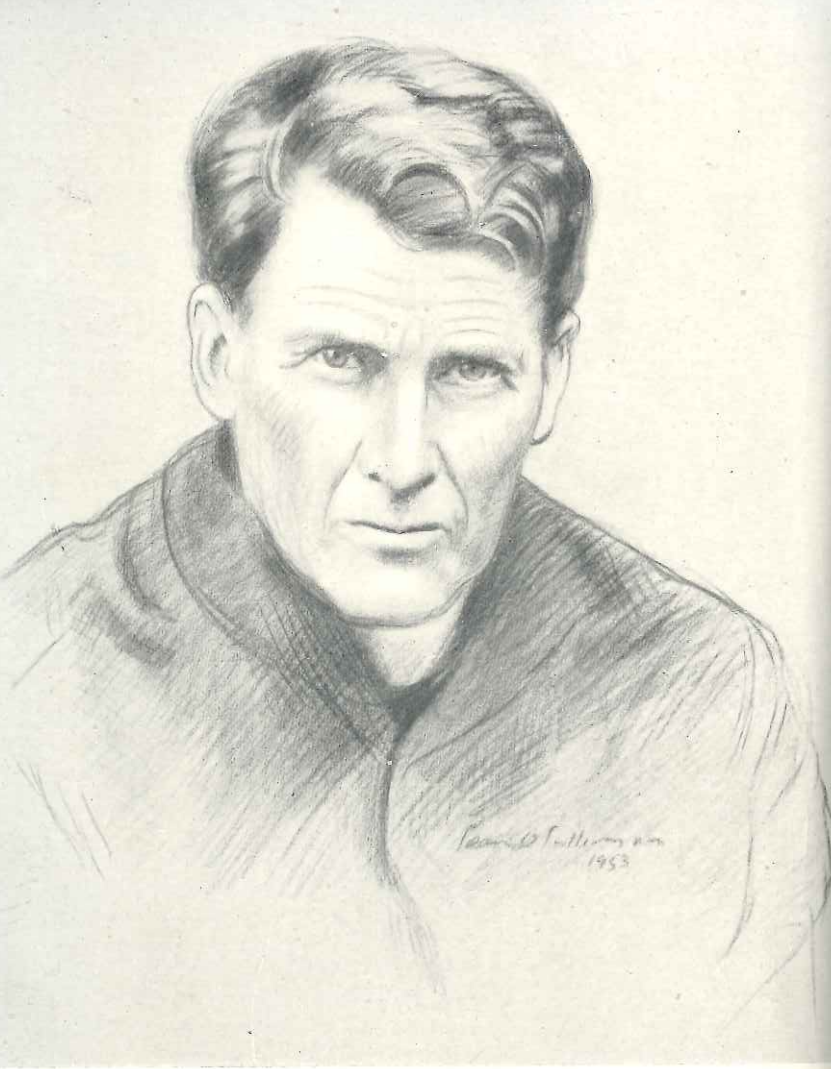
The PORT OF TEARS

THE LIFE OF
FR. JOHN SULLIVAN, S.J.

By M. Bodkin, S.J.



JOHN SULLIVAN, S.J.

BORN	*8th May*, 1861
PORTORA	1873
TRINITY	1879
RECEPTION INTO THE CHURCH	*21st December*, 1896
NOVICESHIP	*7th September*, 1900
CLONGOWES	*July*, 1907
ORDAINED	*28th July*, 1907
RATHFARNHAM	*July*, 1919
DIED	*19th February*, 1933

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MATHIAS BODKIN, S.J.

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DE FACULTATE
SUPERIORUM ORDINIS :
THOMAS BYRNE, S.J.
PRAEP. PROV. HIBERNIAE SOC. JESU
DUBLINI, DIE 31 MAII, 1953

NIHIL OBSTAT : JOSEPHUS A. CARROLL
CENSOR THEOL. DEPUT.

IMPRIMI POTEST : ✠ IOANNES CAROLUS
ARCHIEP. DUBLINEN., HIBERNIAE PRIMAS
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Contents

DEDICATION

To Margaret and Norman Robinson,
united here,
as they were in all else,
by their esteem and affection for

Fr. John Sullivan, S.J.,

in the confident expectation
of their reunion beyond "the Port of Tears."

I

INTRODUCTION

By a happy chance the story of Father John Sullivan's life can in a large measure be summed up and symbolised by five medals which link it from beginning to end. On the reverse of the gold medal which he won for Classics at Dublin University is the coat of arms of Trinity College, borrowed from the proud city where he was born and bred. The towered gateway matches the towers of the old medieval fortress, the core of Clongowes, which was his home for twenty years, and the scene of his priestly labours. This castle is on the reverse of the medal of the College Sodality of Our Blessed Lady, of which he was the inimitable Director for so long. The beautiful profiles on the Portora medals also symbolise perfectly an aspect of Fr. John's life. The smiling, handsome boy on the Frederick Steele memorial medal can well stand for his own happy boyhood, for the boys he loved so well, but whose life and youth he knew with such penetrating conviction to be so transient. Frederick Steele was, in fact, a perfect example of those who " carry bright back to their Maker the mark of the mint." The favourite and most brilliant son of his noble father, he was drowned on a boating expedition on Lough Erne just as his boyhood was coming to a close. This was in November 1866. Two years later the Memorial Medal was founded, and Fr.

Sullivan won it in 1879. It is still an annual reward at Portora. On the obverse of the other medal awarded him in the same year for Classics, and bearing the words " William Steele Master," is the image of Athene, goddess of learning, to whose cult Fr. Sullivan was faithful to the end of his life—after his own and St. Augustine's fashion. On the obverse of the Trinity College medal the jewelled magnificence, the proud, hard features of the first Queen Elizabeth, remind us almost too forcibly that Fr. John was born in the camp of the conqueror, dedicated, so to speak, to the kingdom of this world.

Elizabeth reigned from 1558 to 1603. But there had been a ruler in the Kingdom of God beforehand with her : St. Ignatius, General of the Society of Jesus from 1541 to 1556. His image is taken from the obverse of the medal which is attached to the rosary which Fr. Sullivan, like every other Jesuit, received on his vow day. The pictorial contrast is that so splendidly summed up in " The Ten Reasons " which Blessed Edmund Campion, the martyr, addressed to Queen Elizabeth : " Listen, Elizabeth, mighty Queen. I tell you one Heaven cannot receive Calvin and your ancestors. Join thyself to them, be worthy of thy name, of thy genius, of thy learning, of thy fame, of thy fortune. Thus only do I conspire, thus only will I conspire against thee, whatever becomes of me, who am so often threatened with conspiring against thy life. Hail, thou good Cross. The day shall come, Elizabeth, the day that will show thee clearly who have loved thee best, the Society of Jesus or the brood of Luther." And again : " Touching our Society, be it known to you that we have made a league—all the Jesuits in the world—whose succession and multitude overreach all the practices of England—cheerfully to carry the Cross you have laid upon us . . . the expense is reckoned, the enterprise is begun, it is of God and cannot be withstood."

Reluctantly perhaps, certainly after long delay, Fr. John also made his decision to be " God's good servant first." He never abandoned his interest in the souls of those with whom he had

once been united in a narrow circle, but he found a new world in the hearts and homes of the simple people of God's Kingdom on earth. Needing therefore no elucidation, the reverse of this medal of St. Ignatius carried the official seal of the Jesuit Order. The monogram of the Holy Name, the nails, and the thorn crown, strike the dominant note in Fr. John's life, the life of a companion of Jesus, " a man crucified to the world and to whom the world is crucified," who suffered here as he ought, to exchange the sorrow for glory. But even then, even with this crowning symbol, Fr. Sullivan's life-story would be incomplete without an image of her to whose care he owed, as every Jesuit does, his vocation, and whose honour was linked in his heart with his favourite devotion to the Passion of Her Son—as Monica is linked with Augustine. The figure of Our Lady from the obverse of the Clongowes Sodality medal, " Mary Conceived without Sin," opens her arms to receive the noble innocence of her servant and foster-child, yet another of those Johns who were bequeathed to her as she stood at the foot of the Cross.

II

THE CHILD

THE tall brick houses in which Fr. Sullivan was born and died still catch the city sun with a welcome glow. Pillared doors and the tracery of fanlight and balcony still lend distinction and elegance to the harmonious spacing and well-ordered lines of Georgian street architecture in Dublin. The houses are rather museum pieces now and remind one a little too forcibly of the days of their building. But they retained their prestige and use until the age of the motor enabled the shopkeeper, the doctor and the lawyer to live their private lives at a distance from the courts and hospitals, the banks and markets. Eccles Street, where Fr. Sullivan was born on May 8th 1861, was part of the most ambitious of those plans of the Broad Street Committee, which had made Dublin spoken of throughout Europe as another Dresden or Edinburgh. Five great streets were to meet in a circus where the Mater Hospital now stands. The Act of Union ended that dream and only Eccles Street was built. In it

one passes the great mansion in which the first Irish Cardinal lived and died. There too one can see the strange house of Johnston, architect of St. George's Church and the G.P.O., its carved nymphs and demigods in smudged relief upon a sooty brick façade, and its abandoned belfry in the rear. But it is hard now to visualise that wide sunny thoroughfare as it must have been when the " carriage folk " kept it a bustle of activity. Moreover, even in Fr. Sullivan's boyhood the tide had turned south. He was two years old when his parents went to live in 32 Fitzwilliam Place. This house was for him his " home " until he exchanged it for the courts of the Lord. Oddly enough, it is only some yards away from 96 Lower Leeson Street, where, in the Nursing Home of Saint Vincent's hospital, he was to die.

When the future Lord Chancellor set up house there he was in the very centre of Dublin society. The first Duke of Leinster's famous prophecy that fashion would follow him south and camp around his lawn had been fulfilled. In late Victorian days the ruling classes had not yet struck their tents and, leaving a rear-guard of doctors, moved away to the mountains and the sea. Outwardly, though the houses in the area are now for the most part occupied by offices and public or semi-public bodies, even today the place is not much changed. The Georgian square is still, in this democratic age, a lesson in brick on the nature of aristocracy. Each house in the strictly enclosed space, though itself often dull, unimaginative and undistinguished, fits into the plan, because it has no fussy desire to stand out or express individuality. Taken in unison they provide fine spacious lines and masses, prospects satisfying if not splendid. Two such are visible from the door-step of No. 32. To the south, but clear over low roofs, the Dublin mountains. To the north, not yet closed in by the masses of Holles Street Hospital or the gasometer that dwarfs it, a wide street stretching away so far between the blocks of high brick residences that the two tall mansions which closed the converging lines fitted modestly into the view.

Today, though Fitzwilliam Place is perhaps the least affected of

all its streets, the area is subtly altered. Only little trifles tell at first the changed world. The pillar-boxes are not red, and no crossing-sweeper leans on them. The Duchess of Rutland's fountain, which drew its water from a spring and its inspiration from the Mediterranean, is ruined and dry since there are no horses to drink at the trough, and "laid on" water long since made its stone mouths sterile. The maids that drew water there are themselves almost all gone. Except in a dream you cannot see them run down the steps to take a crested envelope from the lancer or hussar who stoops to hand over the viceregal summons to dinner party or "Drawing-room." In Fr. Sullivan's time Fitzwilliam Square, only around the corner from his home, was still the headquarters of the Fitzwilliam Tennis Club, and a place, with the Dohertys and Renshaws in the zenith of their fame, to match Wimbledon, a place to draw to the Irish championships a fashionable garden party's atmosphere and patronage. A few steps further away the annual flower show was held in Merrion Square. Under the stimulus of the Royal Dublin Society, which had made Leinster House its own and kept it the focal point of an ingrafted culture, there were displayed there in rivalry the blooms from scores of great houses : Carton, Castletown, Bessborough or Lismore. It is hard now passing these Squares with their stiff railings and bedraggled shrubberies to realise what they once were. But in Fr. John's time morning by morning an army of nursemaids would set out from the basements and attics they have long since abandoned. They wheeled the perambulators of their privileged charges and, using an almost magical key, gained access to these sacred enclosures where the offspring of their masters and mistresses might safely enjoy the sunlight of their twice secluded childhood. Lad Lane, Pembroke Lane, Quinn's Lane were all within a stone's throw of No. 32. But the children of these mews were almost further off from the Lord Chancellor's little son rolling his hoop or flying his kite in "the square" than were the black babies in the bazaars of Bombay or the bush villages of the Cape. It is not altogether

without significance that the first recollection of Fr. John that has come down to us is that of a nine-year-old girl who thought herself honoured to be allowed to wheel the perambulator of a smiling, good-tempered baby who " took the air "—the almost " conditioned " air—of these sanctuaries. Fr. John was always a little aloof, definitely not a good mixer. He was very shy before he was very holy. And he remained shy. It is not to be wondered at. Yet the hand of God would unerringly lead this scion of the Ascendancy to the homes of the dispossessed. One more of their dwellers would leave the stiff façades of mediocrity as Mother McAuley had already left them to share the lives of the very poor. He would be perhaps the most welcome guest that ever entered them.

Edward Sullivan, John's father, was a man of rare ability, holding in turn each of the great legal offices of the Crown, and having a very real share in Irish administration. He was a man of forty when Fr. Sullivan was born, already absorbed in the affairs which gained him his baronetcy before John reached his majority and made him Lord Chancellor in the end. From him his son received position, wealth, perhaps a measure of intellectual ability or strength of character, but apparently little personal care or intimacy. A valuable legacy he did have in his father's circle of distinguished and honourable colleagues whose friendship Fr. John so to speak inherited. His spiritual endowment was, on his own evidence, mainly the gift of his mother. Edward Sullivan was a member of the Church of Ireland. A Corkman, he married a Catholic heiress from the same county. By a custom more than strange to our ideas, but not then uncommon in Ireland before the decree *Ne Temere* had been promulgated, it was agreed that the sons of the marriage should be brought up in their father's creed and the daughters in that of their mother. Lady Sullivan had probably agreed formally to this, and kept that agreement most loyally. Acting in the temper of her time, even when her son had reached the years of discretion and personal choice she appears to have

taken no steps to induce him to reconsider his position. Perhaps she was content to believe that in God's good time this God-fearing son of hers would find his way without any pressure on her part to the Faith which he must know meant so much to her. It worked out that way. Nor did Fr. Sullivan himself ever seem to doubt the wisdom of a reticence which today some might question. On the contrary he clearly and repeatedly attributed his conversion to the mother who might have been thought to have contributed little to it,—his conversion and so much else. Writing to a mother who had lost an eldest and well-beloved son in promising boyhood he told her he could understand her grief. The memory of his own mother's sorrow when her son was drowned was still fresh in his memory. The young man's body was never recovered and he could recall the agony of the inconclusive tragedy. "I believe," wrote Fr. John, "that only for her passionate love of Our Lord, and for her boundless faith, she would have lost her reason. To her prayers at that time and to her resignation to God's will I believe I owe everything, and God alone knows how much that means." He was an old man, and a Jesuit priest when, in the very last letter he wrote, he declared : "I owe everything in the world to my dear mother's prayers and tears and sufferings." It is her brief but sufficient epitaph.

There were five children in the Sullivan household and they seem to have always been a united and happy group. The eldest was the only girl, a daughter very dear to her mother, the only child to share her Faith. After her came Edward, who succeeded to his father's baronetcy, and played expertly the minor role of a front-ranking authority on book-binding. Next came Robert, the young man who was drowned at the age of twenty-four on a summer holiday outing, boating off Killiney. William, the third son, was the only child to survive his brother John and, in a family very closely attached, there seems to have been a specially strong bond uniting him to Fr. Sullivan. William held a commission in the Inniskillings—the oldest Irish regiment,

and on resigning it was called to the Irish Bar and became a judge of first instance. Under the curious system then in vogue in Ireland, these judicial functionaries were called Resident Magistrates, and bridged the gap between the local bench of Justices of the Peace and the County Court jurisdiction. It was inevitable in the Irish scene that they should be regarded as tools of government, pledged in all circumstances to support law and order. This indeed they were, but the role was not necessarily the degrading one that politics might suggest, and William Sullivan, if a trifle easy-going and fond of all the pleasures of life, was an upright, popular, tolerant and charming person. If he married a daughter of Baron Dowse, a well-known legal luminary, it was not in the "Trial by Jury" manner, but a natural alliance, for the fathers of bride and bridegroom were close friends, and the young people of both families, including John, were much together at the tennis and boating and dancing that made the Victorian society round. There remained to the very end a special tie of affection between the brothers. Though it came to be on William's side strangely mingled with exasperation for their lost common interests, he always showed a remarkable forbearing and warm admiration for the younger brother who had become so much more to him.

