins, ever since their arrival at Pantasaph, in North Wales, in 1853, three years after his reception into the Church.

The new friary, beside the church in Grosvenor Street, was a plain red-brick building, and its interior, in accordance with Franciscan poverty, was simplicity itself. Two reception rooms, a library, a refectory and a kitchen comprised the ground floor, and above, there were seventeen private rooms, or "cells", to use a monastic phrase, for the use of the brethren. So large a number of rooms for such a small community might, perhaps, have seemed superfluous. Twelve months later, however, they were all in demand, for the first meeting in England of the General Chapter of the Order took place in Chester, and then every room available would have been used.

The cost of the new friary was £2,000, a sum which was largely defrayed by the generosity of the friends of the Capuchins. Among those who contributed were the Duke of Norfolk, the Earl of Denbigh, and several well-known Catholics families in Chester, the Tophams, the Tatlocks, the Burtons and others. The building had been designed by the Liverpool architect and contemporary of Edmund Kirby, James O'Byrne, but many of the interior fittings were the work of the friars themselves, some of whom came over from Pantasaph to do it. For instance, the carving of the choir stalls in the private chapel was the work of an Italian friar, who was responsible for similar stalls at Pantasaph.

The solemn opening of the new friary took place on Wednesday, July 19th, 1876, just a week after the opening of St. Werburgh's church. The ceremony was preceded by a solemn High Mass, in the church of St. Francis, during which a special voluntary choir sang Mozart's Mass. Father Pacificus, the chief celebrant, spoke movingly in his sermon, of the gratitude of the friars towards all those who had made it possible for them "to be seen again in their own monastery, in the ancient city of Chester, trying by their simplicity and fervour both among the rich and the poor, to gain souls to Jesus Christ". At the conclusion of the Mass, a procession was formed, and all followed Father Pacificus through the building, as he solemnly blessed each room in turn. After that, the house was open for the week, so that all who wished might visit it.

The celebrations all through those long July days of 1876, first at St. Werburgh's and then at St. Francis's, must have caused no little astonishment to the good folk of Chester. They could hardly have missed

noticing the arrival of the various dignitaries, lay and ecclesiastical, or the flags which decorated the new church and friary in the busy Grosvenor Street. That such "goings-on" could not only be allowed, but be so fully and favourably reported in the local press, gives us an indication of the position now enjoyed by the Catholic Church in Chester. It was well summed up by Bishop Brown, when he returned to St. Francis's church on July 22nd. After accepting an illuminated address of congratulation and a purse containing twenty five gold sovereigns, to mark his episcopal silver jubilee, he spoke of the changes which had taken place in Chester during his twenty five years as Bishop of Shrewsbury. At his first Visitation, he said, there were no more than seven hundred Catholics, one small chapel, and but thirty two children attending school. Now they had two churches, and schools to accommodate all the Catholic children of the place. It is hardly surprising that he left the church to the strains of the "Te Deum" and "Faith of our Fathers". The Catholics in Chester were beginning to reap with joy what their forefathers had sown with tears!

CHAPTER III

Growth in the Nineteenth Century

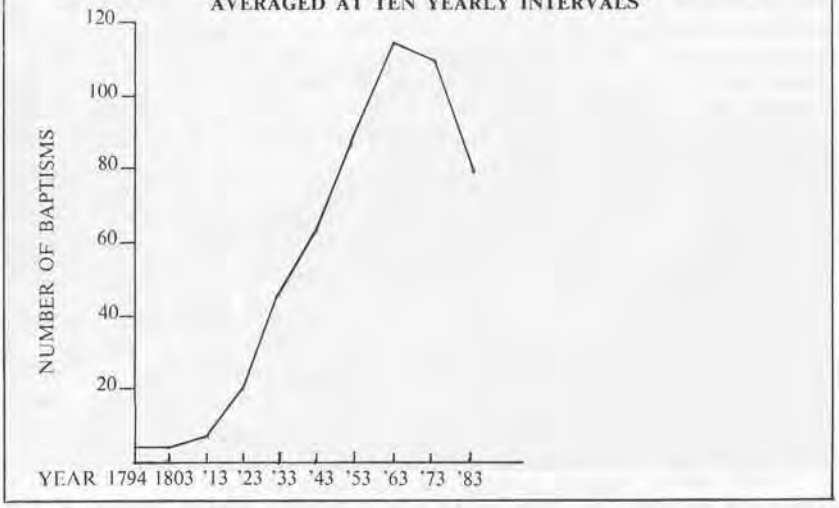
We have already seen that in 1767, when the total population of Chester was over 14,000, the Catholics numbered only one hundred and twenty nine. It was also suggested that the Catholic body was an ageing one, which could grow only very slowly, unless immigrants came to swell its ranks. This picture is borne out by the next set of figures sent to the House of Lords by the Bishop of Chester in 1780. There, he reported that they numbered forty six, distributed in the following Anglican parishes:—

St. John's	St. Mary's	St. Peter's	St. Martin's
23	12	5	2
	St. Olave's	Trinity	
	2	2	

These figures may be incomplete. Nevertheless, during the thirteen years which had elapsed since the last Returns, many of the older people would have died, leaving behind a much smaller number of young people to fill the gaps. It seems true to say that, even if the drop in numbers was not as severe as it appears here, it does give an indication of what was happening. The 1770's may well have been the lowest ebb of Catholicism in Chester before the turn of the tide.

After 1780, however, we can begin to make use of the surviving registers of the Mission. The baptismal registers run continuously from 1794 down to the present day. The marriage registers are almost as complete, starting from 1823. Unfortunately, there is a gap of twenty five years in the burial registers from 1836 to 1861, and they are incomplete for the beginning of the century. It is the baptismal registers which are particularly revealing. By averaging the number of baptisms at ten-yearly intervals, and plotting the figures on a graph, it is possible to see how rapidly the number of baptisms rose during the nineteenth century. Beginning with an average of four baptisms a year between the years 1794 and 1813, it reached one hundred and fifteen a year between 1854 and 1863. After that, though one hundred and twenty nine were baptised in 1863—the same figure incidentally, as there were Catholics in Chester a hundred years before—the numbers began slowly to fall. This was caused partly by the slackening off of immigration, and partly by the development of St. Francis's parish. The highest percentage increase took place at the beginning of the century, especially between the years 1814 and 1823, when there was a 185% increase. After the 1830's, though there was a steady increase it remained at about 33%. The baptism figures therefore show that there was a rapid growth in the numbers of Catholics in Chester in the first half of the nineteenth century, and especially between 1814 and 1823.

GRAPH TO SHOW RISE IN NUMBER OF BAPTISMS FROM 1794 TO 1883, AVERAGED AT TEN YEARLY INTERVALS



Continuity of the baptism registers also makes it possible to use a conventional and recognised method of estimating the size of the Catholic population, though the resultant figures show a trend rather than make any claim to absolute accuracy. By taking the average number of baptisms at ten-yearly intervals and multiplying by thirty, the following table can be drawn up to show the approximate size of the Catholic population between 1794 and 1883. The date given represents January 1st of every sixth year in the ten-yearly groups:—

Year	1799	1809	1819	1829	1839	1849	1859	1869	1879
No. of Catholics	120	210	600	1,440	1,891	2,580	3,450	3,330	2,400
% Increase		75%	186%	140%	31.2%	36.5%	33.7%		

These figures seem surprisingly high and they have to be accepted cautiously. At the same time, they fit in with the general rise of the population of Chester itself, and of the parish of St. John's in particular. Between 1801 and 1831, the total population of the city rose from 14,860 to 21,344, i.e. by 43.6%. The two Anglican parishes affected by this growth were St. Oswald's and St. John's, which had well over half the total population of the city between them, with St. John's taking the greater share. This expansion continued from 1832 till 1861, St. John's rising from 6,035 in 1835 to 9,835 in 1861. By far the greatest area of expansion therefore took place to the north east of the city, in the quarter circle stretching from Upper Northgate Street to Foregate Street. A whole new housing area, known as "New Town", grew up to the north of the Chester Canal, in the vicinity of St. Anne's Street and the streets leading off it. At the same time, the land between the canal and Foregate Street

and out to Boughton was quickly filled in. Here, in streets like Canal Side, Steam Mill Street, Russell Street, Seaville Street and Steven Street, small terraced houses for the working classes were erected in cheap brick, in imitation Georgian style, with two bedrooms, no garden, a back-yard, and outside lavatory.[1] The map, which is based on the official Census of 1841, shows that it was in these areas of greatest expansion that Catholics were congregating. It seems true, therefore, to say that part, at least, of the growth in the north-east of the city was caused by the growth of the Catholic population.

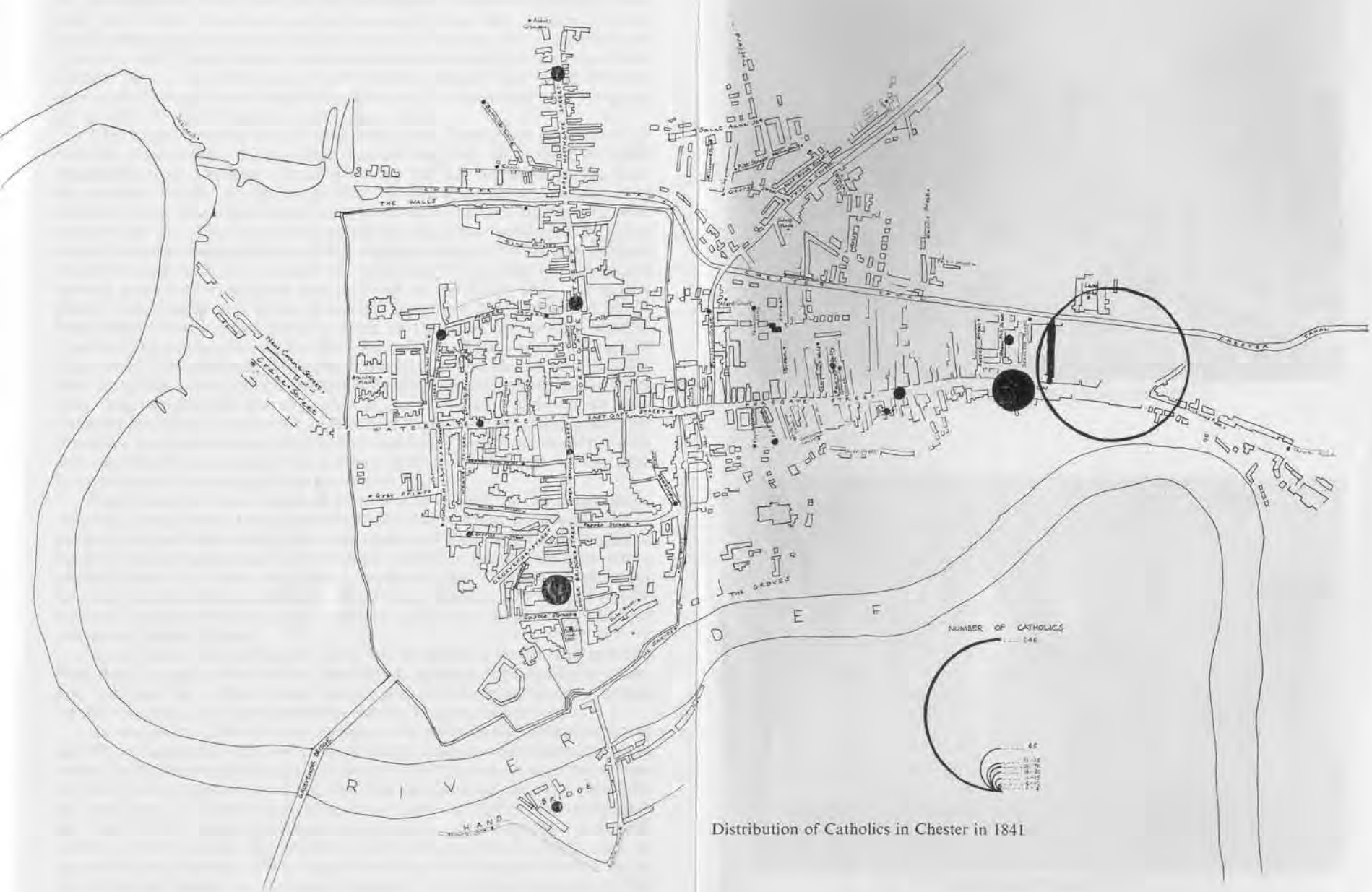
The explanation of this enormous growth of the Catholics is not far to seek. It is possible to trace a few of the older Catholic families over the last years of the eighteenth century into the nineteenth, as will be shown later, but Catholicism in Chester grew so rapidly in the early nineteenth century through the influx of Irish immigrants.

The story of the mass emigration from Ireland, especially during the years of the "Great Hunger" in the 1840's, when the population of Ireland decreased from eight million to four million, has been told more than once. These pages attempt to relate that part of the story which affected Catholicism in Chester. It has several strands, some older than the nineteenth century.

Irish names appear among the recusants in Chester in the early eighteenth century. In 1706, there was a periwig maker, named Philip Doyle, living in Eastgate Ward with his wife, a son named William, and five daughters. There was also a gingerbread maker named Patrick Fitzgerald, who lived in St. John's Ward with Martha, his wife, Richard his son, and a daughter named Katherine.

As a port trading with Ireland, Chester attracted Irish merchants, who came to settle in the eighteenth century. One such person was the Francis O'Brien already mentioned, who must have immigrated into the city about the year 1760, and subsequently married a member of the Anglican Church. The majority of the Irish people mentioned on the Papists' Returns of 1767, however, were poor labourers and domestic servants, like Roger McGinnis, a gardener, John and William Murphy, probably brothers, who were described simply as "labourers", and Sarah Hynes, a servant.

By the end of the eighteenth century, the poor from the Irish countryside were beginning to appear in Chester in much larger numbers. During the next fifty years, they came in two great waves, as famine and disease struck their own land. The first large-scale settlement began in the last decade of the century, after a severe outbreak of famine, and the distress which followed in the wake of the rebellion of 1798. The agricultural depression which set in after the Napoleonic Wars drove yet more out of Ireland. In 1821, the Irish potato crop failed, and the consequent famine and disease, which were almost as bad as in 1846, led to a wholesale movement into the growing industries in North West England, and expanding canals and railroads. The coming to Chester of large numbers coincides with the great rise in the population which was already mentioned. Some came via Liverpool and Holyhead, but for many the journey was made possible by the development of regular steam packets to Chester, in which the fares were low and the boats recklessly overcrowded. Many



Distribution of Catholics in Chester in 1841

Dee House Convent School, 1854-1976

The Convent, Union Street
occupied by The Little Sisters of the Assumption, 1911-1957
Now occupied by the Irish Sisters of Charity

of the immigrants were from the less prosperous counties of the south and west, like Mayo, Roscommon, Galway and Clare. This is shown in the first marriage register of the Catholic chapel of Chester. For instance, John Gallacher and Mary Brogan, who were married in 1833, both came from County Mayo. In 1834, three out of the six couples that were married came from Ireland. John Walsh from Fermety, Roscommon, and Margaret Tobin from Cullin, Tipperary were among them.

The majority must have found homes for themselves in the poorer working class streets in the north east of the city. At a time of rapid expansion, they provided a pool of cheap labour. Some found work in the tanning works on the north side of Foregate Street, others were absorbed into the rope-making works adjacent to the north and west walls of the city. There was a considerable amount of road-making going on in Chester at the beginning of the nineteenth century. In 1801, Northgate Street was widened, and in 1827-29, Grosvenor Street was cut through a densely populated area from Bridge Street to the River Dee, and a new bridge was constructed across the river. Irishmen were employed in the heavy labour this kind of work involved, in the same way as they were as "navvies" in a later decade, for the construction of the railways. The low wages they were prepared to accept could lead to bad feeling and hostility from local labourers, which occasionally erupted into violence. In 1835, there was an affray in the city when a party of Irish road-makers were attacked by Chester labourers, and two of them were beaten and abused. The affair was reported by the Clerk of the Peace for Cheshire, Mr. Potts, and used as evidence in the Government Report on the State of the Irish Poor in Great Britain, published that year.[2]

There were similar incidents in the 1830's, both in the countryside outside Chester when Irish agricultural labourers hired themselves out at harvest time, and also during the construction of the Chester to Birkenhead Railway, when troops had to be brought out from Chester to break up a pitched battle. It is not very likely, however, that Chester people were involved in any of these incidents. Harvesting was usually carried out by seasonal migrant workers, and navvies moved on as they constructed sections of railway lines.

Even casual labouring jobs gave the Irish better wages and security than they had enjoyed at home. Some took up petty trading like hawking and huckstering; others kept beerhouses and lodging houses, where shelter was given to fellow Irish less fortunate than themselves.

In the story of the Irish in Britain, it is perhaps the dramatic which has been emphasised. In a town like Chester, where conditions were never as bad as those in a great city like Liverpool or London, it must have been the day to day experiences of ordinary families accustomed to a rural life, as they tried to adjust themselves to an entirely different environment and way of life, together with the loneliness of exile and the social difficulties, which caused the suffering and distress. Such things can go unnoticed or forgotten. They lay at the basis of the appeal drawn up by the Cheshire priests, led by John Briggs in 1826, which speaks of "the many Irish (who) by great distress have been driven from their homes, and have settled among us; who through centuries of severe sufferings have preserved the precious treasures of their faith".[3]

The official Census of 1841 recorded the presence in Chester of 1,013 Irish immigrant men and women. This figure multiplied as the third great wave poured in during the Famine years, and reached its crest in 1851. Many of the new arrivals came as complete family units, father, mother, one or more children and sometimes a grand-parent. Others, though less numerous, came as single young men in their twenties and thirties. Most sought out relatives and friends, in their search for employment and accommodation. They tended, therefore, to congregate together, often sharing already overcrowded houses in the poorest quarters of the city. The highest concentration in numbers was in the Steven Street area, by now a traditionally Irish quarter, and in Boughton, left vacant by the gentry as the Leadworks moved in.

Enormous economic problems were created for the city by this great influx. The *Chester Courant* of 15th January, 1847, publishing an appeal for the poor, spoke of the high price of provisions, and the distress of the Irish. It listed the number of Irish in each street, and those in great distress. There were four hundred and sixty nine in Steven Street alone, and of these, one hundred and twenty nine were in great distress. Canal Side, though it had a smaller number (sixty five), was in a worse plight, with fifty nine in distress. Of the one hundred and fifty one in Boughton, nearly half, (sixty seven) needed urgent help, as did Steam Mill Street with forty nine out of seventy one in distress. The newspaper wrote of "Unfortunate and starving creatures, huddled up in large numbers in very confined and filthy dwellings".

The city authorities were not able to keep pace with the rising tide, and new housing lagged behind. Courtyard dwellings, with their typical lack of proper ventilation and sanitation, developed in the entries behind the shops of the main streets, and here also many Catholics could be found. Some of the larger houses, once the town houses of the gentry, were subdivided as tenements for families. One such example was the Victoria Buildings in Lower Bridge Street.

Many of the men who came over in the Famine years, especially those in Steven Street and Canal Side, gave as their occupation for the 1851 Census, "Agricultural Labourer", which must have been the work they were doing in Ireland. They found work now on the land, in the nurseries and market gardens south and west of the river, where a large number of "hands" were employed. Others simply called themselves "labourer", and this covered a wide range of occupations. Some were employed by the Railway in unskilled jobs, as goods and coal porters; one was a Railway watchman. Others worked in the lead works, in brewing or milling, or as brick setters' and bricklayers' labourers. In many cases, grown up daughters found employment in domestic service, or as dress makers, milliners, seamstresses and cap makers.

The priests bore the heavy responsibility of the spiritual welfare of the immigrants. Sheer numbers, nominal Catholicism at least for some, migration in and out of the city must have made it difficult to get to know all of them. At times, it must have seemed a superhuman, heart-breaking task. Yet it was undertaken, in spite of the cost. At the same time, many turned to the priest for help and advice of every kind. Father Briggs, we have seen, looked after their money for them, sent it home when they asked,

and if they died, disposed of it as they requested. The notes he scribbled in pencil also show that he was often writing their letters for them. One such note is a reminder to write to William Casey, a first year student of Divinity at Maynooth, telling him that William Magennis wished him to come over to Chester during the vacation. Another time, a sailor named Archibald McAlister wrote to him, asking him to let his wife know that he was about to board ship. It was written from the dockyard at Chatham, but the letter adds that he does not know where they are sailing to.

Father Carbery witnessed the distress of the 1840's, and the hardship of the severe winter of 1860-1. At Christmas 1860, the Committee for the Poor Relief Fund of Chester set up a soup kitchen in Duke Street, at which the soup was sold at 1d. a quart. By January 12th, 1861, seven hundred quarts were being sold daily. *The Chester Chronicle* not only praised the Committee for the work it was doing, but also the "dissenting clergy" for the hundred tons of coal they had distributed. The Catholic priests were surely among them!

Throughout the nineteenth century, a hard winter could throw many men out of work, especially when they were engaged in casual labour. This is reflected time and time again in the school log books, when parents are too poor to supply their children with copy books and slates, or children are absent from school because they have gone to the soup kitchen. As late as December 1880, a hundred of the poorer children were given tickets, entitling them to a free dinner at the Town Hall, from "Miss Jones's Charity". A month later, between fifty and sixty pairs of clogs were given to the poorer boys by the School Attendance Committee, a gift which had to be repeated more than once.

One of the most difficult problems which the Catholic Church in England had to face in the nineteenth century was the fusion of its English and Irish members into one united body—the Body of Christ. On the one hand, English Catholics saw their hard-won liberty jeopardised, as they thought, by the crowds of immigrants who flocked into their towns. On the other hand, Irish Catholics often equated their nationalism with their faith. Yet, without them, the Church could hardly have expanded and developed. That the task was accomplished in Chester was due in large measure to the priests who worked in their midst, particularly the forthright Lancashire man, John Briggs, and the kindly and respected Irishman, Edward Carbery.

CHAPTER IV

Some Catholic Families of the Nineteenth Century

One of the best known families in the nineteeth century, though it did not first originate from Chester, was the Tatlocks. They were orignally a yeoman family, one of the principal landowners of Kirkby, outside Liverpool, who were convicted of recusancy in 1626. In the middle of the eighteenth century, Henry Tatlock, the son of Thomas Tatlock and Ellen Fazakerley of Tatlock House, Kirkby, became a Jesuit. Between 1750 and his death in 1771, he worked as a missioner in Lydiate and Fazakerley, outside Liverpool.

The first member to have connections with Chester was James. He went to Douai in 1777, but in 1784, after completing his studies in philosophy, he decided not to go on for the priesthood, left Douai, and came to Chester. Here, he married a sister of Father James Lancaster, and set up a cotton business in the city. The business, however, was a failure, and he returned to Lancashire, where he died in 1815.

James Tatlock had a brother, probably named John, who was born in 1760. He too came to live in Chester, but no record remains of his activities here. He died in Chester on March 15th, 1827, at the age of 67, and his death appears in the early Burial Register. Only ten days earlier, his younger son, Henry, died of consumption, at the age of 23. He, like his uncle before him, had been studying for the priesthood at Ushaw, and had received Minor Orders. The two burials were among the earliest to take place in the small burial ground behind the Queen Street chapel.

Mr. Tatlock had another son, named John, who was older than Henry. It was this John Tatlock who began the close connections of the family with the Catholic Church in Chester. He was born, though not in Chester, in 1797. About 1824, he married Dorothy Bromley, who came from Upper Pitt Street, Liverpool where she ran a "Ladies' Seminary". Dorothy and her sister, Ann, had arrived in Chester in 1824 to set up a similar school for girls in White Friars. She was six years younger than her husband, and had been born in Jamaica. Sometime before her marriage, she had inherited a considerable fortune, from property and investments in Montego Bay, Jamaica, which by 1836 were worth about £4,000. Presumably, she belonged to an English family that had invested money in the sugar plantations on the island or, since she married a solicitor, her father may have belonged to the legal profession on the island. Among Father Brigg's papers, there are several Accounts, sent to him as the Trustee of her property, from her agent in Jamaica. How this connection arose, it is impossible to say. The Accounts afford a fleeting glimpse into life on the island in the early nineteenth century. They mention "the Penn House", the typical great wooden house owned by Dorothy Bromley, where her agent, John Manderson, lived. He was constantly having to purchase boards and cypress shingles for its repair. These were the days

before the emancipation of slavery in the West Indies, and there are many entries on the Accounts to do with the negroes working on the property. For instance, "Old Daphne's" coffin cost 10s.; clothing for "the old negroes and children" came to £4 12s. 6d.

By 1840, John and Dorothy were living in Queen Street, then a pleasant street, full of elegant Georgian houses. It was here that Dorothy bore her husband at least three children, a girl named Ann, who was born in 1825, and two sons, Thomas Joseph, born the following year, and John, born in 1833.

Thomas went to Ushaw in 1840, when he was almost fourteen years of age. As a student, he beame known for his straightforwardness and kindly disposition, qualities which ripened over the years. He was ordained a priest in 1854. After his ordination, he remained on at Ushaw, where he spent the greater part of his life, holding one important office after another. In 1860, he was appointed to teach Mathematics, until in 1876, he was made deputy rector of the Junior Seminary. He held this position for ten years, until his appointment in 1886, first to the post of House Procurator and then Vice President of the College. He retired from Ushaw in 1890, crippled with rheumatism, and went to live with his brother in Chester. Bishop King made him a Canon in 1891, in recognition of his priestly virtues. He died in 1899 at the age of 73, the last surviving member of his family.

His younger brother, John, was a boy of sixteen at the time of his father's death in 1850. By 1851, he was an articled clerk to a solicitor, and starting off on the career in which he did much as a Catholic in Chester. He was an established solicitor and Deputy Coroner in 1860, when he entered into partnership with another important Catholic, John Hostage. He was then living at Flookersbrook, but in 1864 he made his home in St. John's Street, first at Number 26, and then from 1874 until his death in 1892, at Number 21.

The Tatlock family was very generous to both the parishes in Chester. John was among the benefactors who contributed towards the building of the Franciscan Friary, and his name appears among those who helped the friars in 1876, by paying the cost of their rooms. By his will, Canon Tatlock paid off the parish debt of £3,750 on St. Werburgh's, and the £3,000 still owing from St. Francis's. The High Altar at the latter church was erected as a memorial to the Tatlock family.

The family of Hostage was another closely associated with the growth of Catholicism in Chester, from the early days of the Queen Street chapel until as late as 1915. Like John Tatlock, and indeed in partnership with him, they were a firm of solicitors, illustrating how quickly after Catholic Emancipation, Catholics were able to take their rightful place in the public life of the town. The first recorded member of the family was John Hostage, who was an attorney, living in Abbey Square and practising between the years 1781 and 1828. Soon after 1810, he was living in Northgate Street and married to Mary Street. His bride had been born in 1798, the daughter of Thomas Street and Ann Fox, both of them well known in the Queen Street chapel. There were six children by the marriage. The eldest and the youngest were girls, Mary, born in 1813

and Frances, born in 1826. Of the four boys, James, born in 1819 became a priest, and Thomas Brayne, two years his senior, became a Civil Engineer. He died at the age of 45, in 1861. The eldest boy, baptised John Brayne Hostage in 1815, studied for law, By 1850, he had set up on his own as a solicitor, employing two clerks, and was appointed Deputy Clerk of the Peace. He married a girl from Chelmsford in Essex. Six years later, he held the position of Under Sheriff and Coroner. His son, John Brayne Arthur Hostage, who was born in 1839, also became a solicitor and Under Sheriff of the county. By 1874, he joined the partnership with John Tatlock, so that the Firm became known as Hostage, Tatlock and Hostage. By then, he was married to Elizabeth Boleshans, and was living at 119 Boughton, where two years later, Mrs. Mary Street died, at the advanced age of 86. He had already lost a young brother, Thomas, who died suddenly at the age of 18, in 1874.

The last son of this distinguished line of solicitors was George Brayne Hostage, who died at his residence in Eaton Road, in 1907. The stained glass window of St. George in St. Werburgh's church was his gift. His widow, Mrs. George Hostage, lived on for several more years. In the early months of the first World War, she and her daughter sent out clothes, prayer books and rosaries to the men in the training camps. When she died on 25th October, 1915, she was described as a "truly Christian woman".

Another family closely associated with the Church in Chester in the nineteenth century and well into living memory in the twentieth was the Tophams. This family has become famous in the horse-racing world through its associations with the Grand National Steeplechase at Aintree. There is, however, another and less well-known side to their history which links them with the growth of Catholicism in Chester.

The first member of the family to settle in Chester, at Foregate Street was Edward W. Topham. He came, about the year 1830, from Middleham in Yorkshire, where for four hundred years, his ancestors had been known for their racing stables. At the time of his moving into Chester, he was about twenty four years of age, and married to Elizabeth Galley Metcalf, who came from Richmond in Yorkshire. Several children were born to them in Chester, the best known being Christopher Reuben, at whose baptism in 1840, Father Carbery and Elizabeth Tatlock stood sponsors, and Joseph Bell, born in 1844.

Edward W. Topham became Clerk of the Races first at Chester and then at Aintree, where his perspicacity enabled him to lease the Course from the Earl of Sefton. In both places he revitalised the Race Course, and it was through his ability as a handicapper—he was nicknamed "The Wizard"—that the Grand National Steeplechase was founded at Aintree in 1843. After his death in 1873, his work was carried on by his two sons, Christopher and Joseph, and in the next generation, by Joseph's sons, Edward who died in 1932, and Arthur Ronald who lived until 1958.

It is, however, their generosity to the Catholic parishes of Chester which concerns us here. The name of Edward W. Topham appears regularly in the 1860's, among the contributors to the various diocesan funds established by Bishop Brown. One such was the Church Education Fund, which helped to support boys being trained for the priesthood. This

practice was continued by his son, Joseph Bell Topham, after his father's death. All the members of the family took an active interest in the erection and opening of the Franciscan church and friary, and their names appear among the benefactors who helped to defray the expenses which the Capuchins then incurred.

The announcement of the death of Joseph B. Topham in September, 1910, was made in St. Werburgh's Parish Magazine. The editor then commented, "the name of Topham is a household word in the parish", and continued, "the family have been identified with every charitable work in the past history of Catholicism. Great have been their benefactions to the Church and the poor of St. Werburgh's parish".

Reticence about their charities and reserve of character were marked family features. The magazine spoke of "the deep faith and great charity for which Joseph Topham was remarkable", and of "his retiring disposition, which preferred to conceal from public notice his innumerable kindnesses to the Church and to the poor". His generosity reached out beyond Chester into the Church at Birkenhead, for it was he who bought the sites for the present churches of the Holy Name and of St. Joseph's in that town.

The same trait of reserve showed itself in his eldest son, Edward A. C. Topham, who died at his home, Boughton Hall near Chester, in December 1932. Speaking of his ability in organising the Grand National, the *Liverpool Echo* wrote that "the followers of Aintree racing knew nothing of the man himself. Even those who had met him found him reserved, and knew little more about him than that he went regularly to Aintree".

There were a number of other old Catholic families in the early nineteenth century, who made their way in life by trade or craftsmanship. They lived mostly in the more central part of the city, not on its outskirts, as the Irish Catholics tended to do. Their influence in the life of the parish is indicated by the frequency by which their names appear in the registers, especially in the baptismal registers, where, time and again, they are entered as standing sponsor to a child.

Throughout the nineteenth century, Chester remained essentially a commercial city, which turned its back on industrial ventures. As a market for the surrounding area, its wealth lay in the retail trade which grew out of and flourished from its many trades and crafts. Among the wide variety of retailers, drapers whether in silk, linen or wool, had a flourishing trade, and consequently, tailors, milliners, and dressmakers prospered. Dealers in all kinds of foodstuffs, such as butchers, bakers and grocers naturally did a good trade, but there were also shop keepers selling luxury goods, like jewellers, clock and watchmakers, booksellers and fancy dealers. Apart from the clothing crafts, wood crafts gave employment to many men, such as cabinet makers, joiners and also coach builders.

Since the sixteenth century, the importing of hides from Ireland had led to Chester's main industry, the leather industry, with the tanning, dressing and curing of skins used in its processing. Though the manufacture of gloves was not as flourishing as it had formerly been, there were many boot and shoe makers, and some saddlers in the middle of the nineteenth century. It is hardly surprising to find that the Catholics, debarred as they

had been for so long from entering the professions, should find their way into many of these walks of life. Families like the Tatlocks and the Hostages were the exceptions, not the rule.

Among the oldest of such families were the Gorsts. They could, indeed, trace their origins well back into the eighteenth century, for Mary Gorst, a widow, appears on the Papists' Returns for 1767. At the time, she was already sixty years of age, but she had been living in St. John's parish only eighteen months, and there is nothing to indicate where the family had originated. The early Directories of Chester, dating from 1781, show that the surname was a fairly common one, though all may not have been Catholics. A Richard Gorst, however, who was probably her son, appears on the baptismal register as early as 1795, when he was already married to Elizabeth MacMillan, and they were having their first child, Elizabeth, baptised. One of the sponsors for the newly baptised baby was Sefton Carter. We can see here the close ties of friendship which must have existed in the still small Catholic community, for Sefton Carter's father was also a Papist in St. John's parish at the same time as Mary Gorst and, as a man of 55, had been living in Chester thirty years. Sefton Carter the younger was on the Polling List in 1818, and had a tobacconist's shop in Little St. John's Street. Elizabeth was followed in the Gorst family by twin brothers, William and Thomas, who were baptised in 1799, and in 1804 by another boy, baptised Richard.