III

THE SCHOOLBOY

In 1873 John's father sent his younger sons, William and John, to Portora Royal School in Enniskillen. He had already sent their elder brothers there, so it was a routine decision. But it was one of great, perhaps supreme, importance for the whole of Fr. John's future life. His father was at the time Master of the Rolls, and evidently on his way to the top of the legal profession. He could pick and choose a school for his boys. Dr. Arnold's career at Rugby was already affecting the revolution of the English public school, and only prospects of unusual advantage could have induced such a man as Edward Sullivan to keep his boys at home in Ireland. Such a prospect Portora offered. It was then under William Steele, the outstanding Protestant head-master of the time, in the flower of his reputation. The school had been founded and endowed as part of the only constructive plantation ever carried out in Ireland, the far-reaching and

disastrous scheme of James I of England. His portrait as the Founder hangs in the place of honour in its dining-hall. A hundred and fifty years later, in 1770, the school had left the streets of Enniskillen and gone to a green hill overlooking the town's spires and towers on one side and a lovely stretch of Lough Erne on the other. The schoolroom, where sat the seventy scholars, who were all it then catered for, is still in use ; and though another and larger hall had been built in Fr. Sullivan's time, he must have known it well. Portora's endowments were ample, and the post of headmaster, which was the gift of the viceroy, was " a plum " that might reward merit or attract a good man. In William Steele it got one of the very best. He greatly enlarged the original building and with such skill that its present façade, his work, is both dignified and interesting. Himself a very fine scholar, he soon built up a wonderful tradition of scholarship. In addition to the old " planter " families such as the Archdales and Montgomerys, who had been its past pupils, he now gathered the sons of the leading professors of Trinity College, and of the men who consulted them about their sons' education. The Pursers, for example, were there in generations with and after Fr. John. Across the school-hall, which he built, William Steele's bust still faces the marble-cold features of his eldest and favourite boy, Frederick, drowned on a boating expedition on the lake while still a pupil. To judge by it he had good looks to match the gifts of his mind. It is a head both refined and strong. He was in fact a good administrator who built generously : a good disciplinarian without severity, and a secular teacher both inspiring and practical within the still unbreached tradition of the classics. His influence drew boys, as the school still does, from all over Ireland. But more important, and one at least of his pupils realised this, was the formation in character and piety that his example and teaching provided.

Fr. Sullivan went to Portora very young. His unformed, childish hand in the school register might be discounted as the

beginnings of a caligraphy that became nearly indecipherable. But what is one to make of a small boy who did not know his own age—he corrects eleven to twelve—and who had to insert the Christian name of a father whom he had written down as plain " Sullivan." It is a smudgy, shaky effort among much copper-plate and under his brother William's characteristically neat and unobtrusive entry. But Portora changed that. In middle life he wrote a fine flowing script and before he left the school his name was inscribed in golden letters on panels of honour which are still to be seen. He was Royal Scholar to T.C.D. and Senior Exhibitioner, the classic of his year. Yet it may be surmised this was the least part of what the school did for him.

All schools then had, and Portora has, a looser and more liberal tradition than that of our regimented age. Probably there were no organised games at all in Fr. Sullivan's time. The boys were free on foot or in boating expeditions to wander over a wide stretch of some of the loveliest countryside to be found anywhere, the wooded shores and islands of the two Lough Ernes. If the day of the bicycle had not yet given the boys their present bounds, which are the Atlantic, Fr. Sullivan does record that on bird-nesting expeditions they now and then reached the sandhills near Ballyshannon, having " sailed all day with sails on river and on lake." Already, perhaps, in these open-air hours he had gone far afield. Later he was to be in his *Wanderjahre*, a tremendously energetic cyclist and walker. Usually, or at least frequently, he travelled alone, arriving for example with towel and tooth-brush in hand, in newly discovered St. Moritz to tell the hotel dwellers of bathes in crisp-cold mountain lakes and long tramps over the high passes glowing with spring flowers. In Portora he must have acquired such tastes and an eye, albeit the unconscious eye of boyhood, for beauties he would for a little while occasionally recall. On the cliff path above the narrows where the Erne flows deep and steady as it leaves the town for the Lower Lake, he would have seen the steep tree-clad slopes mirrored in the black river, and beyond the pattern of the

clouds reflected in a silver pool, a backwater like a polished shield so wide and clear and still that only the wake of the water-fowl pattern it. Further afield he would see the vistas open to where the faint golden light beckoned from the Donegal hills. One spot on that lake drew him, as he tells us, with peculiar power ; the holy Island of Devinish, crowned by its ruined medieval church and its splendidly-restored round tower, with just beyond its green crest the cyclopean foundations of the oratory of St. Molaise lying by the broken walls of a monastery of the Culdees. It is an enchanted island. There in the sunlight, even today, one can feel very far from this world. Scores of hares, white, brown and grey, leap in the spring running. The curlew's call and moorhen's chuckle are the only audible sounds. As one climbs back up the hill to the boat-stage, an ancient stone cross outlined on the ridge against the afterglow gives point and significance to the island's austere loveliness. Even today it seems a place closer to the lonely spirit of Fr. Sullivan than any other, save the quiet presence-chamber of his chapel at Clongowes.

Fr. John himself was profoundly aware of this impression. He has expressed it in moving words in a short preface he wrote to the Life of another Portora boy, John Steele, the son of his old master who also became a priest. He records how much young Steele, in his opinion, owed to his father, their common master, " who was very earnest in setting the school a good example and a high ideal of things," and who had a " genuine belief in his boys," and " great trust in their honourable conduct." Then he goes on to state his belief that it " was his father's noble virtues implanted in him which in due course enabled the son, like Abraham when called to leave home and kindred for conscience sake ' to go out ' . . . not knowing whither he went." And in perhaps the loveliest words he wrote or spoke, sentences heavy with valediction, he paid tribute both to Portora and the high mind and ultimate victory of a man whose life in some measure foreshadowed his own. " Nearby

was a remarkable incentive to make us thoughtful in the right direction. . . . At the extreme end of the grounds where the path that runs along the narrow channel of Lough Erne at some elevation comes to an abrupt termination, stands the ruin of an old plantation castle overlooking the lake. At the foot of the castle was the place of departure for the boats carrying the dead to their last resting-place on the holy Island of Devinish, a little lower down in the lough.

"As all were not privileged to accompany the dead on their last voyage, scenes of weeping and wailing were frequently witnessed here, hence the name Portora, 'The Harbour of Tears' or 'Tearful Bank,' as it was translated when I was a boy at school. . . . This life of ours has been called a valley of tears and so we must expect at times the tears will flow . . . and even sometimes, flow plentifully—but leaving this life we leave all tears behind us. In Heaven, thank God, there are no tears. So, leaving Portora on his last voyage, we can believe that John Steele had left all his tears behind in 'the Harbour of Tears' and so he now rests in peace in the shadow of St. Mary and under the protection of St. Molaise."* But in school-days such solemn thoughts were inevitably intermittent. Fr. John in later life not only gladly paid tribute to the training of his great headmaster—upright, generous and deeply religious—but he made it clear that, despite the primitive condition under which all schoolboys then lived, his time in Portora was a very happy one.

Three-quarters of a century is a long time to go back for personal recollections, but happily there is alive today a group of old Portora boys who were willing to respond to the request of the headmaster of their old school for memories of the boy whom they knew, as future generations of boys were to do, as "Johnny" Sullivan. From the united memories there appears a distinct picture: "A gentle, good, and estimable boy in every

* John Steele was in fact buried in the shadow of the old cathedral of Cavan, and so joined only in spirit those who rest in Devinish.

way," writes William Steele's youngest son. Another : " who was a youngster at the time Johnny was at school," remembers with gratification " the notice he always took of him." Still another, now Dean of Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin, has a memory of John Sullivan revisiting his old school from Trinity : " What comes to my mind is an incident in the library—Sullivan was there, and I was a little chap, a newcomer to the school. My recollection is of his kindness to me on that occasion. If I remember right he took me on his knee and spoke to me. I have no idea why he paid such attention to me. It may have been because, like myself, he came from Dublin, or because he had a special feeling for the small chaps of the school. The impression left on me was that he was a very kind-hearted, impressionable fellow, and one of much sympathy. I have a clear picture of his face which seems to bear out these characteristics of him. I do not think I ever saw him again after that day or those days." It is reassuring to find his kindness to small boys reiterated. " He was," writes another past pupil, " monitor of the junior dormitory number 4, and was very much liked by his juniors." Dormitory 4, the juniors' dormitory, is still there to support the long memory, but no trace remains of the office alluded to in the next sentence. " He was elected by a poll of the whole school to a position (of which I forget the title), which in effect proclaimed the elected the most popular boy in the school for a year." This last is interesting, and confirms what another old boy wrote : that " he was popular with the seniors." Other memories show that " Johnny " could be a severe " disciplinarian " and it seems clear too that he was not of the thrustful type that wins active leadership at school ; but evidently he was appreciated even by his contemporaries, and the school gave him, with so much else, affection in return for his affection.

It is less surprising that he won here, as he was to do hereafter, the affection and esteem of his elders. We have seen his relations with his revered master. Mrs. Steele, and her sister who acted

as matron of the school at that time, had, in her son's recollection, a peculiar predilection for this bright-eyed, fair-haired boy. Fr. John came to the school, it is true, after the most brilliant era of Portora. She could recall the precocious genius of Oscar Wilde. (In 1869 he had won, as the bookplate testifies, the prize for Sacred Scripture when he was aged only fourteen and three-quarter years.)* She had sorrowful memories of her own brilliant son, Frederick, which must have been revived when, during Johnny's time at Portora, news would have reached her of the sadly similar tragedy of the drowning of his brother Robert, who had so recently been under her roof. Yet it was of "Johnny" she retained long memories, and of him she often spoke to her youngest son. In this wise then we can form a reliable picture of John Sullivan in the headmaster's parlour, a lovely room that looks upriver to the small grey town ; or in Mrs. Steele's garden whose splendid beech hedges have lasted apparently unchanged for a hundred years and are perhaps twice as old. There he takes his place with his elders as he was to do later in the houses of such men as Judge Murphy, Judge O'Brien and Baron Dowse. It is a youth serious and modest that we find. He is the amiable companion of his contemporaries, but already he has the attraction for the company and conversation of those whose years and experience enable them to set a special value on his friendship. Little wonder then that, addressing in 1953 an assembly of the past pupils of Fr. John's old school, its headmaster, the Rev. D. Graham, spoke of the just pride the school felt in having trained one whom his co-religionists hoped one day to see canonised.

* Fr. Sullivan cherished his own prizes in a remarkable way, at least till his priesthood. The three volumes he won for Sacred Scripture in 1875, 1876 and 1877 are still treasured with his other prize books in the Museum Library at Clongowes.

IV

THE SCHOLAR

FOREIGN visitors in Dublin find Trinity College unique. They cannot understand how any nation which achieved its independence by revolution can tolerate in the finest site, in the very heart of its capital, the splendid buildings of an unrepentant University which was founded by the conqueror as an aid to subjugation, and which remained for three centuries the bulwark of alien rule. It is not surprising that such a phenomenon, quite impossible in intolerant nationalistic Europe, amazes and perplexes them. Ireland feels quite different. It is not just a memory of Davis, an old alumnus of T.C.D., that keeps her flag green, white and orange. She dreams of a united Ireland, and in the meantime salutes on her daily round the figures of Goldsmith and Burke, whom Trinity nurtured and Foley cast in bronze. For the Catholic majority, barred out from the elder son's birthright by the old order, is yet scarcely behind Trinity's own sons in paying generous tribute to the schools which

taught or were taught by Rowan Hamilton, Whitley Stokes, Robert Ball and Edmund Dowden. And it must be remembered that in Fr. Sullivan's time the last-named were not vague or distant memories.

It is true that from the sons of her own family T.C.D. has had, and has today, a peculiar affection not altogether dissimilar to that enjoyed by the city of the dreaming spires. It is a bond indeed touched with the fervour that since Sparta's day and before, has lent a special loyalty to the stronghold of a minority among the dispossessed. In Fr. Sullivan's youth there was of course not even an infant National University to fan that feeling, but it was perhaps a similar pride and satisfaction which Trinity offered to her sons.

In 1879 John Sullivan entered Trinity with the best credentials possible as the star pupil of Portora, and during his time there his father held the office of Lord Chancellor and kept house around the corner. Yet Fr. John's university life was not an unmixed success. He tells us that he went to school weeping tears of home-sickness and that he left it weeping tears of affection. He cut himself off from Trinity, it would appear, because he found his life there intolerable.

Academically he justified all expectations. He went there as the Royal School Scholar, and though he twice failed to obtain a classical scholarship, he justified his reputation by taking his degree with a senior Moderatorship and gold medal in classics. The first rumblings of the scientific storm were just becoming audible. Fr. John told his superiors on entering the Jesuit Order that at College his mathematics had been so bad as to cause him great trouble even with otherwise easy exams. But a poor head for mathematics was as yet no more than an inconvenience.

The decade of John Sullivan's life in Trinity coincided with the heyday of a very remarkable group of classical scholars. Tyrell, Palmer, Mahaffy were his seniors, Bury and Louis Purser his near contemporaries. The last-named had actually been with him at Portora though Fr. John was a little the junior. In

Trinity they must have been drawn to one another by their common background. John Sullivan certainly shared the admiration and affection which Dr. Purser inspired in all who met him. Years later, when they had travelled their very different roads, his name on the lips of a younger Jesuit drew from Fr. Sullivan the splendid tribute—" the most Christ-like man I ever met." At Trinity therefore he found himself surrounded by talent. Professor Stanford has written of the group—" In the long history of classical scholarships there have been single figures in other centres of learning greater than any of these five, but I doubt if any university has ever had such a team of indigenous classicists working together as Mahaffy, Palmer, Tyrell, Purser and Bury." The judgement may owe something to the natural " pietas " of the holder of the Fellowship and chair of Greek in their university, but it is carefully weighed.

Thus in the teaching he received Fr. John was fortunate. Palmer, his Latin professor, was witty and capable. Tyrell, better remembered, had something of genius. It is not always an unmitigated evil for a teacher to be naturally idle. Fr. Sullivan was not spoon-fed—far from it. It was common gossip that the spade-work of Tyrell's masterpiece, an edition of the letters of Cicero in seven volumes, was done by another Portora student, Dr. Louis Purser, and strangely as it reads, Henry Bowen's recollection of Tyrell postponing a class because his " cheela," John Sullivan was absent, is probably accurate. But while Tyrell may have opened new vistas for his mind, his influence in other ways must have been the reverse of that of William Steele.

His published expression of his religious views or prejudices was rude and intolerant. Some of the other luminaries with whom John came in contact cannot have been much more helpful. John B. Bury was a near contemporary. Even as an undergraduate he showed his quality as an editor, but he early gave evidence of the views expressed in his *History of the Freedom of Thought*. John Pentland Mahaffy, who almost embodied the spirit of Trinity in Fr. Sullivan's day, was, if possible, an even

greater contrast to Steele than either Tyrell or Bury. A clergyman who made it clear that he took orders for form sake and as a necessary expedient, could not fail to subject his very gifts, his fine presence, his excellent intelligence and taste, to his temporal ambitions. An outstanding authority on Hellenistic culture, a doctor of music, the leading spirit of the Dublin Georgian Society, a witty conversationalist, and a man of unbounded mental energy, he ought to have been, but was not, above a childish snobbery, spoke often of "my friend the German Kaiser" and could be arrogant and even deliberately rude to those whom he despised for lack of culture or position. But Fr. Sullivan must have seen a good deal of a man who was then the coming figure. It would be almost impossible to imagine a greater antithesis of character than that existing between John Sullivan and John Pentland Mahaffy. The gap between them must from the beginning have been real, and the sympathy limited. It is very difficult to imagine that great Provost in any circumstances saying, as one of his successors did, " if John Sullivan is canonised I shall hoist the Trinity flag and proclaim a three days' holiday."

There is a story, perhaps rather " ben trovato " than true, of Mahaffy's association with the tragic genius of Portora. Oscar Wilde had been to Rome with a friend who joined the Catholic Church and later became a Benedictine abbot. That side of Wilde's complicated nature to which the rich and ancient life of the Church, its liturgy, art and music, and its grand enthusiasms appealed, was uppermost in his mind and found expression in three sonnets of homage to Rome. He stood, his friend thought, on the threshold of that Church to which he came only when suffering brought him a death-bed submission. But at his side was another figure, Mahaffy, all too like a thinly-disguised abbé of the unbelieving Enlightenment. " Wilde," he is said to have invited, " come with me to Greece. You will never make a good Christian, and I will make you a good pagan." Wilde did go ; his Catholic dreams faded, though

perhaps it is not untrue to say that he became as good a pagan as it is possible for a pagan to be.

It was some years after this pilgrimage to Hellas that Sullivan accompanied Mahaffy and a party of students on a like pilgrimage to Greece. Nothing is recorded of the trip save that the great man invited his junior to lecture the band as they stood on the slope of the Acropolis gazing at the ruins of Athene's temple. It is not likely that even Mahaffy would have seen in Sullivan a promising convert for heathenism in the sensuous tradition of Wilde or Swinbourne. He was still popular and sought after, but his shyness was already noticed. Perry, lecturing on the Latin verb " osculare "—meaning to kiss, would set out three grammatical usages to be found, and pointedly enquire, " which of the three do you employ, Mr. Sullivan ? ", sure of the laughter that would greet the notion of Sullivan in the toils. No, neither then nor at any other time, was Fr. John deflected from the high standards of conduct in which his parents and William Steele had trained him. " To the pure all things are pure." He was no prude. It is on record that as a Jesuit priest he objected to the expurgation of school texts, and with boys in private tuition went boldly ahead. Aristophanes, one of his favourite authors, apparently gave him no scruple. But his own conduct and innocence were always recognised without question to be above reproach. Naturally, it made him in Irish feminine society even more eligible than charm, or wealth, or intelligence alone could have done. His sister, the much loved Annie, apparently took on herself the role of protector against designing females. But actually her little brother was well able to look after himself in this matter.

The danger he met in Trinity was then not so much the common danger of young men before " the heyday of the blood is tame." It was something more subtle. He was brought into contact not so much with hostility to the Christian religion, as with a growing indifference to it, and above all, with a practical conviction that any too literal acceptance of the Gospel

which might intrude on the ambitions, or even the mental or aesthetic development of the individual, was rather crude folly.