From 1795 down to as late as 1822, Richard Gorst's name appears fifteen times as a sponsor in the baptismal register. On one occasion, in 1807, he acted in this capacity for Joseph Street, the son of Thomas Street and Ann Fox, the parents-in-law of John Hostage. He seems to have been not only an active member of the Catholic congregation, but also an articulate one, ready to take up the cudgels on behalf of his faith when he thought it necessary. Three long letters written by him to the local press have survived among the correspondence of Father Briggs. Presumably they had been sent first to him for censoring, before being published in the newspaper. They are written in justification of the visible church. In spite of the errors in spelling, their tone brings out clearly the controversial topics upon which leading Catholics had to engage. The following extract illustrates this:—

> "You have conjured up a freightful specter and cloathed it with all the horrors of immagination, and this you call Popery . . . You can have little desire of informing yourself of their real tenets, but content yourself with the fictitious ones that you have been pleased to father upon them."

What kind of answer these letters drew in the press we have no means now of knowing.

Pigot's Commercial Directory for 1818 lists Richard Gorst as a cabinet maker, living at 6 Watergate Row. It also includes John Gorst, a leather dealer and currier, living in Bridge Street. John Gorst's name appears on the baptismal register, so he was probably Richard's brother. Richard himself died in 1832. He was followed shortly afterwards by John Gorst's wife, who died from the dread disease of cholera.

Another Catholic living in Watergate Row was Charles Cliffe, an upholsterer. Here again, their faith and possibly their trading relations

brought these two Catholic families together, for by 1823, Charles had married Elizabeth Gorst, and their first child, also called Elizabeth, was baptised. Father Briggs was one of the sponsors. The following year, another daughter was baptised Mary. The sudden death of Mrs. Cliffe is recorded in the burial register in 1832.

Charles Cliffe had a brother, named Joseph, who was also an upholsterer, living in Bridge Street Row. He seems to have been more successful than Charles. By 1840, he had moved to Watergate back Row, near the Cross, and was an auctioneer and appraiser. His name appears on the Polling Lists for the city in 1820, and again in 1835.

Some successful shop keepers were of Irish extraction. Greenwood Campbell, for instance, set up a draper's shop in Northgate Street in the 1830's, and married a girl from Dodleston named Ann Burkey, by whom he had six children. By 1851, he was a master draper, advertising in the Directories the sale of Irish, Scotch and other linens. His two eldest sons, Samuel and William, were working as assistants in the shop, with a view, presumably, to taking over the establishment on his retirement.

Another successful Irish Catholic was Joseph Fitzgerald, who had a clay pipe industry in Love Street in 1818. His brother was also a pipe maker, in Barker's Lane, as Union Street was then called. By 1820, both brothers had the right to a vote, and Joseph had moved to Newgate. James, meanwhile, had set up as a victualler and was probably finding this more profitable. In 1828, Joseph advertised in Pigot's Commercial Directory as a pipe and tobacco manufacturer, resident in Newgate Street. He continued to live there until at least 1840. This made him the neighbour of another quite important Catholic family, that of Thomas Montgomery, an umbrella maker. Thomas Montgomery had been born in Chester in 1809, and had a brother, William, who was a cooper, living in Castle Street. They were probably the sons of John Montgomery, also a cooper from Watergate Street. In 1839, Thomas married an Irish woman three years his senior, named Mary Murphy, who must have been a young widow, for she already had a girl of eleven, born in Ireland. Their first son, also called Thomas, was baptised in the Queen Street chapel in 1840, an uncle, Michael Murphy, standing sponsor to him.

In addition to the Irish immigrants, there was also a group of Italians living in Chester in the nineteenth century. One of them, Antonio Rivolta, must have been a well-known figure in the Queen Street congregation, for between 1818 and 1826, he was sponsor no less than twenty nine times, nearly always to Irish children. He does not seem to have married himself. It is impossible to say what his calling in life was, but he was certainly not poor. Some of his suggestions for raising money for the Mission seem to have been rather original, as this letter to Father Briggs illustrates. It was written in 1819.

> "Signor Rivolta presents his very humble respects and proposes to him his very good plan that the Signor may have the use of the chapel, to perform a grand and impressive dirge with his complete and wonderful band. Signor Rivolta will give him 2,000 tickets, and charge 10/6 only for the gentry of the true religion, but for the heretics and schismatics he will charge 5/-."

No answer of Father Briggs to the offer has survived, so it is impossible to

say whether the dirge was performed, and if so whether it was a success.

Most of the Italians possessed shops, where they sold the more sophisticated goods. Many of them already had ties of relationship or friendship, and they seem to have immigrated into England from Lombardy. When they married, however, it was usually into Chester families-so that the next generation became Cestrian, rather than Italian in their outlook. One such family were the Testi's. Charles Testi, who was born in Lombardy in 1805, had a jeweller's shop in Claremont Walk, off Eastgate Street, by 1841. He lived here with his wife and four young children, sharing his home with Hugh Rigney, the master of the Catholic boys' school. He seems to have been less successful than some of his fellow compatriots, for ten years later, he was already widowed, and he had moved out into Lower Bridge Street where he set up as a general dealer with his youngest son, then aged thirteen, serving as his shopboy. His eldest son, Joseph, who had been born in 1824, married a Chester girl in 1854.

The Bordessa family seem to have been more numerous, were perhaps more successful as business men, and took a prominent part in the Catholic community. Peter Bordessa also came from the States of Lombardy, where he was born in 1801. His name first appears in 1825, side by side with that of a Chester girl, Elizabeth Martin, as a sponsor to the son of another Italian family, the Pozzi's. Shortly afterwards, he and Elizabeth were married. It must have been a double celebration for another Italian, Antonio Menga, married Elizabeth Jones at the same time, and two at least of the witnesses of both weddings were related.

By 1850, Pietro Bordessa, as he usually called himself when he advertised in the Chester Directories, had a fancy toy shop in Bridge Street Row, His wife helped him in the shop, and they were well enough off to keep a servant, named Harriet Williams. They had two girls, Maria and Elizabeth, but they had already lost two children, another Elizabeth who had died at the age of six months from whooping cough in 1835, and a boy named John, three years earlier. Their eldest son, also called Peter, born in 1829, was an attorney's clerk by 1851, and had set up his home in Queen Street, where he lived with his Chester born wife, Hannah Jones, and her mother. Within ten years, he had become important enough to act as Sheriff's officer, a position he still held in 1864. By then, he had moved to Newgate Street, and was an auctioneer and valuer, pipe maker and cork cutter, as well as Sheriff's officer, with an office at 4 Cuppin Street. The Bordessa family continued right into the twentieth century, for the death of Mrs. Elizabeth Humphrey (nee Bordessa) was recorded in the Parish Magazine in 1909.

Two other closely connected Italian families were the Pozzi's and the Rodiri's. Both married into Chester families, and established themselves in the trading life of the city during the 1820's. Charles Pozzi had a toy shop at 59 Foregate Street in 1828, while Ferdinand Rodiri advertised in the Directories as a wireworker, with a shop in Watergate Street. It may well have been the presence of a number of prosperous Catholic shopkeepers in Watergate Street, in the middle of the century, which persuaded the Capuchins to start their first chapel in that street. It was also in the same street that a room was used for the first boys' school in Chester.

A number of other Catholic families can be traced in this way from the parish records and city directories. There was, for instance, Geoge Pickering, whose career was different from any so far mentioned. Born in Yorkshire, he came to Chester in the early 1820's. He established himself as a drawing master and landscape painter, and quickly made a name for himself by his fine paintings of street scenes in Chester. Reproductions of his pictures are frequently found as engravings in books on Chester. He also had a studio in Bold Street, Liverpool, and exhibited his paintings at the Liverpool Academy. Sometime before 1821, he was married to Magdalen Ferrers, by whom he had six children. Their baptisms are entered all together by Father Briggs, on a separate sheet in the baptism register, and it is clear from the godparents that he was on intimate terms with many of the Catholic gentry of the area. For instance, his second son, born on January 23rd, 1825, had as godparents Sir S. Smythe, Bart. of Acton Burnell, Shropshire, and Sir John Gerard, Bart. of New Hall, Lancashire, while a daughter, Maria, born in 1827, had as godmother, Lady Bultney of Beaumaris, formerly a Miss Stanley of Hooton. George Pickering himself lived for a time at Flookersbrook, but later moved to Upper Northgate Street, which he reproduced so often in his paintings. Towards the end of his life, he made his home at Grange Mount, Birkenhead, where he died in March, 1857.

Finally, this brief survey, which must perforce omit the names of other Catholic families, may be concluded by mentioning one more Catholic woman, Mary Yates. She probably succeeded Ann Abram as housekeeper to the priests, some time after 1767, and her death from old age is recorded in 1827, in the burial register. She was housekeeper to Father Briggs and Father Ashurst. Father Briggs entered in his account book the wages he paid her. They seem to have amounted to about £12 a year, paid to her at rather irregular intervals. He probably left to her the expenditure on housekeeping. A page of "Mrs. Yates's Accounts" has survived among his papers. It has an entry "Bought 20 measures of wheat £12". Her apostolate, however, covered more than the material care of the two young priests who came as missioners to Chester. They called on her, most often when there was no-one except themselves to do it, to stand sponsor to Irish children being baptised. The last time she performed this duty was in 1826, only a year before she died.

CHAPTER V

Catholic Education in Chester

The earliest recorded Catholic school in Chester is the one which was attached to the Collegiate Church of St. John the Baptist. This is not surprising, for St. John's was one of the most important churches in the Anglo-Saxon Kingdom of Mercia. It aspired to the status of a cathedral at a time when it was customary for a bishop to have a number of boys in his household, who were being trained for the sacred ministry. We do not know where the school attached to St. John's was situated, but it would probably have been in the complex of buildings which once surrounded the church. Lucian, the monk of St. Werburgh's Abbey, who wrote the first Guide Book of Chester in 1195 was a pupil there. He would have studied the Latin language, the Scriptures, some of the early Fathers of the Church and some classical writers, according to the normal tradition of such schools.

In the later Middle Ages, it was customary for the great Benedictine monasteries to establish and support schools, quite separate from the monastic school within the cloister which was meant for future monks. By the late fourteenth century, there was such a school attached to St. Werburgh's, for in 1368 the Bishop of Lichfield, in whose diocese Chester then lay, licensed a Master John de Whiteley, Clerk, to have "the care and rule of a grammar school in the town of Chester".[1] This school continued down to the time of the Reformation, for at the dissolution of St. Werburgh's a John Birchley was given a pension of £6 as "teacher of the children". It functioned during the interim period from the ending of the abbey till the opening of the new King's School in 1544, since at Christmas 1541, the children received their usual allowances.

It is possible to see what the old medieval school was like from the statutes of the new cathedral school. It had a Master "learned in Greek and Latin", who received a stipend of between £13 and £20, and an usher, or undermaster, "learned in Latin". After 1544, these were appointed by the Dean and Chapter of the cathedral instead of the abbot, as in former times. They were to give free instruction to all the children who came to them. In addition there were a number of foundation scholars, "poor friendless boys", between the ages of nine and fifteen, who had to come knowing the rudiments of Latin. During the four or five years they were expected to remain at the school, they received board and lodging, and a free education in Latin.

Until recent years, the King's School was housed within what had been the monastic precinct, and this again points to its origins. There is no evidence that it was ever in the Almonry, which was the normal place for such a monastic school—hence the name "almonry school", the title they were often given. But in the seventeenth century, by which time the school was using the old monks' refectory, the chapel of St. Nicholas in

the south transept of the cathedral was marked as "anciently called the school there".

In addition to the almonry school, the larger monasteries often had a "Song School", where boys younger than those in the almonry school were taught to read and write, and to sing the Plainchant of the Mass. The sixteenth century choir school of the cathedral must go back to the medieval song school of the abbey. There were then eight choristers. Where they assembled, and possibly had their lessons is called on the seventeenth century plan "the singing school porch".

Whether any of the chantry priests in the other Chester churches taught any children in their spare time, it is impossible to say. Children were often taught in this way in medieval England. They would learn the alphabet, the Our Father, the Hail Mary and the Creed, and possibly some of the chant of the liturgy, and in this way would be able to serve the priest's Mass. Such a practice, however, might not have been very popular in Chester, because it might have been considered a rival to the already established song school of the abbey.

Wall paintings, stained glass windows, statues of Our Lady and the saints were all means used by medieval priests, to instruct their people in the truths of the Faith. Religious plays familiarised people with the stories of the Bible. This is particularly true in Chester, where the Mystery Plays, composed by a monk of St. Werburgh's, continued to be performed year by year. It was only in the reign of Elizabeth that they were forbidden as "popish impostures".

During penal times, Catholics were forbidden to instruct their children in their Faith, and Protestant relatives were supposed to take the children and teach them. Catholics who could afford to do it, sent their children abroad, and since Chester was still an important port, a few Catholic boys from the city and surrounding area may have managed to escape, without being detected. For the rest, whatever instruction they received would have been given at home and when a priest could do so.

It is only when one reaches the beginning of the nineteenth century that the picture of education for Catholic children in Chester begins to emerge more clearly. The earliest school to be recorded is a private one for girls, which was run by a young Catholic lady, named Clare Corral. She advertised her school in the Catholic Directory for 1820 and 1822, but she died the following year, at the age of forty. We do not know how many pupils Miss Corral obtained for her school, but the advertisement is worth quoting in full, both for its intrinsic interest and because it is so early. It reads:—

> "Miss Corral respectfully informs her friends and the Catholic public, that she has opened a school for the education of young ladies, No. 21 Crane Street, in an airy part of the city. The healthy situation of this city has long caused it to be selected for academies of youth; the moderate terms, too, it is hoped, will recommend this as a preparatory school for the children of more opulent parents, and for those of the middle class of life it is trusted it will be deemed sufficient. Young ladies admitted from five to twelve years of age. The following are the terms. For board and education, in reading, writing and arithmetic, plain and ornamental needlework, 18 guineas per annum, washing included. The children will be taught grammar, geography, sacred and profane history; one pound will be charged for the use of paper,

> school books etc. Entrance one guinea. Dancing and drawing form separate charges, and are taught on the usual terms. Vacations at Midsummer and Christmas one month each; no additional charge for those who stay at school. Payment half yearly in advance. Miss Corral begs leave to assure those parents who are pleased to favour her with the care and tuition of their children that they may fully rely upon the strictest care being paid to their morals, health and education."

This type of private boarding school education for the middle classes was common enough in the eighteenth century. What is interesting is that it is now being offered to Catholics in Chester. Though Miss Corral was advertising in the Catholic Directory which had a national circulation, she could feel now that it was safe enough to set up such a school there, and probably obtain pupils there also. Though death, apparently, brought a swift and unexpected end to her venture, the seed she sowed was to germinate and grow in the years that lay ahead. Within two years, two more young women, the Misses Bromley of Liverpool were "respectfully informing their friends and the Catholic public that they had succeeded her, and were conducting a school for the education of young ladies at No. 19 White Friars". The elder of the two sisters had already run a similar school at Upper Pitt Street, Liverpool. The younger, Dorothy, has been already mentioned, for shortly afterwards she became the wife of John Tatlock. The Misses Bromley seem to have felt it necessary to raise their fees, at least for children over the age of ten, whose parents were asked to pay 21 guineas. Washing was now charged for separately at £2 12s. 0d. and writing cost £2 2s. 0d. Besides the dancing and drawing which were regarded as essentials in the education of young ladies of the period, music and French were now "taught by approved masters". The most significant sentence in the advertisement, however, is the one which reads, "Religious instruction will be given to the young ladies by the Reverend J. Briggs". John Briggs, therefore, found time in his busy life, to go across to No. 19 White Friars, and teach their religion to the small girls at the school there.

This school was also short-lived, or at least, it ceased to advertise in the Catholic Directory. Even if the custom of the day had allowed her to continue to run a school after her marriage, Dorothy Tatlock soon found herself too busily occupied with the rearing of her own children to have time to run a school.

Another attempt was made to open a private school, again with the assistance of Father Briggs, to whom this time prospective parents had to refer. This was the "Seminary for Young Ladies", opened by a Miss Ross and a Miss Bick in Bold Square, in 1827. Here again, the education considered by contemporaries to be suitable to a young lady was offered. The fees charged were the same as before, with the additional request that "each young lady is to be provided with one pair of sheets, four towels, knife, fork and silver spoon".