At Portora Steele had expounded earnestly on the Greek texts of St. Paul and St. Luke, and the boys had gone Sunday after Sunday to their parish church (there is no chapel in the School) to hear their master or his son, John, preach the Gospel. At Trinity John found, how sadly one can imagine, nothing to put in the place of such schoolboy piety. He confessed to a College servant who upbraided him, that church-going now meant nothing to him. But evidently he suspected that there were others for whom it was not so. He made a strange offer to the poor woman, and one she may well have found embarrassing. " For," said he, " I will try going to Mass, if you will bring me there." It is extraordinarily typical of John Sullivan that the Lord Chancellor's son, and the son and brother of devout Catholics, was at once so shy and so humble as to choose to go to Church for preference with a college bed-maker. It was perhaps unfortunate. Mass in a crowded Catholic city is an experience that usually requires both preparation and explanation, neither of which Fr. Sullivan's guide could have been expected to offer. We do not know if the experiment was repeated, though it may have been at this time that he attended Mass frequently as he afterwards declared he had done. Certainly it is not without significance to see, thus early in his spiritual life, one of the simple poor hold out a helping hand to the man who was to help so many of her sort.

The classical career closed in a blaze of scholarship. In that highly learned journal, *Hermathena*, the young Trinity champion buckled on his armour and broke a lance with an English scholar, D. S. Margoliouth, who was later to win great renown in his own field of learning. On this occasion, however, it was the unknown young knight who unhorsed the champion and, carrying the metaphor further, the Oxford man and his edition of Aeschylus may be said to have perished with three and forty trenchant wounds—for that was the number of

Margoliouth's emendations which John exposed as unoriginal. True, the criticism was a little petty and purely destructive. Indeed Trinity classical studies, even in this brilliant period, proved somewhat sterile and unprogressive. This futility may have come home to John Sullivan even as he carried out his task. At any rate, honour being satisfied, he left the lists of mere erudition with a faint suggestion of contempt for the whole business. After that the lawyer's son began to read law. But by now he had perhaps grown restless and rudderless. More than two years later, with the course as good as finished, his LL.B. degree in sight, he threw up the whole business on a domestic reason that ought to have provoked in a stable mind only a temporary lapse. He left the university and the country and went to England. He had surrendered, it is to be feared, to the dilettantism to which his circumstances tempted him. Lincoln's Inn was the easy way to the Bar. The Isles of Greece beckoned from laughing waters. Europe and Italy offered him solitary beauties. Holidays in Ireland gave him company so familiar as not to disturb his shyness or his enjoyment. He surrendered. Did he quite fall asleep ? Or in the ten years in the lotus land of sleeping beauty were those bright eyes of his at least half open, watching and waiting for the off-shore breeze of the Spirit of God ?

Fr. Sullivan had had the best academic training his country could then give, and even after this the fortunate young man could take his time. He emerges now out of the chrysalis stage, a fairly decorative young man. He was remembered, is perhaps still remembered by a very few, as a handsome young man, the glass of fashion, whose elegance of dress, taste in ties, silk underwear (in a pre-nylon age), and flair for whist, suggest the graceful idler. He liked society, and society liked him. But he had other interests. Games or athletics were not yet indispensible accomplishments of a beau ideal : But he was an addict to the contemporary cycling craze, a mountain climber, and a traveller who did not keep to the beaten track. There was never

the smallest drop of viciousness in him. His fastidious taste must have saved him that.

There is an amusing picture of him in later life : One day Father John was sitting, a reluctant figure, at the well-appointed table of his brother's club, crumbling his dry bread while the latter enjoyed the rare chance of a chat with him on old times. Suddenly there entered the room a character well known for good living, hard drinking, and a robust contempt for clerics. Sir William raised a hand and called him to their table, where he stood in astonished and candid disgust at the unusual figure before him. " Don't you know my brother ? " asked William. " Of course you do, surely you have not forgotten John ? Many a time I've seen the pair of you on the top of a cab rolling home with the milk." Not a word from Fr. John at this stupendous lie. He had no desire, as in fact he had no need to defend himself from the charges of drunkenness or disorder. Nor, it must be admitted, had the alleged companion of his revels. What humiliated him was not the imputation of one more spree, it was the idea that he should ever have indulged his pleasures in the company of a man so obviously unworthy of him. With brows as black as thunder he denied the charge. But while any suggestion that Fr. Sullivan sowed wild oats was false, the unfortunate man might have found it as odd to believe that this shabby, cheerless priest had been a popular favourite, able to take his full share in all the gaieties of any pleasant party.

Now too his worldly career was shaping itself smoothly and with a certain inevitability. The Chancellor's son was called to the English Bar, and got the right, honourable and lucrative sinecure. Such a post as Marshal to the Lord Chief Justice Mathew was an experience doubly valuable, since the Chief Justice was one of the ablest lawyers of his generation. John became a member of the Reform Club, then in its heyday. At home he was the close, and even intimate friend of a group of his seniors. Judge William O'Brien, Judge Murphy, Chief Baron Dowse, who all were in a position to forward the interests of a

protégé. For his travels in Greece he was provided with a military escort by a Prime Minister who became his personal friend. And when in 1895, the young lawyer who knew modern Greek was appointed by the British Government a commissioner to investigate the circumstances of a massacre at Adana, a career was definitely open to his talents. He might be said to have had a despatch box , if not a marshal's baton, in his knapsack. He was thirty-four. It was exactly the age at which another lawyer had received his first political appointment, only to resign it at once : St. Bernardino of Lecce became a Jesuit. In another year Fr. Sullivan became a Catholic, and in four more a Jesuit. Henceforth the world interested him only as a battle-ground for eternity. Twenty years later he would arrive at Clongowes by the late train one August day carrying to a less detached colleague a copy of the evening paper, unopened and unread. It contained the news of Austria's declaration of war on Serbia and the beginning of a new era.

V

THE CONVERT

Fr. John Sullivan's baffling reserve is impenetrable in all that concerns his conversion. No one, it may be surmised, ever shared his inner mind sufficiently to question him openly about it. He daunted curiosity. His actual reception into the Church took place in the Jesuit church in Farm Street, London, on December 21st 1896 and he was received by a very well known Jesuit of that period, Fr. Michael Gavin. But it is impossible to say if there was anything really personal in the choice of the place or the man. It is an interesting fact that from the moment of his admission into the Order on September 7th 1900, his Jesuit brethren, without exception, seem always to have been well aware of the quality of his holiness. He is a remarkable exception to a rule, verified in the case of too many saints, and not least the modern ones, that a man's enemies are of his own household. Fr. Sullivan had no earthly enemies ; and in his

Order only admirers. He was almost a prophet in his own country. If therefore even the external details of his arrival into the Church had had an Irish setting, they must almost infallibly have been a subject of enquiry and left a tradition. It did not happen so. We can therefore only read the log of his voyage by an occasional reference to the ports at which he touched and the ships he passed, too often in the night.

The background was, of course, his divided home. He had admired his father greatly and been deeply moved by his sudden death. The Lord Chancellor had been at work as usual the day before he died, and indeed had even dined on the previous night in the Viceregal Lodge, sitting next to the Princess of Wales, the lovely Alexandra of Denmark, and appearing in perfect health. So harsh to his son was the blow of his death, that it seems certain that for a time Fr. Sullivan found Dublin insupportable. It was at this stage that he went to settle more or less permanently in London, and abandoned his almost completed law studies in Trinity College, to be called later to the English Bar. It is certainly of a piece with all the story of John Sullivan that his father's death should have smitten him so severely. He was always acutely conscious of the uncertain terms on which a man has a lease of life. This was not morbid, but from his boyhood in Portora it was deep-seated. It had been further impressed on him at that time by his mother's grief when her son Robert was drowned. On his father's sudden decease he seems for the first and only time to have run away from death. He had ample means, and he gave himself to the life we have seen : to pleasure, innocent certainly, even worthy, but the pleasure of the passing day, pleasure both purposeless and impermanent.

His mother had a different sort of influence on his life. She had long stood for something more real than his father's worldly success. He is recorded as having, with a Victorian and almost a sentimental gesture, filled her grave with sheaves of white lilies. And there remains his clear statement that it was to her

that he owed everything. His friend Judge Murphy believed that he reached the decision to become a Catholic when returning from a stay with the Greek monks of the famous monastery of Mount Athos. While there he had made good friends with whom he continued to correspond for a time. In Southern Italy, on his way home from Mount Athos, he fell ill of small pox. Alone, and close to death himself, in a Catholic land and atmosphere, he may well have reached the decisive point in a long pondered transformation.

It is doubtful if the Judge's opinion was more than surmise. It is by chance that we know that his mother contributed something more than her prayers and the example of her devotion to her son's spiritual life. Twenty years after her death a small boy in Clongowes went to the spiritual Father's room on the eve of an annual Retreat. He asked for a holy book to help him through the days of silence. Fr. John agreed, and asked had he any special book in mind. Oddly enough the boy had come across a volume, *A Manual of Happy Eternity*, drawn from the writings of St. Alphonsus Liguori. In the book was a vivid description of hell, which boy-like he remembered. Would Fr. Sullivan have that book? The priest looked at him a little curiously. It appeared he had. He fetched down from his shelf a shabby little volume in the unattractive format of Catholic books of devotion in semi-penal times. But it was a book he treasured : " Take great care of it now, and be sure to bring it back to me," he said. " I value that book. My mother gave it to me." The boy had always thought of Fr. Sullivan as a kind of Melchisedech, a saint without origins or relatives. So the reference to his mother was remembered. Only when he grew up he realised that it was extraordinary for Fr. Sullivan to have kept and treasured any material thing.

But indeed there was one other object which had been his mother's and which he held precious ; and all who knew him, however slightly, must have realised it. Every Jesuit novice is given at the time of his vows a rosary, a rule book, and a

crucifix which he may call his own. The crucifix is very plain, wood and brass, with "issue" rather than personal devotion stamped upon it. But it is often kept till death. Fr. Sullivan, who seldom or never asked for personal exceptions, requested, and was given leave to retain, instead of the standard cross, his mother's crucifix. It was almost a replica of that usually provided, a trifle larger and no less solid. It is this crucifix, which he venerated with such tender devotion, that is now kept in the Jesuit Residence in Gardiner Street. There it is in constant request by the faithful, who believe it still carries something of the power and blessing it had in Fr. John's heart and hands.

For a man of Fr. Sullivan's habit of mind the approach to the Church will of necessity have been at least partly by way of a close study of the Scriptures and the teaching of the Fathers, such as that which preceded the conversion of Newman and most of the Oxford men. We know that Steele had taught his boys to weigh the great texts almost syllable by syllable in the original Greek. John Sullivan remained capable of that. All his life his knowledge of the Scriptures was comprehensive and ready; text matched text, explained and completed it. Once one of his students chose an apocryphal quotation to introduce a practice sermon without citing chapter or verse. At once his superior called for the reference. The words used were colourless and harmless. Fr. Sullivan, however, was clearly puzzled to hear any text purporting to be Scripture which he could not place at once. Yet his cast of mind was not controversial. He had taken no part at all in the polemics that occupied such men as Tyrell and Trench. One who knew him well and heard him as a Catholic priest lecture and preach scores of times could not recall a single occasion when he animadverted on any specific Protestant practice or standpoint. He was obviously incapable of a hard judgement of any man, least of all of a sincerely religious one. It came as a surprise to those who knew him only in later life to learn or to remember that he had not grown up in the household of Rome, so naturally did Catholic devotions

and teachings seem to fit him. It is therefore possible, that while his intellect assented, it may not have played a dominant part in his conversion.

There is, of course, even for the man quite convinced of the truth of the Catholic position through the gift of faith, and ready to submit to the Church's teaching and governing authority, a further discipline which he must undergo. This is the detailed study of doctrine and duty which the catechism class provides in childhood for the born Catholic. The necessity for this is obvious, but sometimes the difficulty involved is exaggerated and it becomes a deterrent to an enquirer, distasteful at least in imagination or anticipation. Fr. John was "instructed," as the phrase goes, at least partially in the simplest way. He became almost literally a little child again, so as to enter the Kingdom of God. After his death a lady recalled how, during the summers of 1894 and 1895, he had stayed in Kerry in the hotel belonging to her parents. She was then being taught her lessons by a governess, and the middle-aged scholar, passing an open window, saw the pair at work. What was she at ? Her catechism ? Might he join the class ? He came, he listened and questioned, and to the little girl's relief went away before she had to display her knowledge or her ignorance of geography or mathematics. But he took a note of the text-book used. It was Butler's Catechism. And he returned day by day. Soon she lost her embarrassment and timidity with him. Not that they became intimate. Until he became a Jesuit he sent her each Christmas a religious book, but she never told him that she longed for *Chatterbox* instead. If he had known would he have sent it ? It is at least doubtful. All the same she was pleased when he returned next year like the swallows, and not only shared her lessons again, but had evidently been studying the Catechism. And then after another year or more, on the Feast of St. Thomas the Apostle, the lawyer and the scholar had learned his lesson and the long journey was over.

There is an amusing story told of the reaction of Fr. Sullivan's

friend, Judge Murphy, to the conversion of the good man. Shortly after it took place he is said to have met a Presbyterian lawyer who expressed his disgust that their acquaintance, young Sullivan, " had gone over to Rome." " Don't worry," retorted the witty Judge, himself a staunch member of the Church of Ireland, " I believe John Sullivan would save his soul even if he became a Presbyterian." The *bon mot* should not perhaps be given too much significance, but there is better testimony to the position this very young man held in the esteem of such a man as the distinguished judge. Years after the conversion, his son, Q. Murphy, a resident magistrate, and a Protestant himself, told a friend of the deep impression made upon him by his father's reception of the news of John Sullivan's conversion. The convert was much nearer a contemporary of the son than the father, and they were of course intimately acquainted. Murphy was not deeply interested in religious matters, but he could not fail to be touched by John Sullivan's change of allegiance. Not without misgiving he discussed it with his revered father. He expected to hear the action unreservedly condemned, and was frankly astonished at his father's grave comment : " If John Sullivan has become a Catholic we may all consider whether we might not be well advised to do likewise." Respect of Age for Youth could scarcely go farther.

And so in 1896 John stood on the dividing line, the watershed of his life. Thirty-six years had led him forward to his big decision. Just so many were left to him to reap the fruit of it. Many years later the friend of his Trinity days, Dr. Louis Purser, himself very near the end, wrote to Fr. Sullivan. " I often thought of you but did not know clearly about yourself except I heard you had joined the Jesuit Order. . . . There is no question that you are happy with the very purest form of happiness ; you are to be envied in attaining to the happiness that is laid up in heaven." Fr. John himself, in giving to cold print those words written to him in the confidence of private correspondence, certainly confirmed his friend's judgement.

Never for a moment did he look back from the plough. The Church had no more loyal son. He had gone out, in his own words, as Abraham from his own people, " he came to Oxford and his friends no more." It is unlikely that he ever passed under the echoing arch or across the quadrangle of the great university, certain that he never read in her libraries or sat under her trees to watch white figures play cricket in the sun. But no one who knew could doubt his own conviction that he had chosen the better part—or rather that God had chosen him for it.

VI

THE CATHOLIC

THE first half of Fr. Sullivan's life had been filled with remarkable graces remarkably received. Now, as he stood on the summit, at the watershed, the sources of his spiritual life changed in character and direction. Henceforth his inner life ran on without pause or check, a continuous stream, with ever-increasing force till it reached the ocean from which long ago it had come. It cut ever-deepening gorges as it went, and gained in power as well as speed and volume, but did not again change direction or character, and to discerning eyes the final pattern was already visible. Those who knew him and valued him most were now anxious only that he should harness his vital energies, and that done, in practice they made no attempt to direct, plan, or check the course on which his life ran out.

Two tributaries formed it. To a superficial philosophy they were opposed, but in fact they complemented one another and gave an apparently effortless richness and range to his Catholic

life. One was his courageous and utter detachment from all temporal interests, his preoccupation with what was permanent and eternal. The other was a corrective ; a realisation that the Eternal had put on mortal Flesh and suffered in His own Person, all the liabilities of created being, first in His own Body and Soul, and then in the Mystical Body in which also He was incorporated, in each member of a Church, all of whom shared His human nature.

The first, the negative aspect of Fr. Sullivan's sanctity, was the more obvious. It was almost startling. In an age, which much more than that of Wordsworth, has come to see how in getting and spending we lay waste our powers, his indifference to worldly things is his primary and inspiring message. To all temporal accumulation and achievement, and much more, to all scheming, contriving, salesmanship, or exploitation, he was impervious. Not merely the material world, but everything in the world of spirit which is ephemeral seemed to him unimportant. The college in which he worked so long had as a second patron the Polish boy, St. Stanislaus, whose motto "Ad majora his "—Born for better things—he made his own. To the boys he guided he was never tired of emphasising the one thing that mattered. He almost seemed to say, " Seek first the Kingdom of Heaven," and whether the rest be added or not is a small matter. His constantly reiterated slogan, " a thing done for God is a thing done for eternity," emphasised, and was meant to emphasise the vanity of all else. Humanity and its affairs ceased to interest him. It was a little unnatural ; it was more than a little frightening ; but it was purifying, and in our worldly times even comforting. It remains for many the first and most important fact about Fr. Sullivan, written on every page of his later life—his message to us. Like St. Augustine, he could believe in no secular solution, his interest lay entirely in the City of God.

His detachment made him independent of all earthly consideration. He became a man not only invulnerable to success

or failure, but one making no personal claims to gratitude or affection or influence. In this role he is a figure admirable rather than amiable. He is one who may provoke us to envy, rather than encourage us to imitation. Inspiring to an ideal of superhuman wisdom, he calls to what is strongest in us to rescue us from our cherished follies. It is an ungrateful function, and it is well that it was not Fr. Sullivan's only, or perhaps principal, one. He set himself now, it is true, to discard the baggage of life, all superfluities, and even what most men deem the necessities of life, to travel light through this vale of tears. It involved discarding companionship also, for the route he chose was a solitary one. But just as we see him set out on it, we observe that his way did not lead through uninhabited country, but carried him to hospitals, sickrooms, prisons and poorhouses. He had left man behind, but he would meet him again disguised as God. His light, swift step became a graceless shuffle. He looked at the ground, but it was because he ran to help, with his back bent under burdens not his own. Fr. Sullivan discovered the art which seems to lie at the root of holiness, to forget himself while becoming increasingly conscious of the needs of a wide and widening range of his fellow-mortals, united in the livery of their suffering Master. " What you do to the least of my brethren you do to me," said Christ. All about him Fr. Sullivan saw God hungry, naked, in pain, in prison, and he ran to comfort Him. He even saw Him carrying the sins of men and he hastened to relieve Him of the load by converting the sinner and absolving the sin.

It was this union of qualities which won for him the admiration, or at least the respect of all, and the affection of those who had themselves most need of affection. There was fundamentally in Fr. Sullivan nothing of the pagan detachment, which, as the Fathers noted, made Diogenes and the Cynics leave the world, but never follow Christ. He was no Yogi seeking interior peace by indifference to pain or sorrow, but quite the contrary. He was a man for whom the pain and

sorrow of others had taken on a new tragedy by becoming the wounds of Christ's members.

When Fr. John became a Catholic he found in the Church what most good Catholics have enjoyed almost as unconsciously as the air about them, the help of those communities of nuns whose lives are a permanent inspiration to the ordinary Christian. His friend Judge William O'Brien introduced him to the local convents as they went on circuit. With truly Catholic taste, he found in many different religious families, friends and helpers to guide and encourage him along the road which he travelled with such swift and unfaltering strides. Contemplatives like the Poor Clares and the Sisters of Perpetual Adoration welcomed him to their devotions and their Oratories. More than one Dublin Carmel knew him as a frequent visitor. His simplicity, his fervour, his humble bearing delighted souls dedicated to like virtues, and from the first they were confident that he would, like themselves, choose the religious life. But it was the great and typically Irish Congregations, dedicated to the service of the poor and unfortunate, that drew him to their works and gave him perhaps his first taste of serving the Sacred Humanity in Its suffering Mystical Body.

He was still a man of means and leisure, and he gave both to the needy. Now he became a constant visitor to the Hospice of the Dying at Harold's Cross, and we shall see as his story unfolds, a devotion to the sick and dying worthy of a follower of Christ the Healer. For the present it would seem his gifts were those open to many to give. He brought spiritual comfort and companionship, and the little presents of food, drink and clothing, that were all the more welcome for being tokens of sympathy. With the career of Mother Catherine McAuley, who became a nun in the service of Dublin's and Ireland's poor, his story has more than one parallel. Her spirit, alive in her nuns, infallibly drew him to them. The first contact seemed casual enough. We get a glimpse of him as an anonymous benefactor with a package of banknotes for a charity in urgent need. Then

he is " found out." In the night-schools held for the very poor in the rough conditions of those times, he is completely at home —less shy it would appear than he had ever been in the society of men, or was to be in the Society of Jesus. He was not embarrassed when a well-coached little one ran up, and with joined hands repeated a memorised prayer : " God bless Mr. Sullivan and make him a Jesuit." " Say it again, Annie," he would laugh, " say it again." He was in fact enjoying a care-free hour, one of his very few, in the nurseries of God. But even when he had fulfilled Annie's prayer, and was a religious bound by a vow of poverty, there remained a spontaneity about his love of the poor not noticeable in other ways. For an old rheumatic man he would have his little weekly ration of tobacco ; for nearly-blind Brigid, whose cottage at the gates of Clongowes has long since gone back to the earth from which it came—the grey Kildare mud—he had her tea and a pinch of sugar and snuff. He would ask his superior's leave to give what he did not use himself. The dainties even, which he so harshly rejected, were right to comfort the needy. While Fr. John scribbled a note before running off to a mental hospital, a student would see the bed in his bare room in Rathfarnham, and on it a vivid pool of oranges and apples ready to go with his superior on his errand of charity. Another student opened his eyes at two little bottles of yellow fluid : " Don't worry," said his Rector, " I'm not going on the booze." But he knew, and said with the humility of the saints, that a drop of the " cratur " could be a gift of the Creator more acceptable than even his own kind words or wise advice. He would pray long with a sick man, and drown him in holy water, but he would leave him a little paper bag as well as the blessing of God. In him there was a lovely Irish simplicity that reconciled without effort his own abnegation and his fellow-men's comfort.

So several years passed with Fr. John edifying his friends old and new, and being drawn more and more to the life wholly and officially dedicated to the service of Him to Whom

he already belonged completely. It is interesting and curious that all his closest friends and advisers were unshaken in the confidence with which they advised this man, whose story and character had so much in common with the great Cistercian and Franciscan vocations, to join the Jesuit Order. He hesitated. The Capuchins attracted him greatly. The Cistercians were later to express their warmest admiration of his spirit when he gave the community retreat in Mount St. Joseph's Abbey, Roscrea. But his friends on earth and in heaven were right, and he chose the Society of Jesus. And in return God gave him very special graces in a special degree. St. Ignatius puts on the lips of the exercitant, who meditates in his Spiritual Exercises, a prayer which runs thus : " Eternal Lord of all things, I make my oblation with Thy favour and help, in the presence of Thy Infinite Goodness, and in the sight of Thy Glorious Mother and of the whole Heavenly Court, protesting that I wish and desire, and that it is my deliberate determination, (provided only it be to Thy greater service and praise), to imitate Thee in bearing all poverty, as well actual poverty as poverty of spirit, if only Thy Divine Majesty be pleased to choose me and receive me to this life and state." Fr. John the Jesuit was to make these Exercises twice for thirty days and year after year for eight days. It would be impossible to find a figure less like the Jesuit of fiction. It would be almost equally difficult to find one in whom the impress of those Exercises was deeper. But with all his detachment he was, and remained, a man for whom the duty of practical charity to his brethren was a primary one. In giving the same Exercises to Jesuits he struck this note again and again. Once advising another who was on his way to give them he urged him to bring home the lesson that " we are saved by charity." We must give ourselves utterly to God, Who receives the gift in the person of His least brethren and gives Himself in return. That was the burden of his message in word and deed.

VII

THE JESUIT

On September 7th 1900, the vigil of Our Lady's Nativity, John Sullivan stepped down off the side-car which had carried him the seven miles from Tullamore to the Jesuit Noviceship at Tullabeg. He was a man of forty. It would be seven long years, a Jacob's service, before he was a priest—and then he would have a third year's noviceship still before him. Many a man has shrunk back from so long a preparation, lacking the essential Jesuit gift of patience, and perhaps mistaking the years away from the Lord's vineyard as so much mere waiting—time lost—when it is really a time as full and active for the soul as ever the years of labour can be. Nor is the growing urge to be about the Father's business ordinarily without fruit. There is a certain sharpened edge on the activity of a man whose desires have been whetted by delay, and Fr. Sullivan's "prentice" seven years must have given a special force to the ardour of his pastoral life. He had been a convert for nearly four years and he

must have known all about many of his contemporaries who had gone before him to the altar. He could not hope that for him the journey there might be as it had been for Archdeacon Manning, a matter of months. But there were nurseries of " late vocations," and there was the Beda. There was the Accademia dei Nobili Ecclesiastii whither John Steele went on his conversion. And there were other ways by which a lawyer and a " classic " and a man of forty might short-cut the full course. Fr. John chose the longest way. He served for his orders half as long as St. Patrick, but he was nearly twice Patrick's age when at last he bowed his neck to the yoke. The years were spent, two as a novice in Tullabeg, two in Stonyhurst College in Lancashire studying philosophy, and three at theology in Milltown Park. Then after five years' interval he returned to Tullabeg to make a third year noviceship. Each of these houses were what is called in the Society " Houses of Formation," and in them Fr. Sullivan cheerfully and even gladly submitted to and welcomed the discipline, the strict rules and " order of time " which, at any rate since the Council of Trent, have been an integral part of a priest's preparation.

So, older even than St. Ignatius when he went to sit with the boys at Barcelona and learn his grammar, Fr. John went to share the life of men who were scarcely more than boys and learn the grammar of the Religious Life and Ecclesiastical Studies. One of his companions in those years, a brilliant student, as charitable as he was witty, used to make in a gay grumble a sound point. " Easy for Sullivan," he'd say, " he'd been everywhere and done everything. He was tired of the world. But we, poor lads, who'd never had a taste of it, we had to get on with the scrubbing and the scolding and the studying for twice as long as he." No one knew better, of course, that however a jaded or satiated, not to say disillusioned, experience might help, it could hardly make up for the difficulty of submission after having been one's own master half a lifetime, nor for the extra strain of living in middle age with young

folk not long left school. Besides, as Fr. John followed his shortened course he had at each stage to start a fresh task to pick up a new science—and that gets harder with the years. Since he naturally did not return to the University nor teach in the Jesuit Colleges before his Ordination he kept " catching up " each time on a new generation. He had to start each stage in the company of a new set of fellow-students—old friends of one another, but total strangers to him. A formidable assignment evidently and the difficulty would not wholly or principally be a struggle with the studies.

The young men with whom he lived were, of course, conscious of this difference. But the more thoughtful of them were edified to note that he himself seemed unaware of it. He never presumed on his seniority. He never talked down to them. Seldom, except for their entertainment, did he draw in conversation on his past experiences. He was, at least in those days, always ready with a reminiscence of his travels or a Bar story to help out a recreation which hung fire, but neither then, nor even after, did he in the casual interchange of daily life discuss deep issues that might be beyond his hearers or set up for a master in Israel. On the contrary, he who was incapable of a pose, quite sincerely took on the character of the clumsy, foolish fellow. " I made a terrible fool of myself " was a sentence so often on his lips that it became a shibboleth in the noviceship. But even the novices were not deceived. Fr. John was no fool and there was no folly in him but that of the Cross.

Only in the third year's noviceship, the tertianship as Jesuits call it, did he associate more closely with one of his brethren than another. The reason for this may well have been a charitable desire to help out a foreigner, who found himself exiled, to spend a year in the Irish bogs. But though so different in age, Fr. Sullivan was then well over fifty, the two men had much in common. Fr. Roiron, a member of the Paris Province, was a very brilliant scholar, destined immediately after his tertianship for an important chair of Theology. He was a

Doctor of the Sorbonne. It is or was the lordly practice of that famous school to allow its students to present their thesis for the doctorate in the foreign language of their choice. Fr. Roiron caused some embarrassment by choosing modern Greek. It is not therefore fanciful to overhear the two priests as they tramped the rutted lime-white roads or crossed the gravel hills of Offaly using the speech Fr. John had heard on the Acropolis. But their fellow Tertians did not believe they discussed knotty points of scholarship. For Fr. Roiron had in his own right a reputation not only for the most meticulous religious observance and method, but for profound spirituality. The recreations he shared with Fr. Sullivan would have been, it was agreed, on topics of a depth and height beyond ordinary human levels. It is a pity that no record of this relationship by the hands of either man endures, neither letter, nor note, nor reminiscence. Fr. Roiron was scarcely appointed Professor when in the First World War he was conscripted. He took his place with the plain " poilu " in the trenches and there was killed by a bursting shell, surely not the least valuable life to be laid against war's charge. The long preparation, with Fr. Sullivan's acquaintance as perhaps its final big grace, and then the falling leaf, hidden in the autumn forest of war—one more proof for Fr. Sullivan of the transcience of our life.

But to return to the noviceship. Making his late and handicapped start, Fr. John had fortunately advantages too. Just for a couple of months he had as Novice Master a singular but remarkable man, Fr. James Murphy. Fr. Murphy then became Provincial, but not until he had given Fr. Sullivan the Long Retreat, thirty days spent under his direction, making the Spiritual Exercises. This for most Jesuits is, as it was for St. Ignatius, St. Francis Xavier and all the early companions, the crisis, the turning-point as it were, of their whole lives. On Fr. James Murphy's other qualifications as Master of Novices there may have been, and were, two opinions. Of his power as a retreat giver, of a quality in him of eloquence and much

more than eloquence, there was never any question. After fifty years the Long Retreats he directed are still vivid, treasured memories to all, it might be said without exception of the men who made them under him. Giving the Spiritual Exercises was his charisma. It was Fr. Sullivan's gift from God to make the Long Retreat under such a man. He was eminently and perfectly prepared to receive the good seed and bring forth fruit a hundredfold. In later life he was always a humble recipient of any spiritual instruction he could get. If he met a man who had been in contact with some teacher or director he valued, or even whose name was well known or whose repute was currently high, he would enquire carefully, " What did he say ? " " Did he say anything remarkable to you ? " When he was a superior he would often cross-examine his young subjects on the sermons they heard or the retreat lectures to which they listened. Until they knew him they might have been pardoned for thinking this a relic of good Victorian Protestantism which catechised the children returning from the Sunday sermon. But it was quite evident that it was his own improvement he sought. He never criticised, or only once when his vigorous " he ought to learn to control his feelings " startled a young man narrating how a venerated Father had broken down as he described Christ's Passion. But even that strange lapse was probably due to his disappointment in missing his share in what such a man might offer. Now under Fr. Murphy's care, he was set down at a full table, and whatever self-denial he practised in other directions it certainly would not have stopped him doing justice to that meal.

Then, no less fortunately, the retreat given and made, Fr. Michael Browne came to take Fr. Murphy's place for the rest of Fr. Sullivan's noviceship. What manner of man then was Fr. Browne and what had he to give Fr. Sullivan in whose life he might be expected to be, and in fact was, with Fr. John's mother, the dominant personal influence ? First, he was a personality so marked and unusual as to have deserved and received

on his own merits an able and full-length biography.* Here then he can only be glanced at for what he meant to Fr. John. He was at that time somewhat Fr. Sullivan's senior and had had experiences curiously parallel to those that still lay before the latter. A fine scholar and not so good a teacher, he had been in too rapid succession Prefect of Studies in more than one college, and then Spiritual Father and Rector for two quite brief periods. It was as Novice Master, as a directly spiritual guide, an office he held for three long spells, that his gifts were best used and appreciated. What he did for Fr. Sullivan can, under one aspect, be summed up briefly and forcibly in the latter's own words, " Without him I'd never have stuck it." It is a sentence that puts the Society and many outside it deep in Fr. Browne's debt.

Next, he gave Fr. Sullivan both a model and inspiration for his own ascent to the heights. There can be few more dangerous methods of sanctification than to set out deliberately to imitate in detail and on a wide front anyone but Christ. True, St. John Berchmanns fashioned his soul to be an exact copy of the Aloysian masterpiece and perhaps improved on the example. But even St. John did not work, so to speak, from the living model. It is therefore all the more to the credit of both men, and especially to their humility, that Fr. Sullivan's very literal following of Fr. Browne was such a success. It is the secret of his inner life in the Society. The lesson and example of his novice master may be summed up, of course only approximately, as a neglect of himself and his own ordinary human needs and weaknesses, and the gift of himself to God and for God to his fellow-men.

The first involved self-denial, mortification, indifference in an heroic degree. Fr. Browne would rise at five and break his fast at ten with a few dry crusts and cold leavings of tea. Dinner was his only other meal. Fr. Sullivan throughout his life ate more plentifully, but never meat, never anything sweet or

*_Father Michael Browne, S.J. A man who took Christ at His word._ Fr. T. Hurley, S.J. (Clonmore and Reynolds.)

dainty or even varied. He took dry bread, milk-puddings, porridge lavishly—he liked it served in a soup plate—and cold water ; in short, as unappetising fare as possible. Lent and Eastertide, Sundays and festivals passed for Fr. John at least without relaxation or alteration. Fr. Browne's clothes were old and shabby, his gowns extensively made over. Fr. Sullivan seems almost literally to have had no new clothes during his religious life. He travelled in the clothes he stood up in, wearing his " gown " under his raincoat, carrying a change of shirt and night things in one pocket and breviary, crucifix and such like in the other. A boy watching him from a high window of an infirmary saw him washing out a pair of the coarse socks he usually wore and hanging them out to dry before a spark of fire.

Some five years after Fr. Sullivan came to Clongowes, in 1913 to be exact, a pair of inquisitive boys picked up an old pair of boots that stood between the double doors of his room. They were well brushed but very worn and patched. Their condition seemed to the boys a reflection on Fr. John's deserts. They decided to get him a new pair from his superiors by simply purloining and hiding the old ones. But hardly were they safely tucked away behind a lot of football boots in the large press used by the boys for their boots and shoes, when they were disconcerted by a vision of their owner entering the boys' corridor. He was evidently much perturbed at the disappearance of his boots. Almost by force he enlisted their help in his search. While, for prudent reasons, they delayed to find what they had hidden, they were taken aback to hear him declare, first, that the boots were his only pair, and second, that they were excellent boots, for had he not tramped " all over Greece in them, all over Macedonia "—twenty golden years ago ! The boots were quickly recovered amidst expressions of embarrassing gratitude.

Fr. Browne's penances were proverbial and perhaps exaggerated by rumour. Fr. Sullivan certainly imitated him here too

and to the end of his life, but both men knew well how to protect their secrets and a glimpse of chain or haircloth and the legacy of a discipline was all curiosity achieved. Fr. Browne was a man of great forthrightness and simplicity; and in this too the disciple was not behind the master. Neither of them could be cynical any more than they could be canting. They were utterly without respect of persons or any guile. They were, and Fr. Sullivan perhaps showed this most defiantly, without any false shame. If Fr. John said his rosary on a tram he took it out and fingered it openly and even audibly. He was a shy man, but never apparently shy of being discovered at prayer or diffident of offering " a good word in season." He had an almost aristocratic certainty of himself when it came to confessing God with unusual fervour.