After 1828, we hear no more about a Catholic "Seminary for Young Ladies" in Chester, though one may have existed. Consequently, we cannot be sure, until the middle of the century, where better-off Catholics sent their daughters to be educated. After 1854, the problem was solved for them by the coming of the Faithful Companions of Jesus. The group

of four nuns whom Father Carbery welcomed to Chester on 29th January, 1854, came from Birkenhead, where they had already established a girls' school, subsequently to become well-known in the Wirral as Holt Hill. They purchased from the Bishop of Shrewsbury the small Georgian mansion known as Dee House. It had been built by James Comberbach, a former Alderman and Mayor of Chester, who died in 1735, and it remained in his family until shortly before 1850 when an Anglican minister purchased it. The Faithful Companions of Jesus began their work by opening a small boarding school, but under their second superior, they quickly added to this a parish school and also a "select day school". Before long growing numbers, both in the community and among the children, obliged them to build, and on 2nd February, 1867, the foundation stone of a new wing, comprising chapel, study room and dormitory, was laid. The architect of this building was Edmund Kirby. The new chapel was solemnly opened on October 23rd, 1867, by Bishop Brown, in the presence of a large number of priests, and consecrated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

In 1886, under Mother Aloysia Russell, the adjacent property, formerly belonging to a prominent Chester citizen, Meadows Frost, Esq., was purchased, and further extensions were made to the buildings. Meanwhile, the girls' day school continued to flourish and extend, though until 1917, the boarding school was administered as a separate entity. The school was first recognised by the Board of Education in 1921. The Faithful Companions of Jesus were obliged to give up their convent in Chester in 1925. During their stay, their school had been highly esteemed, and their educational work praised by the Inspectors who visited it. As far back as 1870, S. N. Stokes described it in his Report to the Committee of Council on Education as one of "several flourishing schools belonging to this teaching Order".[2]

In 1925, the convent and school were taken over by the Ursulines from Crewe, who have continued to work in Chester down to the present day. Thus it can be said that over the last one hundred and fifty years, the education of Catholic girls in Chester has been catered for.

With boys, the story is a very different one. We know very little about how boys of the more well-to-do families were educated. In 1705-6, there were two Catholic teachers in the city, William Kingsley, who taught Mathematics, and Bartholomew Casey, who was a fencing master. Where, or whom they taught does not appear.

At the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century, "Academies for Young Gentlemen" were as common in Chester as the "Seminaries for Young Ladies", and they advertised their existence in the newspapers and directories of the town. Some, especially those run by Anglican clergymen, gave a classical education similar to that of the King's School. Others were more commercially minded. Pigot's Directory for 1828 lists one belonging to John Gorst in Goss Street. What connection he had, if any, with the John Gorst, whose name appears as sponsor on the baptismal registers in 1815 and 1816, cannot be said. He may have been a son, and was probably a Catholic. What is clear is that Catholic families who could afford it, had to look elsewhere than Chester, for a Catholic education for their sons.

As late as 1811, Anglican vicars in Chester were giving a categorical negative to the question asked at a Visitation, "Is there a Popish school in your parish?". As the nineteenth century progressed, however, the rapid growth of the Catholic population made it imperative that its children should receive some form of elementary education in a Catholic school, if they were not to be lost to the Church. As soon as he arrived, Father Carbery began to devise means of building such a school.

The great problem, of course, was finding the money to finance the building of a school, its maintenance and a teacher's salary. This would be entirely beyond the means of the Catholic body. Many were poor, and unable to afford a large sum of money, either to build a school or to pay fees for their children's education. Yet the need was made greater by the influx of large numbers of Irish immigrants. Nor as yet did the Catholics qualify for the grant which other voluntary bodies were beginning to receive from the newly created Committee of Council on Education.

At a meeting of the Cheshire clergy at the end of 1838, it was decided that £50 should be taken from a fund established by the Earl of Shrewsbury, and given to Father Carbery for the building of a Free School in Chester. Unfortunately, the Earl had required that this subscription should be used only for buildings of which Augustine Welby Pugin was the architect, and now, though the Chester project was so small, he insisted that this condition should be respected.[3] The result was that the whole matter was shelved for another fifteen years, though more than one hundred children needed to be educated.

Father Carbery was more fortunate in having a teacher. This was Hugh Rigney, an Irishman by birth, and in 1838 about forty seven years of age. He lived in Claremont Walk, with the Catholic jeweller, Charles Testi. He seems to have been already a familiar member of the congregation and was probably teaching Catholic children before 1838, for he was frequently asked to witness Catholic marriages, and continued to do so until as late as 1854. The first place where he conducted his "school" for fifty five boys seems to have been a small room over the wooden sacristy attached to the Queen Street chapel. Bagshaw's Directory of Chester for 1850 speaks of "a Sabbath and day school, attached to the chapel, of which Hugh Rigney is the master". This, in the words of the Inspector, was

> "an apartment which for singular shape and narrow area was certainly comical, and, I hope, unique."[4]

Before the end of 1854, however, Hugh Rigney had either relinquished his position or had died, for Mother Louise of Dee House was then teaching "a few children, numbering ten to fifteen" in the same room. More children began to come, and it became imperative to find other accommodation. For a brief spell, a room was rented in a house off Watergate Row, and some boys were taught by a Dublin man named John Martin, who also sold trunks and so was known as "Trunky Martin". Another Irishman, named John Clarke, had a similar "school" in a room in Wilson Court in Love Street. Their efforts were finally taken over by the Faithful Companions of Jesus, and all were transferred to the coach house and hayloft of Dee House.

Writing nearly forty years later, Mother Louise recalled what it was like:—

> "Arrangements", she wrote, "were made to open a parish school, which until then did not really exist. The site on your right as you enter the convent gate was the coach-house and the hay-loft, with the space in front roughly paved. The girls and infants were in the hay-loft; the boys in the coach-house under a master. The girls entered at the convent gate, the boys at a small door in the wall leading to the river."

The H.M.I. who visited the school here, regarded the premises as "provisional but serviceable", though later he described them as "an old stable" and classified them in his list as "bad". In any case, the old building was not able to stand up to the unwonted movement. The ground used as a playground by the girls suddenly collapsed without apparent cause, and fell several feet into the lane below: no one was hurt.

Meanwhile, Father Carbery was working towards the building of proper schools. In 1852, the synod of Oscott had laid down that "no congregation was to be allowed to remain without its schools, one for each sex". The Account Book of Bishop Brown[A] at this time refers on several occasions to sums of money sent to Father Carbery. For instance, in 1852, the bishop sent him a cheque for £205 towards the purchase of land, and in the following year, another £40 10s. 0d. During the 1860's, a special account was opened for the "Chester Girls' School". Finally, in 1858, a schoolroom for the boys was opened behind the chapel in Queen Street, at the cost of £400. John Marsden was appointed school master. White's Directory for 1860 describes it as "neat and well ventilated". It was built to accommodate one hundred and eighty children.

In 1847, State aid was sanctioned for Catholic schools, on the understanding from the Catholic bishops that they would control and supervise the schools, since to them religion should be "the pervading principle" of a Catholic school, not merely another subject on the timetable. The Catholic Poor School Committee—the ancestor of the present Catholic Education Council—was established, to communicate with the Commitee of Council on Education. Its first secretary was Scott Naysmith Stokes, who, as Inspector for the Catholic schools of North West England, came regularly to Chester. The Poor School Committee, working on a national level, was responsible for allocating the grant to the schools which applied for it. It voted its first grant of £70 to Father Carbery in 1850, though he did not claim it until 1853. The parishes themselves contributed towards the Poor Schools Fund by an annual collection. The amount which Chester managed to collect averaged about £4. This had to be augmented by voluntary donations from better-off members of the parish, by charity sermons and by the school-pence, paid as fees by the parents of children attending the schools. With the total sum obtained, the school buildings had to be erected and maintained, the teacher's salary paid, and apparatus and equipment bought. In addition, the cost of training one or more apprentice teachers, or pupil teachers, as they were eventually called, had to be met. These were in addition to the monitors whom the teacher still used. It is hardly surprising that all this cost Father Carbery more money than he could find.

In 1861, the findings of the Newcastle Commission brought about a change in earlier legislation, whereby the State now paid a "capitation grant" for each pupil, with an additional grant for any pupil teacher, to schools which received a satisfactory report from the Inspector. School fees still had to be paid by the parents. The first mention of a "capitation grant" being paid to the Chester Boys' School appeared in a Report sent that year by S. N. Stokes, to the newly formed Education Department. It came to £4 16s. 0d. only, in contrast to the £10 5s. 0d. allocated to the Catholic school at Birkenhead, and the much larger sum of £138 10s. 0d. paid to Stockport, both of which were older schools than Chester. It indicates how small the Chester school still was.

S. N. Stokes had frequently complained in the 1850's about the inadequate salary which Catholic teachers in his area received. They were "ill-paid and ill supported" he said; i.e. the school was badly attended. He recommended that the average fee of 1d. a week paid by the parents be raised to 2d., in order to obtain better teaching in the schools. Though his argument was valid, many of the Catholic poor were not able to afford the extra 1d.

In 1862, the findings of the Newcastle Commission were modified by the "Revised Code". Henceforward, the capitation grant depended upon the number of children in regular attendance, who were being taught by a certificated teacher, and who passsed the Inspector's examination in the "3 R's", reading, writing and arithmetic. The school could receive a maximum grant of 12s. for each child; 4s. if he had put in a minimum number of 200 attendances during the year, and 8s. if he had passed in all three R's. 2s. 8d. was deducted for each child's failure in a subject. The Inspector carried out an annual inspection, and also had the power to make "surprise visits" without warning, to make sure that standards were being maintained. If his Report was unsatisfactory, the grant could be seriously reduced or withdrawn altogether. This notorious "Payment by Results", which affected the schools of all religious denominations seeking the grant, hampered the development of elementary education in England for the next fifty years. It explains the constant anxiety expressed in the Chester school Log Books and in the Parish Notice Books about the attendance of the children and the standard of their attainments, especially in the weeks immediately before the inspection was due. On both of them depended the amount of grant the school would receive during the coming year.

The Chester Boys' School was immediately affected by the Revised Code. The school no longer fulfilled the conditions requisite for receiving the grant, and from 1863 until 1866, it was withdrawn. The Report for 1863 made by S. N. Stokes reads that

> "a number of schools, including Chester, had ceased to employ certificated teachers, and no longer fulfilled the conditions which necessitate inspection preliminary to the payment of public grant."

John Marsden had either left the school, or was not certificated, probably the latter. The Report then goes on to make the cryptic remark that the

reason for the withdrawal was "the Manager's fear of responsibility under the New Code". Father Hopkins, who was then the priest in charge of the Mission, may have felt himself unable, at that moment, to cope with the new demands through lack of resources. No grants were made in the area between 1863 and 1866, and the Inspector entered in his annual Report the statement that "there are nine Missions in Cheshire which have never received from the public purse any assistance towards the erection or maintenance of a Roman Catholic school". Indeed, it looks as if the school might have had to be closed during those three years, for the Parish Notices for the year 1866 open with the announcement, on the second Sunday after the Epiphany, "Tomorrow the Boys' School will commence". The first Log Book of the school also begins on this day, with a similar entry by the newly appointed teacher, Luke Ryder. "Monday, February 12th, 1866", he wrote, "This is the first day of my engagement". He then goes on to explain that he did no teaching that day because he spent the whole time classifying and registering the names of the 120 boys who arrived at the school.

It is true to say, therefore, that Monday, February 12th, 1866, opened a new chapter in the history of elementary education for Catholic boys in Chester. The picture which now emerges is much clearer, thanks to the preservation of the school Log Books and the Parish Notice Books,[6] which bear witness to the constant concern of the clergy with the education of the children.

Luke Ryder was twenty six years of age when he took up his new teaching post. He remained in charge of the school until December 19th, 1879, when he made his last entry in the Log Book, "Dismissed the children for the Christmas holidays at noon on Friday. My duties as master of this school end today". He was a trained teacher, having spent two years, 1862-3, at St. Mary's, Hammersmith. This was the first Catholic Training College for men, and was founded at Hammersmith in 1850 as part of the policy of the Catholic Poor School Committee. He had obtained there a Third Class Certificate. Before coming to Chester, he had taught at Newcastle-under-Lyme. His own unselfconscious entries day by day in the Log Book, together with the Inspector's Report, which had to be written up year by year, bear testimony to his devotedness as a teacher. They also illustrate the difficulties he encountered, in his endeavours to raise the level of intellectual ability of his pupils and develop their moral training. To the hours he spent in the schoolroom, teaching boys who at times he had to admit were "noisy and very rough", he added daily lessons from four o'clock till 5.30 for the pupil teachers he had in his charge. After October, 1866, he was also responsible three nights a week for a Night School, whose purpose, in the words of the Inspector, was "to impart the rudiments of secular and religious learning to young persons employed during the day in manual labour". For all this, he received as a certificated teacher an annual salary of £171 14s. 3d.

In May, 1869, the Inspector's Report declared:—

> "Much credit is due to the Master for the pains he takes to render the instruction of his school sound, which efforts are attended by respectable results."

The following year, it spoke of:—

> "The moral tone pervading, and the discipline of the boys, which is very gratifying, and is a credit to their respectable master."

The last report he received at St. Werburgh's, written in 1879, praises him in the words:—

> "Mr. Ryder has a very difficult class of boys to deal with, and he is entitled to full credit for their good discipline and the neatness of some of their work."

By then, one senses from the entries in the Log Book that he was a tired and sick man, perhaps prematurely aged by his task. Moreover, family sorrows over the years lay hidden beneath businesslike, almost callous entries. In 1866, he writes, "I heard the news of the death of my sister"; in the following year, there is an identical entry about the death of his brother. On January 26th, 1872, he was obliged to explain,

> "I dismissed the school because my child died and I had to look after the grave and coffin.
> January 27th. There was no school because of the funeral of my child.
> January 28th. School as usual."

There is yet another entry in 1877,

> "One of my children being dead, I was obliged to leave the school twice today, to order the grave etc. Left McGrath (he was a pupil teacher) in charge.
> The following day, 2 o'clock to 4.30. I had to attend the funeral."

One of the problems Luke Ryder had to face was the large number of boys for whom he was responsible. One hundred and twenty turned up the day the school opened in 1866. This was only the beginning of a steady increase during the coming months, and by the end of the year it had gone up to one hundred and sixty. It is hardly surprising that the Inspector's Report for 1867 opens with the comment:—

> "The attendance here is numerous . . . The numbers must not be allowed to outgrow the accommodation."

In 1869, the numbers on the register stood at one hundred and fifty, and by 1871 there were about two hundred and twenty boys, whose ages ranged from five to ten or eleven. This year, however, the Inspector could report:—

> "A new Infants' School is about to be built, which will effect a great improvement in relieving the Boys' Room from the very young children, of whom it now contains a very large number . . . The superficial area of the classroom is not calculated to admit the number at present in attendance."

Trying to teach so large a number of boys single-handed was, of course, beyond the ingenuity of any teacher. Yet it was the feature of

education which posed the most common problem to all English elementary schools at the time. The attempted solution was the Monitorial System, whereby a few older boys were taught by the teacher, and they in their turn passed on the small stock of knowledge they had acquired to the younger children. After the middle of the century, it was gradually superceded by the pupil-teacher system. Pupil-teachers were children chosen at the age of thirteen from the most promising pupils in the elementary school. They were apprenticed to the master for a period of five years, and were examined at the end of each year on a prescribed syllabus. If they passed creditably, the master received a grant. At the end of the apprenticeship, they could sit for an examination which qualified them for a Queen's Scholarship, entitling them to a three-year course in a training college.

When Luke Ryder first took over St. Werburgh's school, he seems to have had only monitors, possibly because there were no boys old enough or able to become pupil teachers. He explains in the Log Book how he divided the school into two classes, the older boys and the infants, and placed the latter under a monitor. The older boys were separated into two groups, and they too seem to have been taught by monitors. By 1867, he, or the priest in charge, seems to have been hoping that they would be counted as pupil-teachers, but they were too young. The Report for that year refused to accept them as such, in the words:—

> "Martin Gough and Robert Davies cannot be regarded as pupil-teachers as they are less than thirteen years of age on April 1st 1867."

They were, indeed, only children themselves, in trouble for playing truant, or having to be warned against playing with the younger children instead of teaching them.