Both men had remarkable gifts of prayer. All his religious life Fr. Sullivan haunted the chapel at every spare moment. A workman who by chance passed the chapel in Clongowes at 2 a.m. saw him within in prayer on his knees. On a Holy Thursday night he spent five or six hours kneeling before the Altar of Repose. A student who slept in the room beneath his Rector at Rathfarnham remembers that almost invariably if he woke in the night he could hear above him " the sacred mutter " of divine conversation, the occasional groans and sighs for which Fr. John's prayers were perhaps so often heard. For in that too he was like Fr. Browne. But while at first taken aback the young man came to pay no more attention than if the wind were whistling outside. It was just the Rector carrying on as usual—if he got up early enough, which was doubtful, he would certainly find his superior in the chapel before him, hunched a little, kneeling a little sideways, gripping the bench with white knuckles or swaying, unsupported, a hand occasionally running nervously through the thick locks, lost to everything, sometimes almost in agony, almost always importunate, but too common a spectacle to need a second glance. It was a sight hundreds of men and boys were to witness as the years

passed, always with a touch of initial awe, almost fear, but usually so often reiterated that they came to take it for granted.

The vigil in the presence of God, that was next to unceasing, was a vigil of Gethsemane perhaps, for Fr. Sullivan's first devotion was beyond question to the Passion of Our Lord. Always when he spoke in public, often in private, it was with his crucifix clasped in his bony hands. Often it was with his eyes fixed on it. Seldom at any time did he lift them for more than a quick glance, and especially when he preached, he did not look at his hearers but at the crucifix or the ground. And for all that he spoke warmly of all the mysteries of Our Lady's life on earth, it was evidently in her sorrows that she touched his heart most deeply. He would compare her tears for the sins of men with those of his favourite St. Monica for her Augustine and perhaps think, though he never said so in public, of those tears of his own mother to which he acknowledged his vocation was due. The Eucharist, the Passion, Our Lady, the Holy Spirit too, these were the objects of his devotions as they were of Fr. Browne's, solid, real devotions owing nothing to novelty or the fashions of the times. And if a constant use of the Fathers—Augustine, Ambrose, and his favourite St. John Chrysostom—can be called a devotion, that too. But above all, like that other distinguished convert, Claire Booth Luce, he was tireless in his application of St. Paul and he paid the other great doctors homage for their own dependence on Paul the Apostle born out of his time.

Fr. Browne is described by his biographer as a man loved and praised by his brethren in an unsurpassed fashion, since he himself had nothing but a good word for all, and was at the service of all. It was not the least of his lessons for Fr. Sullivan, as it is almost the first lesson a novice must learn. To be stern to oneself was in order, to be severe to others, a betrayal of Christ. Fr. Sullivan was, in fact, like Fr. Browne; for this reason especially, he was a good " community " man. Fr. Browne admitted openly to a practice for which he had saintly precedent. To

make routine recreations " go " he collected tit-bits of news or an entertaining anecdote. It was a doubtful expedient. Even his cheerful laugh could sound artificial. Fr. Sullivan may not have actually imitated this prepared entertainment, but he did try to play his part in maintaining a pleasant, even a gay, spirit. While the memories of his travels and legal experience were vivid he could use them ; he told, as his first biographer emphasised, not a few amusing anecdotes. He was a great believer in a rejoicing spirit. If he often tried to raise a companion's spirits in the most futile way simply by saying " cheer up, there now, cheer up," he also made every effort to be cheering. One story he told was of a troupe of elephants whose best trick was to open the circus by throwing their trunks back and trumpeting all together. In bleak spring weather they reached their stand in a small Irish town. The climate had taken its toll, they were sneezing and coughing, " speechless with the cold." A local handyman called in to help to erect tents, offered for a pound to cure them. He borrowed a couple of buckets of hot water and bought a couple of bottles of cheap whiskey. The treatment as prescribed did the trick, or rather the elephants did theirs superlatively. Big money was taken and a date fixed for a return. It came in a season of sun and soft breezes. The circus parade was glittering and musical, but alas, an hour before the show the clever beasts began to cough and to sneeze. To hear Fr. John tell that tale in his own abrupt way, with downcast eyes and a deprecating glance after the denoument was well worth while. But it was not really for the humour of the story that one listened. Dr. Johnson, it will be remembered, said that people went to a sermon preached by a Quaker lady as they would go to see a dog walk on his hind legs, not because it was well done, but because it was done at all. It was not so much that Fr. Sullivan's stories were amusing, as that they were told by Fr. Sullivan.

In speech Fr. Sullivan was charitable to a degree. Where he was not in authority he seemed incapable of even noticing an

abuse or an irregularity. Bad temper, or moodiness, or ill manners seemed to have no effect on his own friendliness. But it was not only nor primarily in words that his charity expressed itself. He was at anyone's service for the extra fatigues that every army has to undertake. A Prefect of Studies could count on him to invigilate, not perhaps very successfully, at an exam. or take over an absentee's class. A " scholastic " coming back on a winter's evening from some excursion would find his fire lit. A younger priest wanting to go off for the day would have the offer from Fr. Sullivan to take the boys off his hands for a free-day walk—a dull task in which he appeared to delight. And if a member of his staff went sick his care of them could be almost embarrassing.

Nor was it only light and easy services he would do. He could give help where lesser men might have hesitated. He could and did give support that required a generous mind and an unsuspecting courage. Fr. Sullivan was utterly incapable of sacrificing true spiritual interests to convention. In this context another of his pupils has left it on record that though he found Fr. John cold and dry in confession and did not therefore make him his regular confessor, nevertheless on several occasions when he approached him with questions Fr. John was decisive and clear-cut. There was no mistaking his advice. He neither hesitated for a decision or made any bones in giving it. Such a course was right ; you ought not to do such a thing. He had the courage of his strong convictions.

Armed then with such ideals and fired with such example from Fr. Browne, Fr. John passed on to the less important task of his professional studies. But whether at Stonyhurst or Milltown he abandoned nothing of his first noviceship fervour. On the contrary, it seemed in those years that the waters rose steadily behind the dam, and the pressure became, as he approached the years of his apostolate, even more potent. He was learning now and being tested in practice. Soon he would teach by word and example to others what he had learned, to priests

and nuns and sodalists in the retreats with which he occupied the school vacations, to the generations of boys and young men who came under his care, and last, but not least, to a whole community of the plain people of Ireland, a community which since his death has widened to embrace a nation and overflow its bounds.

The years of preparation closed with his Ordination in Milltown Park and his first Mass said in the neighbouring convent of the Irish Sisters of Charity, Mount Saint Anne's. It would be satisfactory to have some record of these days either from his own lips or pen, or even from someone who was present. There is none. His constant devotion to the Real Presence, his unostentatious fervour at Mass, his frequent appeals in sermons and retreats for a realisation of the greatness of a Catholic's privileges in this mystery are the only evidence of what the greatest of gifts meant to this most uncommunicative man.

VIII

THE DIRECTOR

His theological studies finished, Fr. Sullivan was posted in July 1907 to Clongowes Wood College. He was to teach classics in the Jesuit College in which conditions most closely approximated to those he remembered in Portora. But after two or three years he was, in addition to his work as a teacher, appointed to act as Spiritual Father to the boys and be immediately responsible for their religious formation. It is a moot point whether it is more difficult to succeed in a position a man who has personally neglected its duties, or one who, by exceptional gifts generously used, has made an exceptional success of his term of office. If the latter be the case, Fr. Sullivan had an invidious task before him, for he was to succeed Fr. Henry Fegan, S.J. For almost a lifetime, first in charge of discipline and games, and then as Spiritual Father, his predecessor had played a unique part in the life of the school. He had been ordained there, and had given it everything a man of most

remarkable gifts could bestow. In the new life to which he was passing as Director of Retreats in Milltown Park he was to yield an influence which formed men whose names will yet fill pages of the Church's history. But many would hold that his charisma, his special appeal, was to boys. This is not the place for a full account of him and here it need only be said that he was almost as different a man from Fr. Sullivan as two very holy priests can be. Fr. Fegan was gay, witty, versatile, an orator and an actor whose theatrical dramatics were saved only by his evident sincerity. Moreover, he was a subtle and tactful leader of boys, interested in their games, their daily life, their fortune at school and in the greater world. No intellectual, his appeal was never to the mind but to the heart, yet his own literary tastes made him not only supreme in his chosen field, a preacher of unique quality, but an inspiration even to scholarship. He had that combination of courage and charm that make a man popular with boys and grown-up boys. No master in Clongowes was ever more popular. This was evident at the School Centenary, when he received a far warmer reception and a more enthusiastic hearing than John Redmond, who was present. And this though the Irish leader, an old pupil of the school, was at the moment at the peak point of his powers, popularity and success.

Such was the man who was Spiritual Father for two years after Fr. Sullivan was sent to Clongowes to teach, and whose vacant office he had then to take. He had not Fr. Fegan's oratory, or his gifts of management. More obviously, he had not his humour, his gaiety, his gift for the happy phrase, his genuine interest in the " res angustae," the small change of school life, the day-to-day happenings in the classroom and playing fields. This was more serious. He tried, at least at first. He attended a debate but did not electrify it with a Fegan speech. He inquired about games and no doubt valued them. Indeed once he was heard, on the occasion when the Leinster Schools' Rugby Cup came to Clongowes, to describe it, and from the altar, as the greatest day in the school's history ! It was a strange aberration

and one of which Fr. Fegan would never have been guilty. He would have cheered on the touchline with the noisiest boy only to tell the school the next day (he could) that games were vanities, and perhaps to have compared the Sacred Leinster Cup to a tin mug chained to a public fountain. Had he not described the ribbons of " decorations " gained in war as mere gewgaws, no better than a few coloured threads unravelled from a football stocking ? Not for Fr. Sullivan such phrases, such leadership. Concerning the detailed lives of his boys his knowledge was academic, and his sympathy small. Above all Fr. Fegan valued his power to see with the eyes and feel with the hearts of those to whom he was sent. Fr. Sullivan's power to enter another's mind and world seemed in comparison negligible.

There is a story told of how Dr. Butler, then headmaster of the comparatively small school of Shrewsbury, said once to Warre, the towering figure who for thirty years dominated in aloof majesty the thousand scholars of Eton : " I make it my aim to know each boy in Shrewsbury personally before the end of his school career." To which Warre rejoined unanswerably : " Well, every boy in Eton knows me." Fr. Sullivan's influence in Clongowes was of that sort. No boy who was there with him, not the stupidest, the most insensitive, but knew with varying degrees of consciousness that he had once at least in his lifetime encountered sanctity. He had known a man wholly and completely given up to the service and love of God without thought of self, and with scarcely a thought for anything else. What made that impression, what won him a respect, even an admiration, as universal and deep and more remarkable than Fr. Fegan's popularity, is a much harder question to answer. Boys might have tired of the spiritual topics that were almost his only subjects of conversation, but they never doubted that he spoke of such things not from pose or show, scarcely even to edify, but because in such things his whole interest lay. His religious brethren found the same, they might

be amused or bored, but it was a vain effort to deflect his constant preoccupation with the need of souls, the approach of death, patience in suffering, generosity in sacrifice. Such reflections were the staple matter of his thought and conversation to the practical exclusion of all else. He had an immense desire to help all sufferers and in a special way the suffering souls in Purgatory. This had practical consequences : During the time he was Director of the Children of Mary Sodality, he habitually substituted the Office of the Dead, said for some deceased sodalist, for the ordinary Office of Our Lady. Scarcely a morning passed, but before saying the boys' Mass he would turn to his congregation and ask their prayers for the repose of the soul of some old boy of the school, or of a relative or connection of one. This could on occasion be depressing. He did not rail as reformers and philanthropists sometimes do at the indifference around him, but his own solicitude for the miserable could be disconcerting. It seemed true to say of him that while he forgot or was indifferent to his own sorrows and troubles, those of others were always before him.

One witty contemporary used till his own death to hold a delighted audience with a description of Fr. Sullivan's last Christmas dinner. The narrator, a man not averse from the good things of the table, sat beside the man of God. He had no hope of making him exchange his crumbled bread for a plate of turkey and ham. But at least the conversation might be festive. He had spent part of the day as usual visiting old friends in the small farmhouses near by. So had Fr. Sullivan it appeared. He had been farther afield. Over near the Reservoir he had called on a poor man whose wife had just died and left him " seven little children to bring up." His listener was sympathetic, but he hurried Fr. John on. It was no good. On his way home he had been in to see poor Bridget whom he had found " very low there " and he had called in another cottage where the mother of the family had cancer, " no hope at all, terrible way, poor thing." With an effort the subject was changed. A new

topic, one dear to the other Father's heart was started. He recalled old days, student vacations on the south and west coast, sunny days on golden beaches. Did Fr. Sullivan remember Glenbeigh? It was a mistake. Fr. Sullivan remembered it well. Indeed he found a promising likeness to a bay on one of the Greek Islands. Lesbos ? Mytilene ? Just such a day of sun, and as they left the shore a procession had come down the cliff steps to meet them, " all chanting, playing on pipes, carrying a lovely girl, there, sitting up in palanquin—quite dead there : a funeral procession, their way of burial." He remembered Glenbeigh well.

Told by the shrewd and humorous table companion, the almost repellant preoccupation with pain and sorrow and death had a certain lighter side to it. Boys joked about it too. The paradox of Fr. Sullivan's preoccupation with sorrow and suffering which nevertheless did not make him " a gloomy saint," is illuminated by a piece of advice one of them remembers. Lonely and a little homesick, he chanced to hear Fr. Sullivan offer a sure remedy for depression. That was just what he needed and he asked eagerly for this cure for " the blues." To his disgust the recipe was simply " Go and make the Stations of the Cross there. Splendid cure for depression." " How like these Jesuits " was his hearer's slightly jaundiced mental comment. Here he was pining for " pictures " or a " party," somewhere to go or something to do, and he was told to " make the Stations." But Fr. Sullivan was Fr. Sullivan and the youth at best in sore need. So to the chapel he went. To a friend years later he passed on Fr. Sullivan's secret ; the message of the sweetness in the Cross. " It worked. What's more, it always works. You try," was his succinct and still slightly astonished summing up. It was in the same boy's term of office as Rector of Clongowes a quarter of a century later that the windows of " The Boys' Chapel " were filled by Michael Healy and Miss Hone with the splendid stained glass which tells the story of Our Lady's Dolours. When they were in contemplation a great

artist suggested that such a subject in conjunction with Seán Keating's dramatic Stations already on its walls might be too overwhelming for boys, might give rise to a morbid obsession with pain and sorrow. But the Rector could afford to smile and dismiss the argument. He had learned Fr. Sullivan's lesson. The Dolours windows were put in. There has been no noticeable loss of high spirits among the boys to whom " the Cross of Christ, to the Jews indeed a stumbling-block and unto the Gentiles foolishness, but to them that are called the power of God and the wisdom of God " is thus preached fearlessly as Fr. Sullivan preached it.

For there was always a suggestion of comfort in Fr. John's own appreciation of the way in which hardship and pain could be used as the opportunities for Faith and Charity. There was even a comfort to find that someone who really believed this world was a vale of tears was quite undaunted by the fact. This Jesuit would never run away from ugliness, distress or pain. He had a use for them all. His own courage was never in doubt. If Fr. Fegan could laugh amid the spears Fr. Sullivan could weep and still be undaunted. It was common knowledge that in clothing, food and sleep he fared worse than the paupers he was anxious to relieve. His room was at the head of a staircase. Up and down it on its bare boards hundreds of boys tramped and clattered on their way to study or dormitory. The room was as cheerless as a slum and less cosy. Ill lit, furnished with a minimum of raw iron and painted deal, it had even in winter a black fireplace. The few books on its shelves were school texts or such unpromising utilities as a Bible, a set of breviaries, a ritual or one or two little books of meditations. It had not even an attractive ikon—one little carved group a few inches high of Christ teaching children was so inconspicuous that it was hard to believe after his death that it had ever been on the bare mantel. Not for him the cupboard approach. He did not invite a boy " to light up," or offer him a book or a sweet. Fr. Suarez' little press of dainties, Miss Nightingale's little dinners, her shower

of well-chosen gifts, were conspicuously absent. He bribed no one to come to him. You took your soul to Fr. Sullivan. He knew all about that. What he had to say might comfort and strengthen it, but it was often at the expense of bodily comfort. Yet it was not only the best boys who sought him out in his room. In his confessional where he knelt to hear the sins of others, the boys who were thought hard cases and tough came to be scolded and penanced and helped by the man whom they all knew and admired. Fr. Sullivan was not gloomy or a spoil sport. He was simply preoccupied with the things of God.

We get one vivid glimpse of him about this time. Just halfway through his time in Clongowes. A visiting Roman prelate had called to see the College. After lunch he and his hosts, and a Jesuit father who accompanied them, walked out of the front door to survey the splendid prospect of the long avenue leading to the west. As they stood there a figure emerged from the door of the " People's Church " and at a rapid pace made for a back door into the house. The Jesuit in the company had, however, spotted Fr. Sullivan and called out to him : " Fr. John, you are not going to pass an old friend that way ! " Reluctantly Fr. John came towards the groups, and in his hearing the other said to the prelate : " Your Grace, may I introduce you to our first-class saint. We have, of course, plenty of second and third-class saints, but this is our first-class one." As he said the words, which were not meant unkindly or mockingly, he could not help noticing how Fr. Sullivan, who was as usual dressed in the oldest and shabbiest of clothes, spotlessly clean, but with a green and threadbare coat and cracked boots, looked thoroughly abashed. He barely stopped long enough to acknowledge the Archbishop's genial greeting with a little formal bow. Then, muttering something about " not taking up the party's time," he was off again about his own ploy. As he vanished the Italian turned to the father and summed up in English idiom what so many felt and were to feel. " He looks the part," he said dryly. He did look the part.