These were the days before compulsory schooling, and Luke Ryder quickly found that, in spite of apparent overcrowding, his greatest problem was absenteeism among his pupils. One of the most important causes of this was the poverty of so many of the parents. Many of the children were poorly clad, and bad weather inevitably kept them at home. A heavy fall of snow or rain, or an excessively cold spell is usually noted in the Log Book, and followed by the remark that many children have stayed away. But if wintry weather kept them away from school, so did the long summer days, when all manner of exciting things went on in the streets to tempt truants. There might be a review of the Militia or the Yeomanry on the Roodee, or the opening of the Agricultural Show there. The Freemasons held a procession in the city, or Tram Omnibuses started running, and this attracted the boys. Even more exciting, Mander's Wild Beast Show or the Circus arrived; and "therefore boys were absent" adds the Log Book, sometimes as many as twenty in an afternoon. Neither punishment the next day, nor small prizes for good attendance deterred the culprits, any more than a visit of the master to their homes. With some new arrival, "many children commenced the old game of truant playing".

Luke Ryder's successor, Patrick Clarke, put his finger on one of the causes for the truancy. It was not merely the natural excitement of watching soldiers on parade, or the coming of a menagerie which drew the

children. It was the opportunity of earning a little money which such events also gave them. In 1880, the new master reported,

> "It is usual for a great number of children to stay away on Fair Days, to earn a few pence by selling matches, or holding horses."

A later teacher complained in 1884 that

> "the recent opening of a branch office of the 'Liverpool Echo' in Chester was causing truancy. "The Manager", he declared, "offers special facilities to boys who will sell these papers in the streets. There has been quite 'a rage' amongst the boys for selling Echos."

Some of the parents were so poor, particularly in the winter months when they were out of work, that at times they could not afford to pay the school fee of a penny a week. Sending the children home to get it did not work, for often they did not come back for the rest of the week. In one case, the boys were removed and sent to another school.

Patrick Clarke tried to raise the amount of the school fees, and to arrange their scale. Standards I, II, and III, after 1880, were supposed to pay 3d. a week, and Standards IV, V, and VI, 4d. He reported in his Log Book that a few of the better class of lads in each class paid 6d. and was able to add, "Total School Fees for the year 1881, £96 5s. 3d. an increase of £16 on last year and £36 on the previous year".

Five years later, however, Canon Lynch was begging the parents to send their children to school regularly and punctually, in preparation for the school examinations (i.e. for the visit of the H.M.I.). Many parents, he said, still neglected to pay the school pence or to apply to the authorities to pay for them. It was upon the school pence that the priest as Manager of the school, had to rely for help in payment of the teacher's salary, meagre as it was. He had to warn parents on one occasion that their children would not be admitted to the school if they did not pay the fees, for, he explained

> "our schools cost us between £700 and £800 a year to maintain, and we cannot keep up unless parents do their duty. The Board of Guardians, on application, will help if parents cannot do this through poverty or failure of work". And he added, "it is downright cruel and unjust to throw this burden upon us, burdened as we are with a mission debt of £6,000."

Poor and irregular attendance could result in failure at the time of the Inspector's examination, and the consequent loss of grant for the school. Another difficulty which teachers found was the early age at which parents took the boys away from school and sent them to work. It was quite possible for a child of twelve or less to leave school for work. In 1867, three boys under twelve years of age were in the Night School, which means that they were in some kind of employment during the daytime. It was still possible until as late as 1870, for children under thirteen to be employed in factories and workshops as "half timers". Chester never became an industrialised city, and only one half-timer is mentioned in the Log Books, working in Mr. Johnson's Foundry. None-the-less, there are frequent ciriticisms in the H.M.I.'s Reports of the

small number of children in the higher standards of the school. In 1867, the Report noted,

> "Efforts should be made in future to prepare more boys for higher standards."

This was repeated much more strongly the following year:—

> "The classification is too low, and strenuous efforts should be made to bring forward a larger number of boys into the higher standards. Out of one hundred and twelve boys examined, only seven are above Standard 3, and these should have been in Standard 6. We shall be obliged to reduce the grant next year unless a much larger proportion of children are presented in the 4th and 5th Standards."

The grant was in fact reduced by £10.

With great difficulty, the teacher managed in 1869 to present the minimum number to qualify for the grant, and the H.M.I. noted how small it was, considering the number of boys of advanced age who were in the lower Standards. The problem was how to get boys to stay on, when parents were so poor as to need the few shillings they could earn in wages. In 1870, several boys left to go to work in a brewery.

In 1880, legislation was passed making education compulsory for children between the ages of five and ten. Beyond that age, however, individual towns were left free to make their own bye-laws, and these varied greatly from place to place. In Chester, until 1883, the bye-law stated that children could leave school at the age of thirteen, or earlier if they had obtained a certificate of proficiency in the three R's. Many Catholic parents clearly made use of the right which the bye-law gave them, and children left as soon as they reached the age of thirteen. Indeed, in some cases it was taken all too literally! The Log Book records the following remark by a boy,

> "Please Sir, I shall not be coming to school this afternoon. I shall be thirteen at dinnertime"!

In desperation, Patrick Clarke wrote a long complaint in the Log Book in the July of 1881.

> "Of the twenty six boys who passed Standard IV in April, only twelve are now attending. The remainder, though many are only ten or eleven years of age, have left, the bye-laws of the city allowing children who pass Standard IV to leave school. Many of these lads only run about the streets, and they offer inducement to other children who ought to be attending, to play truant."

Later on in the year when another group left, he wrote,

> "It is impossible to get any proportion of children to remain at school after passing Standard IV."

The situation was no better in 1882, with the consequent fear of a drop in the grant:—

> "Boys of ten and eleven are leaving because they have passed Standard IV. This has led to a decrease in numbers in the school from two hundred to one hundred and eighty one. Parents do not seem inclined to let children stay on a single day after they reach the age of thirteen, or after they have passed Standard IV."

After about 1875, efforts were made to widen the school syllabus by the introduction, in addition to the three R's, of what became known as "class subjects". The Inventories of school books now entered in the Log Book include such items as Test cards in Arithmetic and Grammar, and the Newspaper Readers which were needed for the examinations in the basic subjects, but also Geography and History Readers, and even a copy of Shakespeare's Merchant of Venice. Unfortunately, these subjects were tested by the Inspector for the sake of the grant, and such entries appear in the Reports as,

> "Music needs improvement", or
> "Geography is so weak as to imperil the whole grant. Better results will be looked for next year."

Faced with the constant danger of losing part of the grant, it is hardly surprising that mechanical learning by heart became the educational method of the day.

After spending two years at St. Werburgh's school, Patrick Clarke decided to accept Canon Buquet's invitation to take charge of the school at Birkenhead, when the Canon transferred there. Though he had received high commendation from the H.M.I. for his work in the school, the teacher who succeeded him probably had more influence over the boys. This was Philip Lane, who came on October 30th, 1882, from the Pro-Cathedral school at Clifton. While carrying on efficiently the work of his predecessor, the entries in the Log Book seem to reveal in Philip Lane a kindly and sympathetic element in his dealings with his charges. The old difficulties remained, but he was quick to give praise and notice improvement, whether in attendance, in the payment of school fees, or in punctuality. He was helped in 1883 by the alteration of the Chester bye-law, which raised the standard of exemption (i.e. the right to leave) to the 5th Standard, and to the 4th Standard in the case of half-timers. This had the beneficial result of bringing up the numbers in the upper standards of the school and of making children in Standard V attend regularly. The detrimental effects of "payment by results" were also beginning to be recognised and modified, with a consequent relaxation of tension. In 1891, the Mistress of the Infant school reported in her Log Book, "The Manager has accepted a 'Fee Grant' for this school". This was a grant of 10s. a head which was brought in by legislation that year, and presumably it was accepted for all the Chester Catholic schools. As she went on to say,

> "Thus an immense amount of labour and difficulty will be spared . . . The freeing of the school from the payment promises to secure greater regularity of attendance."

Other events, bringing happiness to the children of the poor, begin to find mention in the school records. Probably they had been taking place

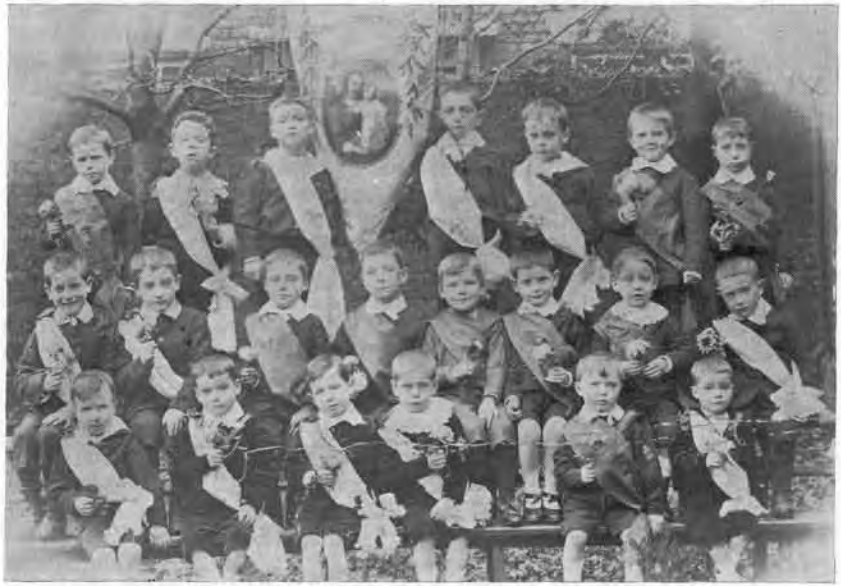
in earlier years, since they are related in the records of the Girls' and Infants' Schools, and the boys would hardly have been left out. But now they lighten the pages of the Log Book. Christmas time brought the children a party and "a Christmas tree, abundantly supplied with presents by ladies in the congregation". We learn from the Mistress of the Infants' school that one of the benefactresses was Mrs. Hostage. There was the occasion when Alderman Sir Thomas Frost visited the school. He was so pleased that he left £5 towards providing a treat for all the children, and the boys, girls and infants sent him an address of thanks. Another highlight for the boys must have been the day when a photograph of the entire school was taken. Five copies were given to the master to be hung in the school. One of them is reproduced here. June 21st, 1887 was celebrated in all the schools for it was the Jubilee of Queen Victoria. The children marched in procession to the Town Hall, there to be regaled with a special tea-party.

Philip Lane remained in charge of the school until 1924, when he was succeeded by Mr. John Cunningham. Mr. Cunningham retired in 1950, and the 11 + pupils were transferred to the newly erected Secondary Modern School of St. Bede's, in Handbridge.

The Girls' and Infants' Schools have in some ways had a more fortunate history than the Boys' School. Since 1854, they have been in the care of nuns; the Faithful Companions of Jesus until their departure from Chester in 1925; the Ursulines from then until 1958, and since then the Irish Sisters of Charity. This has enabled the two schools to build up a tradition lasting more than a hundred years. It has also meant that the Mistresses in charge of the schools have been able to draw on the spiritual and material resources of a religious community, whose specific apostolate in the Church is the education of the young. In the nineteenth century, many of the problems faced by the Master of the Boys' and Infant boys' school existed in the other two schools, the poverty of the homes from which many of the children came, irregularity in attendance and in payment of school fees, the necessity of teaching for the sake of examination results, in order to obtain the grant. But they seem to have been faced in a more buoyant spirit. Moreover, the Mistresses placed in the schools were educators of outstanding calibre, Mother Louise Russell and Mother Josephine in the Girls' School, and Mother Elizabeth Austin who was Mistress of the Infants' School from 1871 until her retirement in 1911.

After the pioneer days of Watergate Row and the hayloft at Dee House, new buildings were put up on the site of the old coach-house in the convent grounds, which became the Girls' and Infants' Schools. They were paid for by Bishop Brown, on the understanding that when new schools were built in Queen Street, the Faithful Companions of Jesus would buy the premises from him. To undertake the cost, he opened a special account, called "Chester Girls' School Account", in 1861. The infants remained in this building until 1872, when they moved to their new school beside the Boys' School, built by Canon Buquet. In 1875, when the new church of St. Werburgh's was opened, the old chapel in Queen Street became the Girls' School.

The first Log Book of the Girls' School under Mother Louise opens in 1870 with the entry,



Group of St. Werburgh's Boys, 1898

Top row, l to r: J. Gallagher, . . Truss, Len Pearce, . . . , . . . , Ch. Stanton, A. Flynn

Middle row: D. Melia, . . . , . . . , Laurie Pearce, . . . , Ch. Walker, P. Melia, . . .

Front row: Ch. Creighton, R. Beatty, . . . , H. Melia, . . . , Jos. Beatty

Philip Lane with a class of boys, 1883

St. Werburgh's football teams old and new

Top row, l to r: J. Jones, J. Cassidy, J. Byrne, M. McGeever, M. Corian, T. Beatty
Middle row: J. Green, W. Gallagher, T. Conlon
Front row: J. McDermott, J. O'Callaghan, W. McDermott

Top row, l to r: D. McCormack, P. Cunliffe, M. Barnett, P. Murphy, A. Williams, B. Hutchinson, T. Phillip, J. Taylor, T. Tonks, Father J. Warnock
Front row: A. Harrison, T. Hennessy, J. Gorman, T. Melia, P. Scanlon, J. Flynn (*in front*)

> "New schools opened this week. The children seemed delighted and came in great numbers and in high spirits. They are very good and diligent, though they have been away from school for eighteen weeks."

Since Mother Louise possessed a second class certificate, the school was at once put under Government inspection. The first visit of the H.M.I., S. N. Stokes, took place in 1871, and the praise he then gave Mother Louise became typical of future Reports.

> "The condition of the school," he wrote, "is very creditable to the teacher. I find discipline and instruction very satisfactory."

His "surprise visits" were equally favourable. On one occasion, he reported "the work was going on comfortably and cheerfully", and on another, "The Register and Log Book are nicely kept"; on a third unexpected visit, "The school is in excellent order".

In 1871, he commented on the confined area and consequent inconvenience of the schoolroom, but added, "larger premises are about to be built for the girls and infants upon a site adjoining the present Boys' School".

After the summer holidays of 1875, the girls moved into the room formerly occupied by the infants. Mother Louise's comment in the Log Book makes it easy to picture the new schoolroom. The room was still too small, but she added,

> "this fault is counterbalanced by the shape which gives the mistress more facility in minding the children, who are all before her."

The room must have been the long one running the length of what later became the Preparatory School at Dee House, and in it one hundred and forty children had to be "minded".

At last, early in 1876, there came the glad entry,

> "We moved into the new school to the delight of the children and the relief of the teachers, who for months have been unable for want of light and room to give writing, sewing or collective lessons in a satisfactory manner."

There were the usual settling-in troubles. Workmen were disturbing lessons finishing off their work. The stove was put too near the woodwork and no fire could be lit in the cold weather, though the gas warmed the room a little. When the stove finally worked, the room was full of smoke. How vividly Mother Louise's pen brings the whole scene alive!

More memorable to the children, however, must have been other occasions like the entertainment by the conjurer, "who amused them highly", and the times when sweets and baskets of apples were sent in from Dee House and other kind benefactors. Once, Mrs. Harnett visted the school, bringing material for dresses and pinafores to be given as prizes, and promising the children breakfast on the day of their first Holy Communion. There was great excitement when the Duke of Westminster gave a special fete to all the school children of Chester, and everyone started off for Eaton Park in great spirits. Once, there was an excursion, possibly to the seaside. For many, this was their first train

journey, and one little girl said "She was afraid to cross the sea". All the Log Books refer to the visit to the schools of Cardinal Manning on April 30th, 1875. Mother Louise spoke of the kind, affectionate way in which he talked to her children. On St. Patrick's day, "the children looked very gay all decorated in green"—a proof of their Irish origins. Christmas parties in which the schoolroom was brightly decorated, were concluded with the children's songs and recitations, and by a magic lantern entertainment. One little girl must have remembered one such occasion with sorrow because she had not attended school regularly enough to be allowed admittance. Another time, three children were taken away from the school when they too were not permitted to go to the party, though they returned the following week.

If the "Superioress" of Dee House, as she is called in the Log Book, provided so many good things, there were also times when she visited the school to examine the classes in their reading, writing and arithemetic, to give "decorations for good conduct", or to superintend the school if Mother Louise had to be away. Then, she must have seemed a formidable person to small girls who curtsied before her, and stumbled over their letters and sums.

Naturally, lessons different from those in the Boys' School appear on the time-table. The Report for 1875 made special mention of Needlework. We hear of a girl named Bridget Kirkby who left from Standard VI to learn the trade of a dressmaker, but the first class must have found buttonhole stitching trying enough, especially when they could not see through want of light in the room. Special note is also made of music, and of the good attempt of the children to sing in parts. They must have been accustomed to hymn singing at Mass on Sundays, as the first time they were accompanied by the organ is mentioned. When the harmonium was out of order, there was no singing lesson.

Girls who hoped to go on to pupil teaching are noted, like Sarah Bradley who left in September, 1874 and was entered as a candidate in the Infants' School, and another girl from the VIth Standard preparing for pupil teaching, who was put to teach their letters to children who had been absent. At Christmas, the pupil teachers of both schools went to Dee House for the special tea-party in their honour.