His physical appearance at this time and until the end of his life conveyed to even a casual glance his austerity, his loneliness and the pressure at which he lived. It was awe-inspiring, even a little frightening. To look at him was a little like looking at El Greco's picture of St. Francis in the Dublin Gallery, or still more, the same painter's St. Jerome in Edinburgh. His features with the deep-cut lines, the drawn lips, the hair, though abundant, above a noble forehead, dry and thick, a dull brown, were a marked contrast to the silvered radiance, the bubbling over of the frail, delicate mite of a man who had been " Tim " to Fr. Fegan's boys. But their eyes were alike, very bright, a little shy, full of feeling, and that feeling kindness. Fr. Sullivan's eyes did not belie him. He was kind. One February morning towards the end of his life three boys started out on a free day from Clongowes for a trip to town. It was but a few minutes past eight when, nearing the village where they were to catch an early bus, they met Fr. Sullivan. He was forging along in his habitual pounding gait, half gallop, half shuffle. He did not stop. One conjectures he was on " a fasting call," bringing Holy Communion to some sick client. But as the boys passed him he gave them a flashing smile and threw them one sentence : " Have a good day now, enjoy yourselves and all that there." The sincerity and warmth of the wish on that cold morning remained a pleasant memory for twenty-five years.

It needed some courage and initiative to approach him, and oddly enough he rarely made the first approach to a boy. But once a boy turned to him for help he could feel complete confidence of his reception. It did not matter in the least to Fr. Sullivan what the boy's standing, reputation or history were. He might be, indeed he probably was, quite unaware of these. The captain of the school XV, the medalist, and exhibitioner, the lag of the lowest grade, the most unpopular boy in the house, if they came to him (and they did) were just so many souls to be helped. He met a man on the ground of the man's own choosing, to hear his own account of himself. It was not as a

master or a friend he offered himself, it was as a spiritual father, a confessor who knows his function is to take the place of Christ on the judgement seat, but the place of Christ the Teacher, the Healer, the Comforter who has not yet come to judgement. His very aloofness, his impersonality, were the strong points of his method. Deliberately or not they emphasised the equality of souls before God. His supernatural power was all the greater because he refrained from using it for temporal ends, even the best temporal ends. Was this a deliberate policy? It can be doubted. He rejected vehemently and indignantly advice on the management of boys which seemed to him hard and unsympathetic. He was not severe. Characteristically as a teacher he was too humble to imagine he could dispense with the corporal punishment which he saw men whom he admired make use of in their teaching. But he used it sparingly.

His expectations of schoolboys were high and he complained of their bad conduct in terms that seemed humourless. "Audacious" was a favourite adjective he used to describe mere mischief, and sometimes less. But the boys in fact knew well he did not want to get them into trouble or have them punished. And of course he never tried to get another to do his "dirty" work, and his animadversions were taken as he must have known, lightly by his brethren and only too lightly, even gaily, by the senior boys. He was not a scold, even in exhortation, still less in private dealing. Nevertheless anyone who approached him knew that he took his sins and troubles and plans to a man who was the very opposite of a prophet of smooth things. One went to him to receive utterly unworldly advice and that in itself was an attraction. Again one may ask how far it was deliberate.

One student of his class, a thorn in his side, for he was clever enough to have much spare time to devote to fooling, tells how, towards the end of a school career in which he and the Spiritual Father had scarcely met, Fr. John stopped him. "Well," he said, "what are you going to do when you leave?" "Law, Father," he replied. "An attorney or an advocate?" enquired

the Victorian Barrister-at-Law. "A solicitor, Father," answered the meek boy. "As soon as you are qualified then," came the surprising advice, "write a big book, a big learned book, doesn't matter what it's about, a big learned book, excellent start to a law career." Was he thinking of his own classical writings ? It may well have been. But the boy whom Fr. Sullivan could not easily have surprised was taken aback. Afterwards he would say in jest, "Fr. Sullivan knew me, he knew spiritual advice would be wasted on me, so he was charitable enough to give me the only cynical and worldly advice he ever offered. He meant me to get on in this life if I couldn't get on in the next." As far as records or memories go it was a unique sort of advice for Fr. Sullivan to give. It was taken and proved its value. It stands to show that Fr. Sullivan's refusal to be drawn at all into the ways of the world was not because he was unequal to cope with it. It is tempting from it to conclude that his aloofness was therefore deliberate and in no sense the result of natural simplicity or inexperience. But certainly it was his unworldliness that told most of all. What impressed most was the fact that he seemed unwilling to be at all impressive. Boys knew from hearsay that he had given up much to be a Jesuit. They could see for themselves that he had rescinded nothing. When he spoke of the Greater Glory of God as the right end of all action he was, though he seemed quite unaware of it, a very obvious, almost too obvious, example of a man with no other purpose. They had not to go out into the desert to see a man clothed in shabby clothes, living on a minimum of unpalatable food and crying without ceasing "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight His paths." Some did prepare and some passed by, but almost all knew that they had encountered a prophet and more than a prophet. For a lifetime they would have the immense advantage of knowing beyond denial, or even question, that real holiness, absolute surrender to God, was not just a theoretic possibility, but something practical and real, something they themselves had seen and

heard and handled. It was almost frightening, but it was comforting and strengthening too. And it was Fr. Sullivan's gift to all the boys, even to those who never gave him the opportunity to offer any other. " Sir," said one of the boys to a master the day after Fr. John's death, " Isn't it a great thing to be able to say that you were taught by a saint ? And the funny thing is that we knew it even when we pulled his leg."

IX

THE TEACHER

His work as a classical master was of subordinate importance to his position as Spiritual Father. Had it not been that the foundation of his Jesuit vocation was the realisation of the importance of a teacher's work it might be passed over almost in silence. The simple fact, early in evidence, was that Fr. Sullivan was yet another example of the fine scholar who was a poor teacher. He never succeeded in conveying to boys anything of his own enthusiasm for the classic authors. On the contrary, it seemed odd to a boy that he, of all people, should value the chronicles of the conquests, Caesar and Livy and Sallust. The worldly maxims of Horace or Cicero's *De Senectute* seemed almost as foreign to him as the nonsense of gods or goddesses that seemed so interesting to Virgil. It puzzled his pupils to imagine what interest these could be to him or them. Beyond these authors his course did not go. It is almost

pitiful to find him asking a friend off on an Italian journey to bring him a picture of the town of Taranto to help him to understand better Livy's description of the siege. The boys he taught wanted to get their Matriculation, or some of them did. Taranto and its siege interested them less than Timbuctoo. Most of them had a cordial hate for the grammar and composition that had played too large a part in their Latin experiences and it would have required genius to give them such glimmerings of Imperial majesty as might have made their studies more than a penance.

Not that Fr. Sullivan really expected their classical studies to be much more than penance. Grim experience must have taught him the price paid by some who exercise " the apostolate of the chalk." In that very unscholastic classic, *The Lighter Side of School Life*, Ian Hay, once a schoolmaster himself, lays down the simple proposition that the foundation of pedagogy is order in the class-room. The most ignorant or the stupidest of ushers who can keep order will teach boys something, or at least force them from sheer boredom to teach themselves something, which amounts to much the same. The finest scholar, the most lucid or pungent speaker will avail absolutely nothing if he cannot achieve and retain his pupil's attention. The first necessity of good teaching is that measure of peace necessary to enable the mind to hear itself or listen to another. It must be conceded that by this most realistic of standards Fr. Sullivan was not a successful teacher. What he might have been able to do with a select group of clever and ambitious boys is anyone's guess. No-one in authority with such a group to train ever thought it worth while to gamble with Fr. John. So year after year it was large, noisy Matriculation or very Pass Leaving Certificate classes that he faced, boys very much bored with Latin—stale from years of it—" the best years of their lives," they might have said grimly, boys often rather unwilling than stupid. They might have heard of his double firsts, his medals or his classic research though certainly not from him. Probably

they had not heard. In any case it would have made no difference for they, like Gallio, cared for none of these things.

Most of them did want to get an exam if only to effect a speedy escape from all subsequent exams, but they quite rightly considered that the labours requisite for this were not a whole-time job and with the margin they might try however unpromisingly to amuse themselves. They certainly respected Fr. Sullivan the man and the priest unconditionally. It saved him no doubt from being ragged beyond a point, personal impertinence being absolutely barred. But they retained their habitual attitude to teachers and teaching, and they dissipated themselves as far as the sanctions of home disapproval or higher authority's occasional intervention allowed. One boy, much too bright to have ever been selected for that galley, recalled, years after, how he invariably sat in a front bench with another like-minded ruffian. For foil the pair had a good earnest soul handicapped by a very slow wit. The villains had their bench and desks so rigged (a few screws removed and pocketed did the trick) that at any moment they could command its collapse. Almost every day the " accident " took place. The desks were reported faulty, repaired and almost immediately sabotaged again. Sometimes it would happen when Fr. John himself would be construing, sometimes it would rescue a companion under awkward cross-examination. Sometimes the victims would be so violently discharged at their master's feet as to roll about the floor, at other times they would be to all appearances seriously hurt. Protests or scolding they met with indignation against their innocent companion who was accused of engineering the fall or against the authorities who they alleged neglected or scamped repairs. Even kind-hearted sympathy with what appeared terrific knocks they repaid with clownish tenderness to their victim or the clumsiest and most protracted efforts at restoration. It made amusing reminiscences afterwards at table in the refectory, but it certainly did not make for a mastery of Horace.

How did Fr. Sullivan react to all this ? It must be remem-

bered he had come to the Society to teach ; and, for all he lacked what in the armed forces is called simply " power of command," he was no simpleton to be thus made a fool of and not to know it. Well, first of all he did not give in, he taught, and just such classes, almost to the last day of his life, and he took his duties very seriously. He was always ready to supplement his class work with private coaching. He had in fact perhaps too great a faith in the method, but it remained that at the maximum expense of his own time and energy he was invariably prepared to " cram " the most backward or stupid boy to help him to get the credentials he needed. For the rest his pupils believed he brought other weapons to play. They were superstitiously anxious to get him on the eve of exams to spot a passage and construe it, or even select a piece of unseen to " prepare." They thought it was almost infallibly, even miraculously sure to " turn up " on the paper. They who had perhaps better claims to his curse, demanded his prayers for their success. And he was truly interested in the poor lads who needed their " matric " to be good doctors or civil servants or engineers, or to please their parents before they took to the farm or the business. In a surprising number of cases they did pass the test. This explains perhaps why Fr. Sullivan who offered himself to God as a teacher remained a teacher to the end. Did he feel the failure, the humiliation ? He must have. But for him a rule which urged the acceptance of humiliation deserved or undeserved, coming unsought and without scandal to his neighbour, was not just a lofty ideal in a book. It was the law of the life which he had made his own, at least from the time when he first made the Exercises of St. Ignatius and begged Christ to choose him to share His poverty, hardship and humiliation if it were His gracious Will.

One young man, a former pupil, a former subject of his, was rash enough to test it. He had lately joined the staff at Clongowes from Philosophy. He had a good University degree and by one of those exigencies of " regulating " he had been assigned

the senior and honours classes in a couple of subjects, though it was his very first year teaching. One day he came into the community library. There he found Fr. Sullivan alone, consulting a book. The devil entered him. " Father," he said without preamble, " I want a word with you. You know I've been assigned the really important classes and I want to do my duty by them, but (and this was actually a lie) you are making it very hard for me. How can I or my boys concentrate with the noise and disorder they hear going on next door." Fr. Sullivan's response was instantaneous. He did not excuse himself or explain that the picture was manifestly exaggerated. His class was not, in fact, noisy in that way. Still less did he put the insolent young man who had but lately been his own subject in his proper place. Far from it. With really evident joy he said his *mea culpa* : " Quite right now, very sorry to be a trouble to you ; try to do better in future, try to keep better order—not the poor boys' fault there—mean well, so they do; all my fault; do my best in future." Nor did the appalled young man who had meant to explain his dubious joke dare then or ever to enlighten him. The deception would certainly have pained Fr. John and he might have been outspoken on such trifling with the truth. But the loss of his humiliation might have pained him more. Fr. John was a man then securely armed against failure. He was invulnerable. Even his deficiencies could not harm him.

A pupil of his early days recalls vividly enough just such an exaggerated denunciation as the young teacher feared and shirked. Fr. Sullivan had come across a note written by a boy who was destined to be a distinguished priest and author. His style on this occasion was more forceful than elegant. " You big-mouthed Dublin Jackeen," the boy had scribbled, " give me back my pen or it will be worse for you." A Dubliner himself, he probably considered this mild enough for the occasion, but Fr. Sullivan thought differently. " Terrible language, terrible language altogether ! " he declared. " Wouldn't think there'd be a boy in the school would use such language : terrible

thing for a Clongowes boy there to write such language to another boy!" The astonished class—for they were small boys—could only gape. Even they had their suspicions that schoolboys, and not only their seniors, could do better or worse than that. They did not develop false consciences, but they did thus get a glimpse of a very delicate one. Fr. Sullivan had read, who shall say too literally, the warning not to call one's brother a fool. Certainly he never did. His favourite description of a dead or absent person seemed to be "a saint."

The same pupil remembers how some years later the Spiritual Father turned as he did almost every morning before Mass to ask the boys' prayers for someone recently dead. This time it came as a bit of a shock, for the dead man had been in the school but a very short time before, and had died almost before he reached manhood. At school he had been popular enough, but both rough and insubordinate beyond the average. The boys believed he had been expelled, certainly he had left school early. It was as a tribute therefore to Fr. Sullivan's charitable mind and tongue, rather than to the dead man's character and reputation, that his astonished contemporaries interpreted the Spiritual Father's description of the dead as "a walking saint." This power to see the good, almost the invisible good, in others, was certainly characteristic of Fr. John. Living with him in daily contact for years, a fellow Jesuit recalls that not a half a dozen times did he hear him animadvert on the conduct of *anyone,* and never in a serious matter. The boy then who had heard him denounce the vocabulary of a schoolboy note, already knew him well enough to interpret his true mind towards the offender, and gave it as his opinion that the lively youngsters of that same class, though often nonplussed by Fr. Sullivan's methods and his apparent devotion to Eutropius, were well aware how innocuous was his reiterated "I'm watching you X, I'm watching you." "We never," he added, "indulged in that ragging which we knew we could have done with impunity—our affection and respect for him was too great."

X

THE SUPERIOR

THEN, without warning, a surprising thing happened. On July 27th 1919 Fr. John Sullivan was appointed Rector of Rathfarnham Castle. The house had been in Jesuit possession less than ten years. The building, now used as a Workingmen's Retreat House and the Third Year Noviceship, had not yet been erected. Crowded into the old country residence of the Protestant Archbishops of Dublin, less than a score of Jesuit students followed courses at the National University. They lived with a small community of Fathers. Of these none were directly connected then with the University but they numbered, or had numbered, such men as Fr. Lambert McKenna, the Gaelic Scholar; Fr. O'Leary, the pioneer Seismologist; Fr. Darlington, like Fr. Sullivan himself a convert and a former University Don; and Fr. Willie Doyle, who had been attached, at least externally, to the house at the time of his death in

Flanders. It was a small community, still in the experimental stage. It lived a little informally and under improvised conditions, but with all the advantages of first fervour.

It is fairly safe to say that Fr. Sullivan's appointment as Superior came as a surprise to most of his Religious brethren, as well as to himself. He was in Clongowes at the time and seemed settled to the routine which was later to become second nature to him. His appointment was made public on St. Ignatius' Feast. On that occasion there were announced, simultaneously with his elevation, a considerable number of changes for others, changes of both place and work. One who was present remembers how, when Fr. Sullivan's appointment was read out, there was a spontaneous expression of pleasure and congratulation, and when a few minutes later he slipped away from the assembly there was a burst of applause. He did not look back but quickened his pace almost to a trot and escaped with a slightly hunted air of confusion.

It was not his way to question the wisdom of Superiors' appointments. Neither then or later did he make an exception of his own case. A biographer who fails to imitate him would be a daring man. But he might conjecture that the Provincial of the time, Fr. T. V. Nolan, who was presumably primarily responsible, though the appointment was by Fr. General's patent, had a double object in view. The House founded by himself would receive in Fr. Sullivan, coming as its head, a University scholar of unquestionable quality. Fr. Nolan, himself a President of the Classical Association of Ireland, must have appreciated fully Fr. John's scholarship. He may have reckoned on it to have fruitful effect both directly and by giving him prestige. Young men, even Jesuit students, may be pardoned if, while in College, they attach an exaggerated value to the very highest academic distinctions. But Fr. Nolan had also been Fr. Sullivan's Rector when the latter first took up duties as Spiritual Father in Clongowes, so he was probably also animated by a sure hope that his example and direction would make a lasting impression

on his young subjects. Both these good ends were in fact to some extent achieved.

Fr. Sullivan took his appointment, as has been said, very simply. His own years of formation in the Society had been brief and under good rule. In the Noviceship, as we have seen, under that saintly Master, Fr. Michael Browne, in Milltown Park under an equally devoted personality, Fr. Peter Finlay, for thirty years a theological Professor of repute and even renown, but a Superior only for a short time. Neither man gave him the ideal example ; and he was too humble a man to dismiss example. Fr. Browne had been notoriously severe in his personal mortifications and a little too preoccupied to check the natural excesses to which such practices might lead others. Fr. Sullivan imitated him in this. It was probably the period of his greatest austerity. He was now at the helm himself and to some extent independent in matters of mortification. The young men saw him subsist on a diet of dried bread and potatoes, a heaped soup plate of porridge and a big helping of unappetising soft rice. They knew he never touched dainties or even the more palatable and nourishing foods. They knew in the severest winter he had no heating in his high corner room. Rathfarnham Castle was an ancient fortress and the place was gaunt and draughty. Sometimes they saw him break off his labour and go down the few steps of passageway to a little drying-room where there was a boiler. He went, not to warm the dry, cracked hands, which always looked blue with cold, but to cling for a moment to a hot copper cylinder till some warmth returned to the very vitals of his body—then back to work. It might, to some weaker ones, have suggested itself that such mortification was pure folly. Indeed it might, by provoking a reaction, have done harm. But in general it did not work that way. The young men rode on bicycles in all weathers into College after an early breakfast, and at two o'clock and later pushed wearily home to their next meal. They might jokingly call the dry biscuits they ate with a last cup of tea about six o'clock " identity discs " and

sigh for a bit of bread and butter, but they did not complain. And whatever might be thought of a Superior who apparently didn't notice such things, his men were not noticeably affected in health, nor ineffectual scholars. Nor were they likely to think too much of themselves for any little sacrifices they made.