One is left with the impression that it was a happy school—two children were removed because their parents thought there were too many holidays! There is only occasional mention of truancy, so constant a feature of the boys' School, though one does read of two children who spent a day and night in Liverpool before they were found, and of the small girl who ran and hid when she saw the pupil teacher coming to look for her. For the most part, their schooldays were probably the happiest for these children, for many of whom life would otherwise have been hard and drab. If they missed school it was because they had to stay at home or in the house where they lodged, "to mind the house" while their parents went out to work, picking fruit or working in the market gardens. Their school life was a short one, for in the 1870's many of them left at the age of twelve, some to go and work in the cotton mills of Stockport or Preston. One wonders how quickly they then became weary and listless. One such child had reached only Standard I in school. Some

came back in the evenings to the Night School which the nuns opened after 1867. In spite of all that was done to help the children in their school days, many were poorly fed and poorly clothed, though their cleanliness was often commented on. In 1875, one child died from weakness, after an attack of fever. The Parish Registers during all these years, and well into this century, speak constantly of the high mortality rate among infants and young children. Parents could not afford to send for medical aid and when death occurred, it was not unknown for an orange box to be used for a coffin.

In 1891, Mother Louise became Superior of Dee House, and she was replaced in the school by Mother Josephine, who remained as Headmistress for the next seventeen years. She retired in 1904, and died in May 1913. Her place was taken by Mother Monica.

In the porch of St. Werburgh's church, there is a stained glass window, showing a Faithful Companion of Jesus, set against a background depicting the Dee House convent and the school in Queen Street. It was erected in 1914 in memory of Mother Elizabeth Austin, who retired as Headmistress of the Infants' School in 1911, after holding that position since 1871. When she died on February 3rd, 1912, at the age of sixty eight, the whole Catholic community of Chester mourned the loss of one whose name was a household word among them. When Mother Elizabeth first took up her office as Mistress of the school, she was not certificated, but before the year was out, the Government Report could already say of her, "The management of this school is sufficiently good to warrant the admission of the teacher to examination for a certificate". In the days when it was not so common for nuns to be trained after they had entered the convent, Mother Elizabeth came out of the school in order to work for her qualification. Presumably she went to the only Catholic training college for women in Mount Pleasant, Liverpool, run by the Sisters of Notre Dame. Meanwhile, Miss Maria Hamilton, a certificated second year student from Notre Dame took charge. By 1875, Mother Elizabeth was back in Chester, fully qualfied and ready to take over the post which she held for the rest of her active life.

The esteem in which the Faithful Companions were held by the Inspectors has already been mentioned. Under Mother Elizabeth, it was said more than once,

> "The school possesses in a high degree all the characteristics of an excellent Infants' School. Every class does well."

In 1892, the Report again gave high praise:—

> "The quality of instruction is distinctly high, and the character of the discipline is both kindly and firm. The recitation deserves special praise for its accuracy, distinctness and expression, and it is seldom that the infants of an elementary school acquire such good pronounciation and accent. The class of babies is most suitably taught, and there is ample evidence in every class that the true principles of infant training are understood."

By then, Mother Elizabeth was assisted in her teaching by Mother Anastasia, two assistant teachers named Elizabeth Jones and Teresa

Murphy, and three pupil teachers, and she had well over two hundred children in the school. At a time when relations with Inspectors were often strained and their "surprise visits" regarded with dislike and suspicion, she was on extremely cordial terms with them. They obviously had the highest respect for her, and she turned to them for help and advice. Thus, in 1890, when the school had to be closed for a month because of a severe epidemic of whooping cough and measles, she became alarmed lest it run short of the required number of "meetings of school" to qualify for the annual grant. The Inspector, Mr. Kynnersley assured her, with "his usual courtesy and kindness" that the school would be allowed the grant. In 1894, when he came for the annual examination, she entered in her Log Book:—

> "The children did their best and were excellent. As usual, the morning, instead of being an ordeal, was quite a pleasant one, and teachers and children alike left the school happy at such a termination of the year's work."

There must have been few teachers in Chester at the time who could speak in such terms of their Inspector. If Mr. Kynnersley recognised her as a teacher who fully understood the principles of infant training, she was convinced by "his courtesy and kindness of manner that in him we have a friend and sympathetic adviser in the great work of education". Probably, one of the highest compliments he paid her was to bring his sister to visit the school.

In one sense, one of Mother Elizabeth's hardest trials must have been the constant stream of visitors to the school. The children were clearly her pride and joy, as also was the school for the "Reverend Manager". The result was frequent interruptions of lessons, so that songs could be sung and drill performed for everyone, ranging from Cardinal Manning to nameless ladies and gentlemen. In the end, Mother Elizabeth was entering in the Log Book the amount of time that went by in this way, ten minutes for the Bishop, twenty for the young ladies accompanied by Sisters from the convent, etc. But the children must have welcomed the baskets of fruit and the sweets that usually followed the visits. Mrs. Topham sent in apples for All Hallowe'en, Mrs. Hostage provided the Christmas tree and presents and £5 came from Miss Jones's charity, for the poorest children. No matter how badly attendance dropped during the winter term or how inclement the weather, the infants always turned up in full force for the Christmas party, and this is always described in full detail in the Log Book. In 1888, a large box of toys was sent in for the Christmas tree, and then on December 18th, "At 3 o'clock, the children assembled. The schoolrooms had been prettily decorated, and the children looked their best, while their behaviour was most praiseworthy. Tea had been provided by Reverend Mother to the great satisfaction of children and visitors alike. After a very pleasant evening, the children were dismissed at 7.30". One hundred and ninety six had enjoyed themselves. On another occasion, there were two hundred and forty six.

The poverty and distress of the 1880's and 1890's, particularly during the hard winters, are reflected in many entries of the Log Book. When epidemics broke out, as they often did, many children could put up no

resistance, because they were "too cold and semi-fed". Several years running, Canon Lynch gave daily breakfasts to the poorer children. In January, 1893, the Log Book records:—

> "Breakfasts for 150 children. They consist of bread and dripping with good hot tea. Children are not restricted to the quantity but may have as much as they require, provided there is no waste."

During this month, seven hundred and fifty seven breakfasts were served to the children in one week. The following year, Reverend Mother of Dee House gave out good warm clothing to forty girls and twenty one boys, "whose beaming faces and eyes spoke volumes". In 1895, eighty children were clothed by Dee House, and breakfast and dinner were given to one hundred and thirty children, but Mother Elizabeth noticed that "the extreme cold was telling on them in spite of the efforts to feed and clothe them, and to keep the school warm". The first Parish Magazine, produced in 1904, described how in times of distress the nuns showed remarkable charity towards the poor, feeding the children at school and the adults at the convent.

With all her motherly love for her "little ones", as she so often called them, Mother Elizabeth expected high standards of behaviour and work, both from them and from her pupil teachers. In 1888, the Inspector reported, "the school continues excellent", but she was not satisfied, as the following remark shows:—

> "If a little more regularity of attendance could be secured, then one might hope for something like good results!"

She taught her pupil teachers from 9 to 9.30 a.m. and from 3.30 to 5 p.m. each day, with an extra two hours on a Saturday morning for sewing. Several passed well in their annual examinations, and one, Teresa Flanagan, obtained a Queen's Scholarship. She observed their lessons, often given to classes of forty children. She criticised them when necessary, and she praised their devotedness to the children. With such a teacher working in their midst, it is difficult to imagine how it could be otherwise.

During the 1880's and 1890's, the amount of grant the Infants' School "earned" is usually entered after the H.M.I.'s Report in the Log Book. The average over these years, when the school numbered about one hundred and ninety, was £142.

After 1882, the number of attendances of each individual child was no longer necessary for the calculation of the grant, but only the aggregate total for the whole school. During this same period, the average Parliamentary grant for all the schools of St. Werburgh's came to £362 a year. An account book for the year 1898-9 shows that the situation was improving for that year's grant is entered at £513 10s. To this, a monthly "Fee grant" of £71 15s. was added. The same account book, however, gives the total expenditure in salaries, coal, gas, water, school cleaning and the purchase of school equipment of every kind as £1,062 7s. 5d., £200 more than it had been ten years earlier. To keep the schools solvent, a variety of means had to be found. Donations and annual subscriptions helped, and the account book enters for instance, an annual donation of £5 sent by the

St. Werburgh's old school, Queen Street

St. Werburgh's new school, Lightfoot Street, 1966

Duke of Westminster. One of the more popular ways of raising money was by balls and concerts. These are referred to in the Parish Notice Book, and several programmes have survived. The Town Hall was often hired for concerts, for instance on Christmas Day, or on St. Patrick's day, and the proceeds usually came to about £25. Occasionally also the Town Hall was hired for a lecture, like the one given in 1898 by Father Stephen Perry, S.J. on Astronomy, a subject on which he had won a high reputation. It was patronised by the Mayor of Chester, and brought in £15. In 1898, the total accumulated in these different ways was £957 6s. 1d., which still left a deficit of £105 1s. 4d. Thus, the pattern familiar to Catholic congregations all over the land was repeated in Chester, as Catholics there strove to maintain their schools.

As the schools grew in numbers in the early twentieth century, improvement and extensions became imperative. In 1905, two classrooms and cloakrooms were added, which involved the loss of the old presbytery. The porch of the old Queen Street chapel was removed in 1908, and replaced by a window, and the entrance of the school was removed from the original portico in Queen Street to Union Walk. At the same time, a new heating system was installed, to replace the old stoves. This left a debt of £1,400 on the school. The same year, the old Catholic cemetery, which had not been used for fifty years, was paved over and the headstones removed, so that it could be used as a playground for the infants. By 1911, the debt on the school had risen to £5,000. This had to be borne by the parish priest. Though denominational schools could now receive aid from the rates, from which they had been formerly excluded, the cost of any new buildings, repairs or alterations still had to be found by the parish priest as the Manager of the schools.

The foundation stone of St. Francis's schools was laid on 5th June, 1881 by the Earl of Denbigh, and they were opened on 20th May of the following year. They had accommodation for about three hundred, and children belonging to the parish who had been attending St. Werburgh's schools now went to their own schools. After 1885, they began to receive a Government grant of about £100 a year. By now the Capuchins had also founded the Mission at Saltney. They were given land for schools there in 1877 by the Duke of Westminster.

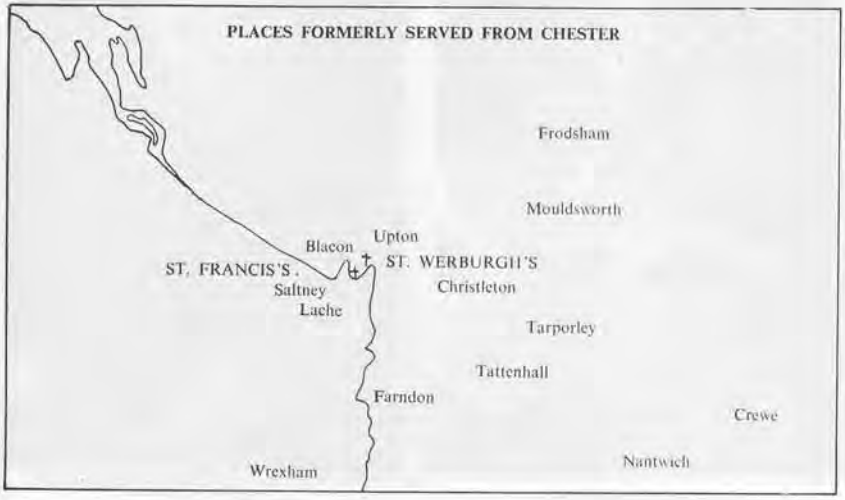
CHAPTER VI

Parish Life in the last hundred years

The final chapter of this story attempts to reconstruct Catholic life in Chester during the last hundred years. One of its most striking features is the steady increase in the Catholic population. The other is the vigour and expansion of the life of the Church, in spite of the great poverty of the majority of its people.

On one occasion in 1889, Father Lynch said that his congregation numbered 2,000. By 1907, he had seen it increase to 2,600, and by 1929, it numbered 3,500. At the same time, St. Francis's parish grew from 800 to 1,300. Catholics by that date numbered about one in ten, in a total population in the city of about 40,000. In spite of a certain drop in numbers during the two World Wars, by 1951 St. Werburgh's had 4,600 members and St. Francis's 2,400.

While it had long since ceased to be necessary for the priests to serve distant centres like Crewe, Nantwich or Wrexham, which now had their own churches, the increase in population and growth of new suburbs in and around Chester itself brought about the opening of new Mass-centres, dependent on the mother-churches of St. Werburgh's and St. Francis's. In November, 1906, Mass was said for the first time at Tarporley by Canon Chambers of St. Werburgh's, for the benefit of the small Catholic population, which had been increased by the arrival of twenty Irish workers. At first, a room, used as a cheese-loft, was lent in his house



PRIESTS OF ST. WERBURGH'S

Eugene Buquet

Edward Lynch

Joseph Chambers

Thomas Tatlock

PRIESTS OF ST. WERBURGH'S

Eugene Rooney

Maurice Hayes

Hugh Welch

Francis Murphy

CAPUCHINS OF ST. FRANCIS'S

Ernest Richards

Simon Denton

Paschal Burlinson (Provincial)

in High Street, by a Mr. Martin Goulding, and here Mass was said once a month. In 1937, the Salvatorians took over the Mission, and in 1941 a small church was built. In more modern times, a similar growth has taken place at Mouldsworth, Tattenhall and Farndon, and in particular at Upton-by-Chester. Here, a flourishing Mass centre was opened in 1939, which has subsequently become the parish of St. Columba's, with its church built by the present parish priest of St. Werburgh's. In addition, the coming to Christleton Hall of the Society of the Divine Saviour in 1934 gave a new chapel to the parish, as well as another Religious Order. Regrettably, the Salvatorians have since had to leave Chester.

In the meanwhile, the work of the Franciscans at the other end of the city led to development on the other side of the River Dee. Saltney has already been mentioned. St. Clare's, in the Lache, was opened in 1960. The entirely new parish of Blacon, in the care of the secular clergy, was begun in 1956, and its church of St. Theresa's opened in 1959. Thus, it can be said that from the tiny room in Parry's Entry, five flourishing parishes in Chester alone have been developed, as well as several other Mass centres.

When Canon Buquet left for Birkenhead in 1882, he was replaced for a year by Canon Dallow, and then in 1883, by Father Edward Lynch. Father Lynch was a Londoner by birth, educated at Sedgeley Park School in Staffordshire and at Ushaw. After his ordination in 1869, he became curate successively at Chester, Shrewsbury, Birkenhead and Seacombe, before finally returning to St. Werburgh's as parish priest. He continued to hold this position for the next twenty years.

Father Lynch found himself faced with the enormous debt, for those days, of £7,000, and throughout the years he struggled constantly to reduce it, so much so that it eventually told on his physical strength. His own people, who were poor and often in acute distress, did what they could to help reduce it. Towards school expenses, the children were asked to bring, "a pingin (a penny) to the sagart (the priest) every week". There was a weekly outdoor collection to reduce the debt on the Mission, and this realised about £2 a week. The Easter collection for the three priests came one year to £4 4s. i.e. £1 8s. 2d. each. All sorts of other money-raising devices had to be found, to pay off the debts, on the church until Canon Tatlock's legacy wiped them out, and on the schools. Concerts, charity sermons, and lectures were common favourites. Seat rents, undesirable as they might be, were levied for certain pews in the church, as another way of finding money. One notice in the Parish Notice Book, before Canon Lynch's time, it is true, gives us an idea of the desperate straits priests could be in, where money was concerned. It reads:

> "The attention of the congregation is called to the charges made in this church for entrance to the floor and to the gallery. At the first Mass, 1d. for each person in any part of the church. At the second Mass, 2d., at the third 2d. for the greater portion of the church. Under the gallery, payment is left to the option of those who go there. Last week from a well-filled gallery 4/6 was collected, and 1/3 for the offertory."

In 1890, a Grand Draw was held with special prizes to tempt people to

St. Clare's, Lache

St. Theresa's, Blacon

St. Columba's, Plas Newton

Farndon

Corpus Christi Procession, Christleton Hall

St. Plegmund's, Tattenhall

purchase tickets. It was a year of severe unemployment in Chester, followed by great cold, but Canon Lynch struggled to raise £200 from the Draw, in order to reduce the debt by another £1,000. Helped by kind friends, he managed to obtain £240, and in thanking those who had contributed, he said that the smallest donation would be gratefully received. What was accomplished by the Catholic population in those days of hardship is amazing. Not only did they help to support their priests, church and schools, but other calls of all kinds were made on their generosity. There was always an annual collection to help the Chester Infirmary, and the congregation was asked to be generous, "because of the help it gave to the sick poor". There were a number of other appeals, which seem never to have been turned down, even though they must have eaten into the small wage packets of the givers. Among them can be listed the Holy Land, a famine in India, African slaves, the building of Westminster Cathedral and the opening of a new church of St. Patrick in Rome. At the same time, the parish priest was appealing for the distressed poor of the parish.

In 1886, Father Lynch stood for election for the Chester Board of Guardians. He urged his parishioners not to stand aloof from these elections, because to him they were a way of protecting the Catholic poor. He and the schoolteachers were continually telling Catholic parents who could not afford the school-fee for their children, to seek assistance from the Board of Guardians. There was obviously an unwillingness to do this, probably because the organisation was associated in their minds with the idea of the Workhouse. That this dreaded place was not unknown to poverty-stricken Catholics is clear from entries in the Parish Notice Book and the School Log Book. In 1886, the congregation was told that when a Catholic child was sent to the Workhouse, its friends should see that its name was entered on the workhouse books as a Catholic, and call the attention of the priest to it at once. Through not doing this, Father Lynch told them that hundreds of children were being lost to the Church. Whether the "hundreds" refers to Chester or not is not clear, but in any case it is an indication of the poverty of the time before the Diocesan Rescue Society was established in 1889. There is one pathetic entry in the Log Book of the Boys' School in 1881, which recounts the fate of two boys, William and John Looney. They had lost both their parents within a fortnight of each other. As a result, the boys were obliged to leave St. Werburgh's school and go into the workhouse. Not long after, the schoolmaster entered in his Log Book the sum of 7s. 8d. received from the Board of Guardians for the fees of pauper children.

The surviving parish records throw some light on the religious tone and practices of a hundred years ago. The sermon clearly played an important part in Sunday observance, whether it was Mass or the evening service. As far back as the time of Thomas Penswick and John Briggs, the sermons they preached were long remembered, and even found their way into print. Unfortunately, none have survived, nor has a translation from the French by Thomas Penswick, entitled "The Love of Jesus in the Adorable Sacrament of the Altar". Throughout the nineteenth century, Jesuits were most frequently in demand, Father Tarleton from Liverpool, Father Caldwell, Father Hassan. Occasionally, the subject of their sermon

is also recorded. "Nuns" was the subject chosen by Father Edgecombe when he once preached on the patronal feast of St. Werburgh, always a day of great solemnity in the parish. On another occasion, Father John Rickaby's acceptance of an invitation was announced, and though the subject of his sermon was not given, it was explained that he was the Professor of Philosophy at Stonyhurst College. Jesuits were also invited to give fortnightly Missions during Lent. In 1889, Father Jackson and Father King came together, choosing among other subjects, "The Love of God", "Drunkenness" and "St. Patrick", in their endeavours to touch every heart. Times of Visitation by the Bishop were also occasions for sermons; and the Visitation records usually specify the subject which the priest wishes the Bishop to speak about, "God in our lives", or "The more frequent reception of the Sacraments", or "Indifference".

In addition to the weekly, and no doubt, lengthy sermon, music, both vocal and instrumental, seems to have played an important part in religious worship. In Father Carbery's time, there was a "good organ". An undated letter to Father John Briggs has survived which shows how very earnestly the choir carried out its functions. It is signed, "R. Gorst, Junior, J. Tatlock, John Barker". It complains about the wretched state of the choir, through "the want of strength and skill in the Treble part". It puts the blame for this squarely on Father Brigg's shoulders—though one would have thought he already had more than enough to cope with—because, as the letter reads, "You have often mentioned it, but not attempted to remedy it". Who the offending Treble was is not stated, but the priest might have risked offending someone he could not afford to. In any case, the letter continues,

> "We, the Contra-Tenor and Bass are mortified by our endeavours being spoilt by the unskilful performance of the Treble, and by the unharmonious discordance. Until a remedy is found, our services will be withheld."

That the choir sang every Sunday appears from the next part of the letter, for it goes on:—

> "We shall desist from singing for the next few Sundays, and you must make observations from the pulpit. If the congregation does not help, we shall give up the choir."

What happened as a result of this ultimatum does not appear. A church choir certainly existed in 1867, for the parish notices that November announced a concert in its aid, adding that it "deserves the hearty support of the congregation".

One of the most important ways of promoting parochial life in the nineteenth century was the formation of confraternities, sodalities and guilds of various kinds. In a letter to the Bishop, Father Carbery mentioned that there were two confraternities in the parish, though he did not specify what they were. Twenty years later, there were four, the Catholic Young Men's Society, the Children of Mary with its subsidiary Congregation of the Angels for younger girls, the Christian Mothers' Guild and the Altar Society. In addition, there were four other organisations, which in the days before the Welfare State, acted as mutual benefit societies.

One was called St. Patrick's Burial Society, another, St. Anne's Catholic Burial Society, the third, the Wirral Catholic Benevolent Society, and the fourth, the Catholic Tontine Society. The aim of the confraternities was to promote the spiritual growth of their members by prayer together, and by regular reception of the Sacraments, especially the monthly Communion day. In addition, they formed valuable auxiliaries for the clergy, helping them in the weekly outdoor collections, and organising the various parish activities, especially those connected with money-raising projects like concerts. It is probably true to say that the stronger and more flourishing the sodalities were, the more closely integrated was the life of the parish. Their contribution to its growth was, therefore, an important one.

The Catholic Young Men's Society must have been founded in Chester towards the end of 1864. It had already existed several years in the north of England, where it was particularly flourishing. The *Chester Courant* devoted a paragraph of its number for November 23, 1864, to the second soiree, as it called the meeting, held in the schoolrooms in Queen Street. Father Hopkins presided over the tea-party and concert, at which two hundred were present. From that time onwards, the society steadily progressed, and the pattern of meeting inaugurated in 1864 continued for many years. There are frequent references in the Parish Notice Book to "the usual literary entertainment"—given on one occasion by "The Emerald Ministrels"—or a lecture, or again a soiree. Many of the concerts in the parish were organised and also executed by the Young Men's Society, as a number of surviving bills advertising them show. These have all the flavour of the typical nineteenth century entertainment, in the days before radio and television; the solo songs, the piano duets, the Victorian poetry, all are there. On more than one occasion, preparations for the concert caused no little disturbance in the schoolroom. Once, the erection of a stage at the end of the classroom for some entertainment, possibly "The Emerald Ministrels", whoever they were, prevented Luke Ryder from giving the monitors their late afternoon lessons.

In addition to the Young Men's Society and the Children of Mary, St. Francis's parish naturally had the Tertiaries or Third Order. One other organisation for children must be mentioned at St. Werburgh's, because it reflects the attempt to combat one of the great social evils of Victorian working class life, namely drunkenness. It was not uncommon, especially in the great industrial towns, to find a startling mortality rate among children brought about through this, and in 1884, Cardinal Manning began the Children's Temperance League of the Cross, to try to safeguard Catholic children. In 1886 the League of the Cross was established in St. Werburgh's parish, and a large number of children took the pledge it required, and joined it. The Band it possessed by 1906 must have caused something like a stir!

The aspirations and needs of modern Catholic life have, naturally, brought into existence their own organisations. The first parish "conference" of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul met at Chester in 1906. To this have since been added the Knights of St. Columba, the Legion of Mary, the Catenians, and the Catholic Women's League.

One gets the impression, reading the parochial records, that much

was demanded from Catholics a hundred years ago, that the Church has seen fit to relax in modern times, or perhaps leaves more to the responsibility of the individual. There are, for instance, frequent reminders in the Parish Notice Book, of the regulations about fasting, on the Wednesdays and Fridays of Advent and Lent, on the Ember Days at the four different seasons of the year, on the eve of Christmas and Pentecost and the feast of St. Peter and Paul. In times of severe epidemics, these laws were relaxed by the Bishop. In 1886, a dispensation from abstinence was granted during an outbreak of cholera, and a notice is warning the congregation just before Advent that it will now cease. Similarly, in early 1890, when there was a severe epidemic following a bad winter with much hardship and unemployment, there was no fasting or abstinence throughout Lent, except on Good Friday. Another aspect of Catholic life which has a ring of austerity, as well as throwing light on the working conditions of Victorian times, was the hours of the Masses on Holydays of Obligation. During the 1860's, they were normally at 5 a.m., 7.30 a.m. and, for the school children, at 9 a.m. The earliest Mass was for the benefit of the workers before they set off on their long daily trek to work in such places as Widnes and Ellesmere Port. One old Catholic of Chester, not long dead, used to recount how he left home each morning at 6 o'clock, in order to walk to his work, and had the long trudge back each night, reaching home at 8 o'clock, then to bed in order to be up in time again the next day.

While the Faithful Companions of Jesus were engaged in their educational work in the now flourishing grammar school for girls at Dee House and in their equally important teaching in St. Werburgh's schools, the parish was able to welcome another Religious Congregation into its midst in 1911. This was the Little Sisters of the Assumption, who did such wonderful work especially among the sick poor, during the years they remained in the city. They came to Chester through the instrumentality of Miss Josephine Hall, to replace the Catholic District Nurses for whom she had been responsible. At first, they lived at 45 Queen Street, and from there they visited the sick in their own homes. Later, they opened a dispensary at 34 Queen Street, in addition to their other work. In 1913, they were given the land for a proper convent and chapel in Union Street by Miss Margaret Collins, the sister of Patrick Collins, the founder of the popular Collins Amusement Fair, whose family were great benefactors to the Church.

The story of the career of Patrick Collins has a Dick Whittington quality about it. "Pat" was the second son of an Irish Catholic, John Collins, and was born, possibly in Steven Street, in 1859. His father was a showman, who travelled about Cheshire, North Staffordshire and Lancashire with his hand-turned roundabout. Patrick grew up on the showground, helping his father not only with the roundabout, but also defending the pitches where they stopped, against the gangsters who attacked them. By the time he was twenty one, he was married to Flora Ross of Wrexham, and possessed his own horse and roundabout. Before long, he was touring the Midlands in the caravan which was his home, launched on the career which was to win him the title of "King of the Showmen". The roundabout grew into "Pat Collins's Amusement Fair", full of lights and noise and excitement, which was eagerly awaited all over the country. Sutton

Coldfield, Barry Island, Colwyn Bay, Yarmouth, all had pleasure grounds which he purchased. He travelled everywhere, including the continent, buying the "Big Dipper", the switchback, the traction engines and the caravans which attracted crowds to his fairs.

Fame and money never made Pat forget his humble origins, or the poor and sick. He believed that he had made his money through the people and that it must go gack to the people, and his favourite saying was, "We only pass this way once; let us do what we can, when we can". Whole days' takings on the fairground were frequently handed over to good causes. The Fair's appearance on the Roodee each year meant money for the Royal Infirmary. Nor was the Church forgotten. The pulpit in St. Werburgh's, among others, was his gift. His generosity was continued by his second wife, Clara Mullett, whom he married in 1935.

From 1918 until the time of his death, he was a member of the Town Council of Walsall. He was made an alderman of the Borough of Walsall in 1930, and became Mayor and a Freeman of that city in 1939, when he was eighty one years of age. From 1922 to 1924, he sat in Parliament as Liberal M.P. for Walsall. He died on December 8th, 1943, leaving behind the memory of a greathearted man, who by innumerable acts of kindness and generosity had helped the poor, the sick and the suffering.

During the First World War, when wounded Belgian soldiers were brought to Chester, the Little Sisters turned their convent into a small hospital in order to help in nursing them. In recognition of their charity, the King of the Belgians awarded the Superior with the Medeille de la Reine Elizabeth. A Belgian priest, Father Loos, joined the presbytery during these years and gave the men much spiritual help, before he himself was called up as an army chaplain. As the War progressed, many Catholics went out among the Chester men, to fight at the "Front". The Parish Magazine recorded regularly the names of those wounded or killed in action.

As one of the larger and more important churches of the diocese, St. Werburgh's has been used more than once for important functions. As recently as February 1948, the Most Reverend John A. Murphy, now Archbishop of Cardiff, was consecrated here Coadjutor Bishop of Shrewsbury. The church has been used twice for ordinations. In August, 1886, two priests, Father Hennelly and Father O'Grady, were raised to the priesthood, and for the occasion, Canon Lynch appealed to his congregation for money to help him to purchase a new carpet for the sanctuary. On the following Sunday, Father Hennelly sang his first High Mass in the church. These two priests do not seem to have been directly connected with Chester, though Father Hennelly may have been related to Patrick Hennelly, for whom the congregation was asked to pray the following year, when he was dangerously ill, and who died soon afterwards. Another ordination took place in 1905 which is of particular interest, because it appears to be the only one of a Chester boy, Andrew McGeever, though there are references among Father Brigg's papers to his arranging to send boys to Lisbon to prepare for the priesthood. Andrew McGeever must have been born about 1880, since his name appears in 1894 as one of the two boys in Standard VII of St. Werburgh's school, when he would have been about fourteen years of age. He was then living at 4, Hoole Lane,

Visit to St. Werburgh's of King Alfonso XIII of Spain, 1907

"Pat" Collins, when Mayor of Walsall

and by then his father was a coal merchant. The Census Returns for 1871, however, enter particulars about two families of McGeever living that year in Steven Street. John McGeever, then aged 36, was probably Andrew's father, and John's brother, Andrew, then 30 years of age, may have been the uncle after whom he was named. Both, together with their wives, had been born in Ireland, as had another brother, Thomas, living with John's family. The only son John then had was Hugh, a baby of one year, and he also later became a priest. Both John and Andrew classified themselves for the Census as "labourer in the oil works", probably at Ellesmere Port, so that John must have prospered as a coal merchant in his later life. Unfortunately, the Parish Notice Book for 1905 is missing, and the Parish Magazine while making much of the fact that he was a Chester boy, gives no other details about Andrew. Possibly, other records, had they survived, would have told us more about his brother. Andrew McGeever died, a comparatively young priest of 42, in the January of 1922, whereas Hugh lived on until 1934, as Canon and the parish priest of Our Lady and the Apostles, Stockport.

An occasion very different from the ordination of a priest was the visit to St. Werburgh's of King Alfonso XIII of Spain in the December of 1907. The Chester newspapers, especially the *Courant*, describe this with vivid detail. The king, then a young man only twenty one years of age, and recently married to Princess Ena, was paying a private visit to the home of the Duke and Duchess of Westminster, Eaton Park. He was accompanied by three Spanish Lords, including the Duke of Alba, a future ambassador to England. On the Sunday, all of them drove through the city to St. Werburgh's, to assist at the 11 o'clock Mass. Crowds gathered in Grosvenor Park Road, to see and cheer them, and the red carpet was rolled out for them, from their carriage to the church door. They were received by Canon Chambers and Father Hayes, accompanied by cross-bearer and acolytes. The King was led in procession through the packed church, to a special seat in the sanctuary, on the right of the altar. The writer of the article in the *Chester Courant* remarked on the contrast in the worldly condition of the worshippers at the Mass, "the monarch and the sons of the highest nobility of sunny Spain, together with the blue-jersied peasantry, the Italian women and the Boughton women wrapped in shawls, all worshipping under the same roof". A Low Mass was celebrated by Canon Chambers, and afterwards the royal party left the church to the strains of the Spanish National Anthem. The king, on whom the shadow of abdication and the tragedy of the Spanish Civil War had not yet fallen, remarked that his cordial reception in Chester was like being back in Spain. The parish magazine gratefully recorded the £5 left for the church building fund.

If the visit of a reigning monarch was regarded at St. Werburgh's as the high light of the year 1905, the visit of the Papal Legate was an even more auspicious occasion. This took place in July, 1932. Here again the parish magazine was outdone in its description of the event by the newspapers, which this time carried photographs as well as long articles. Such was the position now held by the Catholic community in Chester. The Eucharistic Congress was taking place in Dublin, and Cardinal Lorenzo Lauri, on his way there from Italy as the Papal representative, broke his

Visit of Papal Legate to Chester, 1932
Above: On the platform of the General Station
Below: Catholics outside the Queen Hotel

journey in Chester. He travelled from London by a special royal coach, in the company of five clerical students and Mgr. Walsh from Dublin. The *Chester Chronicle* speaks of "the scenes of unparalleled religious fervour" of hundreds of Catholics who assembled outside the General Station to catch sight of the Pope's representative. The clergy of all the surrounding churches welcomed him, Father Hayes as the parish priest of St. Werburgh's accompanied by his curates, Father Murphy and Father McGinley, and Father Stanislaus from St. Francis's, together with the priests from Connah's Quay, Saltney, Ellesmere Port, Talacre and Neston. The Catholic Young Men's Society, wearing their sashes, formed a guard of honour. The crowds cheered and knelt for his blessing, as the white-haired, kindly and smiling cardinal passed through their midst into the Queen Hotel. It was the first time for 1,500 years that a Papal Legate had stayed in Chester, and the Catholic crowds were clearly moved. Before long, the area round the hotel was resounding to the singing of "Faith of our Fathers".