More serious perhaps was Fr. Finlay's influence. He had been Fr. John's superior in a house of theological studies where things ought to be, and were, somewhat different to the régime imposed on students at a public University. Yet this seems never to have occurred to Fr. Sullivan. One of his students remembers how he felt when his Professor, Miss Mary Hayden, being one day in a reminiscent mood, began to describe the chats she had with Fr. Sullivan when he was at Trinity and later. He used, she remembered, to gather a little coterie in his room to talk modern Greek and drink real Turkish coffee—" He made it by a special rite of his own, and it was a great point with him." That was a very long time ago, thought the young man.

Nor was Fr. Rector's simple and literal interpretation of his duties without its inconveniences. He had found in the Jesuit Constitutions a prescription which commanded newly-appointed Rectors to teach the Catechism to children for forty days. On his arrival at Rathfarnham he discovered a little group of the students who gave up their one free morning to teach catechism to the children in the parish church after last Mass. They had obtained leave to do so only with difficulty, for Fr. Sullivan's commonsense predecessor liked to see students go out for a long walk at the week-end. Fr. Sullivan, however, heartily approved of the plan. Moreover he decreed that this voluntary service should be obligatory on all. And he persisted in his determination to do this, although the student-catechists made it quite plain to him that their own leave to work had been obtained only on condition that their activities should be and should remain voluntary. Their representations indeed were not only unheeded but, when they persisted, treated as a form of insubordination. It was not until it was pointed out to him that

in this matter he was proposing to alter the régime laid down for students in the Jesuit Constitutions that he gave way. Some at least of those who had stood out felt themselves thereafter under a cloud of his unreasonable displeasure. It can well be imagined that it was with some consternation that the young catechists who continued the work discovered that he meant to share their labours week by week. It was in any case something of an ordeal for an undergraduate to stand up and deliver a little homily to benches packed with restless, if excellently intentioned, boys and girls. The inclusion on the back bench of one's audience of a venerated and deeply-learned priest—who was also one's Superior—was bound to be disconcerting. Perhaps it need not have been so. The young men in fact soon realised with some surprise and embarrassment that Fr. Sullivan was not there at all as a critic or even adviser. Quite simply, he was diligently and gratefully occupied picking up a few crumbs from the table which they furnished for the youngsters. All the same, it made one but the more conscious of how poor was the fare one provided ! Thus a service almost too light-heartedly undertaken had become a burden and even a grievance.

Fr. Rector's own homilies remained to many of his students a lasting memory. He was, as might have been expected, most assiduous in this respect. He undertook in this matter a task usually, and perhaps more wisely, left to a Spiritual Father ; and he scarcely allowed himself or his hearers such normal interruptions of this kind of exercises as serve to avoid monotony. The University student in term-time hears, in his own opinion at least, a sufficiency of lectures ; and Fr. Sullivan made little concession to human weakness. It is doubtful if he had read, or reading would have accepted, the dictum of Fr. James Laynez, St. Ignatius' friend and successor, and perhaps the most valued preacher of the early Society, that an essential aim of a preacher is to please. But when he took his place at the top of the table in their conference room, his hands gripping the crucifix which his eyes never left, he was a living sermon. He scarcely

ever touched, as a Superior might be expected to do, on day-to-day topics of discipline or formation. Nor were the talks ordinarily instructive or learned despite the familiarity with Scripture and the Fathers which they effortlessly displayed. No, they were "ferverinos," devotional outpourings, sound of course, exalted, and often beautiful, if entirely without art. Delivered at too frequent and regular intervals, such talks often failed for lack of a corresponding mood in his hearers. But it would have been strange if his words on the Holy Spirit or devotion to Our Lady of Dolours had never struck fire. When they did, the effect was all his own. It was untranslatable, even puzzling, but quite unmistakable.

As a spiritual guide in those first years, after the promulgation of the Code of Canon Law of 1917, he may have been somewhat hampered by the temporary suspension of the Jesuit Superior's fundamental right to manifestation. Certainly he did not usually invite confidences. But to those in obvious grief or trouble he was equally obviously kind and sympathetic. He was always completely accessible if a little awe-inspiring. One young man in scruple or difficulty, who took very literally his rights in search of peace, used to approach him almost every day for month after month, desiring Confession before Mass. He has left on record, that day after day Fr. Sullivan bore the interruption of his own prayer and a monotonous story with perfect patience and kindness, never trying to short-circuit or deflect his inconvenient client. This seemed to him all the more remarkable as the confessor had neither special advice or encouragement to offer, nothing but Absolution and the grace of the Sacrament, and during that time the penitent himself believed he made no progress.

If Fr. Sullivan thus discharged, even too meticulously, one part of the task to which he had been appointed, his other function as head of a house of studies also occupied him. He did not nag. He expected serious work from serious students, and getting it he seemed invariably satisfied. He did not make

too much then, or ever, of examination success, but he could be pleased and proud of his men and give them the impression that he regarded their honours as a just reward. A classic scholar, he was most interested in classics. The shortcomings in this respect of men brought up under a different régime worried him. He thought of their future priestly studies and was inclined, not perhaps wisely, to try to re-introduce them to Cicero. He was perfectly prepared and eager to coach most unpromising material. One student of chemistry found himself reluctantly and ruefully but irresistibly engaged in a bi-weekly struggle with his Superior and an *Elementa Latina*, and he may have missed confidently expected honours partly as a result. Even "the classics" whom he undertook to tutor—and he made it very difficult indeed to avoid the offered service—found his teaching hard to assimilate with the studies which they were pursuing in College. Furthermore he lived as always in a world somewhat remote from the daily duties and pleasures of those around him. It was evident that to him the ideal University student was much the same as the ideal novice. That they were men who in the world would have been shouldering mature responsibilities, entering the professions and founding families, seems never to have occurred to him.

Sometimes this had its amusing aspects. For sometimes Fr. John was hoisted on his own petard. One of those who was a university student under him remembers an incident of the sort. It was just after the First World War. Fr. Finn, an American Jesuit whose books for boys were best-sellers for a lifetime, had called at Rathfarnham, a welcome though unexpected guest. He was brought by the Superior to meet his young men. Fr. Finn was at the time stationed in the Jesuit residence in Cincinnati, and had apparently been giving the Fathers assembled in recreation an account of the progress of the Church there, for Fr. Sullivan announced him as—"Fr. Finn here . . . will tell you all about the conversions in Cincinnati, and the baptisms." But the American had evidently summed up his

host, and was out for a little fun. " Certainly, Father, certainly I will," he said ; " but," turning to the young men, " first I must tell you boys the state of things in Cincinnati." There was it appeared a curse called Prohibition laid on the town. This total abstinence was, it seemed, the cause of frightful but exciting things in the way of smuggling and gang wars. The more Fr. John tried to interrupt the visitor's lurid chronicle with a request for baptisms and conversions, the more necessary it became apparently, that the young men should understand the situation. Before Fr. Finn got, as he repeatedly promised to do, to the narrative of spiritual achievements, he felt it incumbent on him to explain what " mobsters " did when they " took you for a ride " because you'd been " hi-jacking booze " or hadn't paid for " protection." A most enjoyable session was had by all but the disappointed Superior, who was of course a total abstinence enthusiast. When at its close Fr. Finn was led away after a final and devastating bad-man tale, his audience waited for their defeated Superior's summing up. It was characteristic : " Wonderful holy man there, Fr. Finn : Doing tremendous work for God there in Cincinnati : Baptisms there, conversions now and all that : Man of God there, wonderful work ! "

But in sum total the tendency to think of his spiritual children as mere children was harmful. For their part he spoke habitually so little of his own past, that it was possible to develop towards him an attitude rather like that of the child who cannot remember that his father and mother were children once. The parents themselves seem to have forgotten their youth so completely that it is but natural for the children to think of them as eternally aged. Fr. John's students knew he *was* a scholar but it seemed irrelevant. One of his subjects recalls with amusement that when he expressed his intention of attending a lecture on the excavations at Timgad, which Fr. Henry Browne, S.J., then Professor of Greek, had advised as an inaugural for the College Classical Society, there was some consternation. His fellow

Jesuits did not doubt the young Jesuit Auditor's ability, but like the Girl Guide who was afraid of the impression which the Lieutenant-General, her papa, would make upon her Scoutmistress, they were uneasy about their Rector. It was something of a shock to see the big men of their academic world, the visiting Professors and the pundits of the Classical Association of Ireland crowd round him to renew old acquaintance. It mattered less then that he would rather frighten the young lady who offered him sugar cakes with his tea ; or even that he would himself be a little frightened at her presence there at all.

Fr. Sullivan was not really petty or suspicious. He gave his young men his confidence. If his shabby clothes, his unconventionally public piety, disturbed some of them, it was his theoretic views on seminarists and remembrances of Fr. Finlay's régime that were inconvenient and even harmful. His subjects realised that his failure to grasp the situation was partly due to their own shortcomings. They might sigh or even groan at some new and characteristic attitude to a cherished custom or plan approved by other Superiors, but they did not criticise him personally. They found nothing in him really to criticise, everything to admire, and something perhaps to love. But even they could hardly fail to see that not only was he lacking, utterly lacking, in experience of government, but he had none of its arts. He was uncompromising. He was a legalist. And more seriously, he seemed to scorn, or rather be unaware of the common practice of good men faced in the past with a like task.

A second in command, Wellington used to aver, was the War Office's way with generals they did not trust. The Minister in the houses of the Society is not a second in command and the parallel is rather with Captain and Commander on a battleship. But it is probably true that in giving Fr. Sullivan Fr. Richard Campbell as his Minister during those years in Rathfarnham, higher Superiors wished him to have the benefit of one who had long experience of the Society and whose undeviating character and clear mind understood perfectly the

value of rule, custom, and imponderable tradition. The precaution proved useless. The Minister obviously failed completely to influence a Rector who worked rather from first principles than from precedent, and who rode rough-shod on a good many small liberties and amenities which had been proved in practice no obstacle to discipline. At the same time it is probable that without Fr. Campbell's restraining influence Fr. Sullivan might have gone further in such innovations as his enforced coaching or his frequent public exhortations. He owed here, as throughout his life in the Society, a great deal to the appreciation of men who might be temperamentally his opposites but who fundamentally shared the same over-ruling purpose, and worked For the Greater Glory of God irrespective of differences of method. He was thus to some extent saved from himself.

XI

THE PRIEST

In 1924 Fr. Sullivan's period as Rector of Rathfarnham came to an end. The five years in Gaza at the mill were done. They showed decisively that, whatever might have been expected, his proper sphere of influence was not his native city. An experiment was written off. He spent a few months at routine work in the Jesuit Church in Dublin and then he went back to Clongowes in his old capacity as Spiritual Father to the boys, and a classical master on the staff. It would be wrong probably to say that his Rathfarnham experience had in any real way altered a character by now fixed and hardened. If in later years his personal austerities were a little milder, they still obviously went as far as obedience would permit and were in fact so unusual as to be something of a reproach to those with whom he lived. In his humility he was certainly not conscious of that fact. He trusted to the guidance of confessor and

Superior, men faced with the unwelcome task of regulating the practices of a fellow religious, a man evidently as mature in grace as in years. Certain it is that by the time he returned to Clongowes in 1924, to spend there the last eight and a half years of his life, the pattern was unalterably fixed.

Men, perhaps most of all great men, are the products of their age and environment. Sometimes they embody and give expression to the current ideas and standards in thought and conduct. Less frequently they are in acute and conscious revolt from them and this also conditions their lives.

Fr. Sullivan had been born the child of the prosperous upper classes in the heyday of Victorian prosperity. To the people of that generation it seemed enough that a gentleman should be a gentleman. He was a good man if he drank in moderation, was above bribery, was courteous to women, and a faithful if exacting husband. That he should be truthful and loyal to his pledged word or a party tie or to the claims of kin or friendship, was expected and admired. If he embraced the profession of arms or rode to hounds he must be physically brave. In no circumstances might he show himself craven. Nothing more was really expected of him and more was scarcely approved. The ideal was definitely negative. History books might point out the decay of a French aristocracy which had become ornamental instead of useful. The attitude of the age remained, notwithstanding, completely tolerant of the gentleman who could not soil his hands with work or business, and whose occupation was often mere pleasure-seeking and at best a hobby. A too successful career in the money-making world that was not definitely banned : banking, brewing, shipping, factory or mine-owning at a distance, was perhaps as much envied as despised. Young men joined the Guards or the Hussars for social reasons, just as they might go into diplomacy for the same cause if they felt a taste or talent for foreign travel or foreign languages—an eccentric taste, perhaps, but a pardoned eccentricity. Such people were seldom called on to fill a form of any

kind, but on how many Birth and Baptism Certificates was the father's occupation not blandly given as "Gentleman" or "private means." "Private means," the possession of a sufficiency of unearned wealth to enable one without toil to enjoy the society of one's equals, and to follow in an amateurish fashion whatever hobby or inclination one possessed—that seemed the good life, not only to its possessors, but to the majority of their fellow-men who willingly or unwillingly made it possible. Men-about-town were not a despised but an admired and numerous class. That wealth was a responsibility as well as a pleasure, might be admitted in theory, though Drummond, the Irish Chief Secretary, had but recently incurred a storm of opposition by saying it openly. In practice, to act on it was to be in danger of being thought a "radical." Sound, good-living men denounced fanaticism and enthusiasm in the same breath and rather more severely than they condemned heartlessness or vice.

Fr. Sullivan was the child of his age. His youth and early manhood had, despite an unusual earnestness and simplicity, followed the usual routine. His father's position and wealth had been allowed to make life easy. He had, perhaps without knowing it, enjoyed more than he earned; the long years of study he might repay by scholarship or teaching, but even when they were past he appeared to have no mind to use his talents for the good of his fellows. The gentleman who did not join the army often took a law degree, as an ornament or a mild preparation for estate management or Parliament. Fr. John, whose nobility was of the robe and who had no estates, seems not to have contemplated a serious legal or political career, for which in fact he was singularly unfit. But with the British Empire in its heyday, there were plenty of less exacting ways of living. They were ways in which a gentleman might complacently earn a little money and a mild prestige without sacrifice or fatigue, indeed pleasurably occupied. No doubt something remained of his mother's influence and his school training to

contradict such an easy philosophy. But he had reached middle age before it became clearly insufficient for him.

Nor did he at any time alter it under the influence of the new ideology of the service of humanity for its own sake. That appears to have been as remote from his thoughts as it was from the mind of the greatest English reformer of his age, Lord Shaftesbury. For in Fr. Sullivan's case also it was not the brotherhood or service of man that became the dominant note in his life but the Fatherhood of God, revealed by His Son, born of a human Mother. In this connection it is surely significant that when in the years before the War ideals of social reform were boiling over in Ireland, and the great strikes brought home to many the social injustices of the time, Fr. Sullivan was not, it would seem, more closely touched by such things than he was by the national and cultural revolutions which succeeded them. He was Spiritual Father in Clongowes in 1913 when the formation of the first Social Study Club was mooted by one of the masters and the boys introduced to work for the welfare of the less privileged of their brethren. He gave it his blessing but no more, never, it would appear, attending its meetings or speaking in public or private of its activities. When he returned to Clongowes in 1924 it was still in existence, though a shadow of its former self; even then he took no thought of its support or revival, and it apparently never occurred to him that it offered at least one useful medium to practice that Catholic Action for which Pius XI, then gloriously reigning, so insistently appealed.

But for all the truth of that picture, there had happened in Fr. Sullivan, with the new sense of religion, a complete change of outlook. Uncompromising is the adjective that springs to the mind considering his later life. He had utterly finished with his early purposeless life of the gentleman at large. His days and his powers belonged now to God and were certainly not to be employed for his own ease or pleasure. Of course the physical side of this revolution was the most obvious. The once well-

dressed man in the shabby patched gown and old boots, the host at special coffee or wine parties crumbling his dry bread at the feast, the lover of travel and the sunny Mediterranean settling down in the Midlands that are sodden and unkind, not only with never a holiday, but with never a fire to warm his room against the long east winds, going on his spiritual errands completely heedless of the driving rain and snow that swept the unsheltered bog roads. This abandonment of physical comfort was there for all to see. It was pushed to extremes that aroused comment though not criticism—comment that was seldom, if ever, made to his face. These extremes were only saved from the stigma of eccentricity by the examples of the saints and his known obedience.