The following morning, the cardinal went to say the seven o'clock Mass at St. Werburgh's, which was beautifully decorated for the occasion. The response of his people to the Papal Legate's visit must have pleased Father Hayes, for the church was crowded, and five hundred received Holy Communion at the cardinal's hands, while one of the papal suite told him, "It is one of the most beautiful churches I have ever been in". After the cardinal's departure, Father Hayes spoke of the courtesy and kindness of all the railway officials of the General Station, of the staff of the Queen Hotel and of the press. This, together with the ways in which Catholics had shown their loyalty—in their flag-bedecked homes and their kneeling crowds—illustrates the strides Catholicism had taken in Chester over the years. The Catholics of Chester might still be poor, but they were no longer the tiny handful of unknown and unwanted recusants living in the courts and entries of the city, and attending Mass in an upstairs room in Parry's Entry. The Church had reached its maturity, and its members were ready now to come forward and play their full part in the life and government of their city. The Cestrians, too, were prepared to accept them as fellow-citizens on a par with themselves, and as good neighbours.

The double celebration of the centenary of St. Werburgh's and St. Francis's parishes stands out as a landmark in the history of Catholicism in Chester. In many ways, it closes a chapter in that history, one of struggle against great odds, out of which the Church has emerged, purified and strengthened by the ordeal. As she moves into a new era of her existence and faces different challenges and demands, she may not forget the past out of which she has grown, the recusants who languished in Chester Castle for their beliefs, the faithful remnant who persevered throughout penal times, and the poverty-stricken exiles on whose pennies her churches and schools were built. These pages have been written to help her to remember!

Notes on the Chapters

INTRODUCTION

[1] The fullest account of the medieval Church in Chester is in D. Jones, *The Church in Chester* 1300-1540, Chetham Society, Vol. VII, 3rd Series, 1957.

CHAPTER I PENAL TIMES

[2] Recusancy in Chester under Queen Elizabeth has been described in K. R. Wark, *Elizabethan Recusancy in Cheshire*, Chetham Society, Vol. XIX, 3rd Series, 1971.

[3] The Churchwardens' Accounts for St. Mary's on the Hill, St. Michael's and Holy Trinity Churches have been printed in the Journal of the Architectural, Archaeological and Historic Society of Chester and North Wales, New Series, Vols. 2 (1888), 3 (1890), 38 (1951).

[4] G. Anstruther, O.P., *The Seminary Priests*, Vol. I (Durham, 1968), p. 171.

[5] R. Challoner, *Memoirs of Missionary Priests* (London, 1924), pp. 146-7.

[6] Chester City Record Office, QSE 8/11, 9.

[7] P. R, Harris, *The Reports of William Udall, Informer*, Recusant History, Vol. 8, No. 4 (1966), p. 221.

[8] Historical MSS. Commission, *Report of MSS. belonging to the Corporation of Chester*, Appendix to Eighth Report (1881), pp. 376-7, 397.

[9] Wark, *op. cit* p. 6.

[10] Chester City Record Office, M/L/2 fo. 270/3, 5, 14.

[11] *Catholic Record Society*, Vol. 6 (1909), p. 76.

[12] Historical MSS. Commission, pp. 387, 390.

[13] *Ibid.*

[14] *Ibid.*

[15] *Quarter Sessions Records for the County Palatine of Chester*, 1559-1760, Record Society of Lancashire and Cheshire, Vol. 94 (1940), p. 182.

[16] Chester City Record Office, QSF/82/2 fo. 112.

[17] *Hearth Tax Returns for the City of Chester* 1664-5, Record Society of Lancashire and Cheshire, Vol. LII (1906), p. 11.

[18] H. Foley, *Records of the English Province of the Society of Jesus*, Vol. 2 (1879), pp. 1-9.

[19] *Ibid.* p. 181.

[20] *Ibid.* Vol. 3, p. 180, Vol. 7, pp. 323, 1399.

[21] *Ibid.* Vol. 7, p. 315.

[22] *Ibid.* Vol. 5, pp. 320, 367.

[23] *Ibid.* Vol. 7, p. 1405.

[24] W. Price, *Three Jesuits at Plowden Hall in Shropshire in the Eighteenth Century*, Recusant History, Vol. 10, No. 3 (1969), p. 172.

[25] *Catholic Record Society*, Vol. 8, p. 341, Vol. 28, p. 281.

[26] House of Lords' Library, Papists' Returns; Chester City Record Office, QSF/90/3 fo. 285-6.

[27] Chester City Record Office, QSF/92/2 fo. 149.

[28] They are deposited in the House of Lords' Library.

[29] Cheshire County Record Office, EDV/7.

[30] *Catholic Record Society*, Vol. 13, p. 173, Vol. 6, p. 340.

[31] *Ibid.* Vol. 10, p. 480, n.

[32] Ushaw MSS. Vol. III, No. 124. I owe this reference to S. Lander, Esq.

[33] *Catholic Record Society*, Vol. 12, p. 7.

[34] *Ibid.* p. 12, Vol. 16, p. 572.

[35] *Ibid.* Vol. 6, p. 165, Vol. 63, p. 413. The Anglican Visitation of St. John's parish also mentions him in 1778. Cheshire Record Office, EDV/1/2.

[36] *History of the Diocese of Shrewsbury*, Vol. II, p. 3. Parry's Entry was the only slum unit of its kind that could boast of having its own pump.

CHAPTER II THE PRIESTS OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

[1] *Catholic Record Society*, Vol. 12, p. 174, Vol. 63, p. 410.

[2] J. Malone, *Peter Newby*, 1745-1827 (Aylesford, 1964), pp. 104-5.

[3] *Catholic Record Society*, Vol. 63, p. 417; J. Gillow, *Bibliographical Dictionary of English Catholics*, Vol. V, p. 259. He was followed in 1790 by his younger brother, John, then aged twelve. John, who was the last of the Douai priests, spent much of his priestly life at Birchley, Lancs., where he built the church. He died at the age of 86, in 1864.

[4] *Catholic Record Society*, Vol. 63, pp. 315-337.

[5] The *Haydock Papers* have preserved John Penswick's account of what happened. The complete story is told by D. Milburn in *A History of Ushaw College*, (Durham, 1964), Ch. I, II, and III. Anne Penswick, the aunt of Thomas and John who was a Poor Clare at Gravelines, was also forced to flee. Her community returned to Gosfield, Essex, where she became Abbess in 1799.

[6] The church plate was afterwards recovered, and sold to help the students who were in prison. The refectory plate lay undiscovered until 1863, when it was found under what had become a barracks. It was returned to St. Edmunds, Ware, and Ushaw, the two descendants of Douai.

[7] Milburn, *op. cit.* p. 39.

[8] Gillow, *loc. cit.* Though most of the Vicars Apostolic seem to have had their portraits painted, I have not been able to discover one of Penswick.

[9] The registration is in the Chester City Record Office, QSF/106.

[10] The Anglican Vicar of St. John's reported a Visitation in 1811, at which Confirmation was administered by the Bishop. Cheshire Record Office, EDV/7/4/132.

[11] It is now preserved in the sacristy of St. Werburgh's church.

[12] Milburn, *op. cit.* p. 117.

[13] I owe most of the information on John Briggs to Father George Bradley, archivist of the Leeds Diocese, who drew my attention to it, and made arrangements for me to have access to it.

[14] It is now in the sacristy of St. Werburgh's.

[15] M. Abbott, *Diocese of Shrewsbury Centenary Record*, pp. 61, 77.

[16] It was mentioned in *The Catholic Times*, 1955.

[17] G. A. Beck, *The English Catholics* 1850-1950 (London, 1950), pp. 70-71.

[18] *Catholic Record Society*, Vol. 12, p. 226.

[19] *Ibid.* Vol. 16, p. 520.

[20] Ecclesiastical Census, 1851, Public Record Office, H.O. 129, 459. The compilers of this census calculated that about 42% of the population of the whole country could not go to church on the Sunday the census was taken. The Catholic population in Chester would have been higher than Father Carbery's figure.

[21] An account of the beginnings of Dee House was written by Mother Aloysia Russell F.C.J. in 1891, and incorporated by Mgr. E. Slaughter in his History of the Diocese.

[22] Booklet on the History of the Friars in Chester.

[23] *Catholic Record Society*, Vol. 8, p. 339.

[24] Michael Harnett had already contributed £1,000 towards the building of a school at Hyde in 1854, and £500 towards the school at Neston in 1857.

[25] Thomas Wallington was received into the Church at Latchford in 1886, and was a great benefactor to the parish there.

[26] Father Clare was popular as a preacher and mission giver at this time, especially in Lancashire and Cheshire. He came from St. Helen's.

[27] The events described in the next three pages were recorded in the *Chester Courant* and *Cheshire Observer*.

CHAPTER III GROWTH IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

[1] M. J. Kingman, *Chester* 1801-1861.

[2] *Report on the State of the Irish Poor in Great Britain*, House of Commons Papers, Vol. XXXIV, (1836), Appendix G, p. 471.

[3] *Catholic Directory*, 1826, p. 49.

CHAPTER V CATHOLIC EDUCATION IN CHESTER

[1] J. T. Driver, *Cheshire in the Later Middle Ages* (Chester, 1970), p. 148.

[2] *Minutes of the Committee of Council on Education*, Report for 1870, p. 289.

[3] Letters to Bishop Briggs, deposited in the Council House, Shrewsbury.

[4] *Minutes of the Committee of Council on Education*, 1854, p. 673.

[5] Deposited in the Council House, Shrewsbury.

[6] The Log Books of all the Catholic schools of Chester are now deposited in Chester City Record Office. The Parish Notice Books are in St. Werburgh's.

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Marriage Registers, 1827 onw.
Burial Registers, 1824-36, 1861 onw.
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Parish Notice Books, 1866-69, 1886-90.

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Parish Priests of St. Werburgh's 1794—1975

James Lancaster	1794-1796
Thomas Penswick	1797-1814
John Ashurst	1814-1816
John Briggs	1816-1833
John Wilcock	1833-1838
Edward Carbery	1838-1861
Henry Hopkins	1861-1865
Peter Lahaye	1865-1867
William Walton	1867-1868
Eugene Buquet	1868-1882
Wilfred Dallow	1882-1883
Edward Lynch	1883-1902
Joseph Chambers	1903-1924
Eugene Rooney	1925-1927
Maurice Hayes	1927-1948
Hugh Welch	1948-1959
Francis Murphy	1959-

Parish Priests of St. Francis's 1858—1975

Venantius of Nieuwenhoorn	1858-1873
Pacificus of Camerata	1873-1879
Nicholas of Capegna	1879-1882
Pacificus of Camerata	1882-1885
Modestus of Glasgow	1885-1888
Bernard of Chester	1888-1889
Anthony of Tasson	1889-1892
Fidelis of Liverpool	1892-1895
Bernadine of London	1895-1896
Ambrose of London	1896-1898
Seraphin of London	1898-1902
Fidelis of Liverpool	1902-1905
Dominic of Derry	1905-1908
Seraphin of London	1908-1911
John Capistran of St. Helen's	1911-1914
Vincent of Liscard	1914-1919
Dominic of Derry	1919-1922
Wilfred of Brooklyn	1922-1925
Andrew of London	1925-1931
Stanislaus of Malta	1931-1934
Pacificus of Amble	1934-1937
Andrew of London	1937-1943
Fidelis of Malta	1943-1946
Victor of Johnstown	1946-1949
Aidan of Bolton	1949-1954
Edward of Southport	1954-1957
Ignatius of Washington	1957-1960
Callistus of Bradford	1960-1963
Ernest of Chester	1963-1969
Vincent of Boyle	1969-1973
Simon of London	1973-

More Recent History

These brief notes are added here, in an attempt to bring the history of Catholicism in Chester right down to the present day.

Catholics in Public Life

The emergence of Catholics into the full public life of Chester has enabled several of them to play a prominent part in civic affairs, and to hold the highest offices in the government of the city. The first Catholic Sheriff since the Reformation was Mrs. Edith Baty, who held this office in 1948. Following her lead, there have been several Catholic Mayors between 1959 and 1966; William Henry Talbott, Thomas Frederick Fazey, Mary Heaney, H. A. Adrian Howell and Mrs. Florence Grogan, the four latter also serving as Sheriffs. All have rendered outstanding service to their city, while at the same time making clear their convictions and loyalty to the Church, in situations which at times have called for considerable moral courage.

Catholic Social Life

The phrase "34 Queen Street" has been a very familiar one in St. Werburgh's since the beginning of the century, when this private residence, once the home of a judge, was acquired by the parish. A hall was added at the back, and until recently this was the home of every social activity in the parish. The League of the Cross with its colourful band, the Women's Confraternity, the Union of Catholic Mothers, the Children of Mary, the Legion of Mary, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, the Knights of St. Columba, the Tontine (Savings) Club, have all held their meetings here. The Temperance Club of the Catholic Young Men's Society also used it, as did the Youth Club, the Folk-Dancing Group and the Football teams. The corrosions of time closed its doors in 1972, and in 1975 a new Social Centre was opened in what had once been the premises of the Bowling Green Hotel in Brook Street. The facilities of the yard attached to these premises had once been used to house the horses taking part in the Chester Races, and later by the nearby Cattle Market.

Of even older vintage than 34 Queen Street and still flourishing, is the C.Y.M.S. licensed Club in Cuppin Street, belonging to St. Francis's parish. It has always been noted for its happy Franciscan atmosphere. In 1962, a Social Club was opened for St. Theresa's parish at Blacon.

Vocations in Chester

There have been a number of vocations to the priesthood and to the religious life. The following have become Friars Minor Capuchin: Clement Vahey, Nicholas Higgins, Cyprian Truss, Anselm McCaffrey, Dominic Jarvis, Ignatius Jarvis, Ernest Richards, John Cavanagh and their present Provincial, Paschal Burlinson, Denis Keating (Dominican), David Musgrave (Schoenstratt), Stephen Lynch (Oratorian Fathers).

Mass in honour of the 40 Martyrs Canonisation, 8th November, 1970, in the A.B.C. Cinema, Foregate Street, Chester

New Catholic Social Centre, Brook Street, Chester, 1975

St. Bede's Secondary Modern School, Chester, 1951-1972

Catholic High School, Chester, 1972

Robert Jones, a "late vocation" while news-casting for the B.B.C. is now Abbot of the Benedictine monastery of Ramsgate in Kent.

Those who have joined the diocesan clergy are: William Jones, James White (Shrewsbury), Desmond Close (Portsmouth), and Philip Dwerryhouse (Westminster). James Kimpton and James Hodson are outstanding members of the de la Salle Brothers.

Among those who have entered Convents are: Pauline Holmes, Nan Bergin, Margaret Creighton, Kathleen Grey, Kathleen Edgar, Margaret Casey, Mary O'Mahony (Ursulines), Dorothy Creighton (Franciscan Missionaries of Mary), Margaret Ellis (Mill Hill Missionaries), Joan and Margaret Wilkinson (Servites), Cornelia Wilson (Carmelites), Winefride O'Brien (Little Sisters of the Assumption), Pauline Smith, Rosemary Tierney, Mary Cunniffe (Irish Sisters of Charity), Rita Cavanagh (Poor Clares).

"Father Hayes": A Short Memoir

Canon Maurice Hayes was an exceptional personality. Ordained for the diocese of Kerry, he came here on loan, decided to stay, and was curate at St. Werburgh's for the first seventeen years of this century. He returned as parish priest in 1927. Though he at first met a certain hostility, he subsequently achieved a personal respect and influence among the more prominent members of the Non-Catholic community which was unique. He was a notable preacher, in much demand both inside and outside the diocese. His annual Lenten retreats for men, in which he demanded a week's strict silence and no newspapers, were always well attended, while his converts outnumbered those of any other priest in the diocese. He was the first priest in the diocese to give a radio broadcast, when he spoke in 1932 on "Prayer". His example in this was followed in 1960, when the first television broadcast in the diocese was also made from St. Werburgh's. On this occasion, Bishop Murphy preached.

St. Bede's School

This establishment began its academic life in 1953, as a "Two-form entry Special Agreement Secondary Modern" mixed school, in accordance with the 1944 Education Act. When the Chester Education Authority decided to adopt the Comprehensive system, the Diocesan Schools Commission moved with it. The school buildings of St. Bede's were exchanged with those of the nearby Overleigh school, and the Catholic High Comprehensive School was established in Overleigh in 1972. The building of St. Bede's became a County "Middle School". St. Bede's first headmaster was the highly respected Mr. Bernard Dowd. He and his wife met their tragic death in an air crash over Stockport, when returning from a holiday on the continent.