But the surrender of the inner man was, if necessarily less obvious, really more remarkable. Fr. Sullivan was, to all who knew him well and thought of his dedicated way of life, a man in utter contrast to the Edwardian gentleman of leisure. On the contrary, he was a man who denied himself equally all natural pleasures. It goes without saying that he neither smoked nor drank, never listened to music or a wireless, never in those years read an entertaining book for pleasure or went to a play or or a film. He had never as a Jesuit any recreation such as a game or a hobby. He did not draw, or fish, or play golf or cards. If he was ever interested in art or antiquities that interest died. Even though the love of nature is so often the first pleasure of the solitary, the poet and the philosopher, the landscape in its rich variety of mood and dress, seemed to pass before him unnoticed and certainly provoked no comment. In this he was another Francis Xavier, who had never a word to describe the Spice Islands of the Pacific, the knife-edged fiery hills of Japan, beast, bird or butterfly of the Indian jungle. Fr. John had seen the oldest and loveliest of European lands. He had holidays by the most cherished of Ireland's treasured lakes, mountains, and coasts. He lived under the magic changing skies of the bog, but one who passed many years under the same roof with him never heard

him utter a single descriptive phrase to do homage to beauty. Nor did statue or picture or music, ordinarily at least, stir him to speech. The nostalgic description of Portora we have quoted is all the more significant because it is unique or almost unique. He might look at newspapers but merely to glance at the columns of births or deaths. Winter nights never saw him sit down for a *téte-à-téte* chat with a friend. Nor did summer days draw him out for a ramble down the primrose lanes either alone or with a friend.

It would sound harsh to say he had no friends. But in the ordinary sense of the term it would be true. His detachment was more complete than that of St. Thérèse, for she had sisters and cousins in her monastery. Fr. John's affection for his family was not questioned, theirs for him was extraordinary, yet his devoted brother would admit ruefully that he could not get a visit from Fr. John but on pretence of needing spiritual direction, which in fact he deplored. Again and again Fr. Sullivan was brought into most intimate relations with good folk whose boy was sick or whose girl was struggling to leave the world for religion. In their need he would come very close to their hearts as he came very close to the boys whose sins he forgave or whose holy aspirations he encouraged, but it never occurred to them to expect he would mingle with their daily life, visit them even occasionally, allow the smallest natural expression of their gratitude in gift or service, or even appear to remember them when their need was over. The rule was universal.

The mother of a boy who asserted confidently that to his prayers she owed the recovery of her son from pneumonia, might appear to be a slight exception. The boy had vivid memories of Fr. John's solicitude for him in illness. Gratitude for it gave him not only the usual admiration, but a real affection, for Fr. Sullivan. The family lived within cycling distance of Clongowes and once, just once, Fr. Sullivan accompanied a Jesuit scholastic who rode over to pay them a visit. It is not unlikely that his purpose was really to please the young man

who hesitated to go alone to the home of a boy with whom hitherto he had only had school contacts. But once in that house even Fr. John could not avoid sitting down to the hospitable tea which is its tradition. " He actually ate a cake," commented his hostess, " he said it was good, and he even asked for a second one, which I call a feather in Maggie's cap. Not," she added pensively, " that anyone could convince me that he cared in the very least what he was eating." Perhaps it was as well in the circumstances that he did not pay social calls. He would have been a sore trial to the kind Irish hearts that give generously and take pleasure in the enjoyment of their gift.

At the time of his conversion he had, as we have seen, been brought into intimate relations with a child and her teacher whose catechism lessons he shared simply and shyly. For a few years there was a little gift at Christmas, then the detachment grew more complete and he dropped out of her life. That most innocent of natural joys, the love of children, which even the saints seem to have permitted themselves without hesitation, he neither sought nor found. No children give testimony to this priest's attention to them or their own love of him. At Portora he had shown himself a friend to the small fry. The Jesuit priest would journey miles to pray at their sick beds, he would most fervently watch with them in their last hours, and marvellously comfort them and those they left, but in their joy and health their angel—or his own—snatched them from him by the hair. He had many admirers and many clients, but there is no evidence at all that in later life at least he had any intimates or anyone close to him to share the secrets of his heart. *Sine amico non potes bene vivere* (without a friend thou canst not well live.) But Fr. Sullivan never gave the impression of a friendless, much less lonely or embittered man. If he scarcely ever spoke of himself and invited no mere social intercourse, it was well understood that this was because he enjoyed sweeter companionship, had the Best of Friends and conversed often and intimately with his Blessed Mother.

Even as Spiritual Father, rector and teacher, Fr. John had found time to exercise a wider spiritual apostolate beyond Clongowes or Rathfarnham.* For all that, it was fortunate both for himself and for others that on his return to Clongowes a new work waited for him which would bring him into constant close contact with a whole community, indeed a whole countryside. It was work which gave to the love of God that was in him an opportunity to express itself in the tender love and service of his fellows. For in addition to his former duties as Spiritual Father and a remnant of his duties as a teacher, he was on his return to Clongowes appointed assistant in the People's Church in Clongowes. It was really in this capacity that his gifts and graces had their best scope.

The Chapel itself had been constructed shortly after the Jesuits had taken possession of Castlebrowne and called it Clongowes. When it was opened it seemed to pre-Emancipation Catholics a wonderful place. There can be found facsimiles of its pillared altar in elaborate low-relief incised on the headstones of graves in Mainham Abbey Churchyard. It was opened with some pomp, made newspaper headings, and for nearly a hundred years served both boys and a local congregation, drawn chiefly from the working people of the College. Then, just before Fr. Sullivan's time, a new and larger chapel was built beside it for the boys, and it became the "People's Church." In spite of the fact that it was an architectural makeshift, and that its original classic proportions were altered, it is an edifice of curious simplicity and charm. A little withdrawn under heavy overhanging trees, there is within it light and quiet. Scarcely a sound reaches it and a large oil-painting of the

*Of Fr. Sullivan's work as a retreat giver nothing has been said. During twenty years as a priest he gave in holiday time over fifty retreats to nuns, Colletines, Carmelites, Congregations of Reparation, of teaching, of missions of healing of body or soul, and in one instance returned three times to a contemplative monastery. All this is taking no account of the Exercises he gave to priests and religious of his own and other orders.

Crucifixion over a rubrical altar draws the occasional visitor easily into the charmed circle of prayer. It has its traditions too. There Dan O'Connell, making an annual retreat, knelt among the boys at Mass when a messenger brought him the news that the Iron Duke had surrendered and Emancipation was passed. There generations of holy men, Fr. Robert Halley, Fr. Ffrench, Fr. Fegan had taught. There John Redmond and Thomas Francis Meagher, Tom Kettle and Christopher Palles and The O'Rahilly had listened, and Frs. William Doyle and James Cullen and Michael Browne had prayed and offered sacrifice. It is a holy place. But to-day it belongs to Fr. Sullivan, and it is his memory that lingers in it and draws men and women to share its peace.

His work in and from the Chapel was mostly what he cared to make them. The Chapel had scarcely the standing of a chapel of ease. Even its Sunday congregation was limited, but it had recently had the services of a well loved and devoted figure, Fr. James Corboy, and it did not take long for the faithful to find Fr. Sullivan there in his confessional or on his knees before the altar, preaching from the predella or blessing at the holy-water font. And from that Chapel they drew him forth into their homes and hearts.

The people of the Midland plain that fringes the wide and lonely Bog of Allen are notorious for a very un-Irish reticence, a slowness of speech and perhaps even of mind. These are qualities which in them match, as those who know them will testify, long memories and grateful hearts. They make them, in this matter of Fr. Sullivan's life in their midst, witnesses more authentic and impressive, if less exciting than men of the imaginative and vocal seaboards could be. They are the last people to fancy miracles, and they are by nature inclined to give even exceptional holiness a measured tribute. It is very hard, perhaps impossible, to carry them off their feet. Yet in that area and for very many miles around Clongowes, even to-day Fr. Sullivan's name, after twenty years, is a household

word and his sanctity as little questioned as is the power of water to wet or fire to burn.

Gradually, but speedily, there grew up in his last years in Clongowes among simple people living within a remarkably wide range from the College, a conviction that there was a holy priest to whom they might with profit take their pains and troubles of body and soul. And as always in this vale of tears there were many in need who sought, some physical alleviation, some strength to bear pain, others forgiveness, resignation and peace of soul, others a sure knowledge of God's will, direction how to follow it and inspiration to do so. And many, a great many of these, came to Clongowes to John Sullivan. They got on their bicycles ; they harnessed horse or ass ; they arranged for a lift for a sick boy in an ancient Ford or a hired car ; they came on old and tottering feet. Often he could be seen greeting a newcomer or blessing someone going, who, as like as not, poured out blessing on him in return. He had no office or privacy for these interviews of mercy. They began at the church door, went on before the altar or in the confessional and ended at the font, for his devotion to holy water was extraordinary.

But if you could not come yourself, you could still send the boy or girl with a line to him or get " himself " to drive over and bring him to you. And if you were sick or in trouble he was sure to come. Promptly, and without making a fuss or a compliment. Distance seemed to mean little to him. Once he went on foot fourteen miles there and fourteen back to pray with and to bless a sick person. He travelled at a shambling trot or on his bicycle ; indeed, one man records having met him many a time running beside the bicycle. It was a clumsy, battered old machine, as ancient as everything he possessed. Years after his death a secular priest asked a Dublin working-man if he was familiar with the sight of Fr. John, for he lived near Rathfarnham. " Of course I was, Father," he answered. "And tell me, did ye ever see a contraption like that 'ole bike of his ? "

But he worked it hard. Of another of Dublin's holy men it is told that when one of his fellow-citizens was asked where he lived he replied without hesitation, " On the ole bike to be sure." And certainly in his devotion to that machine Fr. John, a true Dubliner, was a kindred spirit. Under him the bicycle became the steed of God's knight-errant. Some time after he had given a retreat to nuns, one of the Sisters, a novice at the time, had a very serious accident. It involved amputation and then a further amputation. News reached Fr. Sullivan that she was in a grave condition, fever and delirium had set in. Would he pray for her—perhaps, if opportunity offered, visit her if he was in Dublin ? The post used at that time to arrive in Clongowes in time for distribution at the school break. He had his usual Religious Knowledge class just before this and must have got the news then. The hospital where the Sister lay was considerably over twenty miles from Clongowes. He reached it nevertheless on his bicycle in the early afternoon. He parked the machine and made straight for the sick room. On the way he circumvented solicitous folk with thoughts of at least a short rest and perhaps a cup of tea after the long journey. Once in the patient's room he knelt down as was his custom, without support, and gave himself to prayer. It was quite a time before the sick nun's condition changed. The delirium ceased. The restless tossing became quiet. She appeared to sleep. Fr. Sullivan stole away. He rescued his bicycle and was gone without heed to protests or fears. He was due to take a meeting of the Sodality of the Blessed Virgin that night in Clongowes, and the old " contraption " of a bicycle carried him home in time for it.

He would answer to any cry of distress and answer it gladly. And he would keep coming day after day and week after week if the pain was great or unyielding or the illness mortal. Or you could command his presence if you were poor enough to need the little gifts of tea and sugar and food or clothes he allowed himself to receive and pass on. He was your friend and constant caller if you were making a great struggle to rear a family or

bear up under a cross of domestic persecution or loss. But as soon as you needed him no more he disappeared. He would arrive on the old bicycle riding doggedly down rutted boreens or over wind-swept bog roads; or if you lived closer he might come on foot. You'd see his figure perhaps a good way off, the rather long full coat, the patched boots, the soft hat more often clutched than worn, the beads in one hand and the unmistakable rapid step, almost a trot, that seemed to drive him forward. A quick greeting, then an inquiry, and he'd go straight into the sick room. There'd be a blessing with lavish holy water, and then he'd be down on his knees and praying. How long? Perhaps an hour, perhaps more. Usually he knelt upright without support in the centre of the room and prayed, alone and silently part of the time, but generally the bystanders too, and often the sick man, would be asked to join in. He said the Rosary or simple ejaculations. Or if it was a soul in trouble everyone of course would leave and he would kneel alone by the bedside till, the signal given, the friends returned to pray with the priest, and the prayer seemed always one of trust and thanksgiving. Did he cure souls? Well what else? He who knew the secrets of hearts and was so close to God. Did he cure bodies? No one in that world doubted it.

It is the universality of this impression, the number of stories, which is really impressive. The record of one of them, or even of a number of them, cannot carry the conviction that comes after hearing scores of simple folk, each one quite separate from the rest, tell their own tale, sometimes in almost identical words. In the life of Fr. John Sullivan by Fr. McGrath a great many cases are told in careful and impressive detail. The author does not pretend to have recorded every instance he was given, and even since that excellent piece of research was made, new cases as remarkable perhaps as any in it, are not infrequently reported.

XII

THE PHYSICIAN

LET a few hitherto unrecorded instances of his powers be put on record here, beginning with some early cases and ending with one of yesterday. It is yesterday's only because a printer cannot cope with today's, for such manifestations have not ceased to recur.

Twenty years after Fr. John's death it is still stirring to hear an elderly man, as he sits before the fire on a Sunday afternoon, with his wife and children and grandchildren and a neighbour or two who have dropped in, tell a strange tale with no wonder or speculation, as simply as if he was narrating some incident in his hardworking daily life. He's not an imaginative man. He's not a specially religious man even, though he is respected by all for a fundamentally sterling character. And he has no arts of narration, nor does he feel the need of them. Everyone there has known or heard of Fr. Sullivan, he does not question their acceptance of his story. " Peter was a well-liked young man,"

he begins, " and he was taken badly ill. His condition caused much sympathy for his young wife who was expecting. As many as twenty neighbours had gathered in their cottage which was about a mile from Clongowes. They sent to the College to ask Fr. Sullivan to come down and see them. He came at once, and going to the sick man knelt beside his bed, spoke to him and prayed with him. An hour and twenty minutes he kept us at it," remembers the narrator, though thirty and more years have passed. " Had we known he was coming many of us, young fellows then, would have slipped off before he came, for we could guess he would have us praying long, but once he started no one stirred, either in the sick room or in the kitchen outside where the younger men were. Then he got up from his knees to go, and the woman of the house in a great state came out of the sick room. There, in the hearing of us all, he told her not to worry because her husband was going to die, ' for,' said he, ' he is safe. He will be in heaven before I am half way to the College.' He went on that, leaving us all startled and surprised. But before he was well gone, before he could have reached the ' long rampart ' as we called it—a matter perhaps of a quarter of a mile—Peter had passed away without recovering consciousness, or a word or sigh." The sick man could not have heard, he was sure, what Fr. Sullivan had said, though all around the woman and the priest heard it and were astonished. Though very ill, the man was not expected by them to go so suddenly. It is a strange picture, the priest who thought nothing of a dozen visits to a sick man, of spending half a night on his knees or keeping a score of neighbours on theirs, walks out of a house where a man is to die, so he asserts, in a matter of minutes. But before he goes he says there is no more for him to do. He has heard, he believes, the message of God—this day—no this hour—he will be with Me in Paradise.

A similar incident is related by the daughter of another family who lived near Clongowes and whom Fr. Sullivan visited frequently. Her father was old and had been ailing for a

considerable time, sometimes keeping his bed, and sometimes able to sit up. There appeared to be no change in his condition on this particular day when Fr. Sullivan, who had not been sent for, appeared casually. He surprised the household when he asked the sick man to accompany him alone into an upstairs room, presumably for the purpose of confession ; but they were still more astonished, since they had no reason to think the sick man in special danger, to hear Fr. Sullivan say to him unequivocally, " My good man, you will be with God tonight." In the event the man died peacefully in less than twenty-four hours.

It was in favour of a son of the same house that another extraordinary story of Fr. John's powers is narrated. The man was a soldier in the First World War, and having been buried alive by a shell, was dug out shell-shocked and partially blind. So serious was the latter condition that he could not recognise his own mother's features, and he was only able to distinguish objects very vaguely. The family brought him over to Clongowes hoping for Fr. Sullivan's help. Fr. John prayed with and over him, as was his custom, and blessed him with holy water. Then he asked him a surprising question: Would he be content to give God the sight of one eye if He restored proper vision to the other ? The man answered readily he would be quite resigned to the loss of sight in one eye for the gift of its restoration in the other. Probably Fr. Sullivan gave him some penance to perform and prayers to say, for this was his usual custom. But however that may be, quite suddenly some days later—the man was travelling in a trap with his mother at the time—he felt the vision of one injured eye grow completely dark, but saw quite clearly with the other. This condition persisted, and thirty and more years later, an old man, still seeing with one eye, he refused to have spectacles got for it : he said his sight was his " blessing," and explained when questioned, that he believed its vision had been given to him supernaturally at Fr. Sullivan's intervention.

Of course such a case ultimately calls for scientific investigation. It is beside the point that the first reaction of the surgeon in charge of the man in the Hospital of the Ministry of Pensions is said to have been an exclamation of satisfaction at the explanation of a condition which had surprised him. Later he gave as his written opinion that the condition was " mysterious." The fact that the man had suffered from shell shock suggested that the injury was pyschological and the recovery presumably psychological also. But in the register of the Royal Victoria Eye and Ear Hospital he is stated on the authority of another distinguished surgeon to be suffering in the left eye from cataract caused by inflammation and so advanced as to produce blindness. The right eye, however, though suffering from a similar inflammation (suspected to be tubercular) had still partial vision. It is not perhaps common for such a state to become stabilised, as it appears to be in this case, though of course, it can and does happen, and if in thirty years nothing occurred to cause a " blow up " of the inflammation it is possible that such partial vision might be maintained uniform even for so long a time. On the other hand it is at present impossible to fix the exact date at which Fr. Sullivan saw the man and it was presumably before his admission to the Royal Victoria Eye and Ear Hospital. Unfortunately, though defective vision is recorded on his discharge sheet (with full compensation) from the army, the details of its cause and degree are not readily available. In the circumstances the surgeon at present caring for him finds much that he " cannot explain " medically. So the puzzle presented to the doctors stands at the moment. It was a problem set to them almost too simply when the good priest asked a poor man if he would give to God the sight of one eye if he were granted the permanent vision of the other, and the holy bargain was struck.

Of Fr. John's extraordinary gifts in dealing with souls there are again many examples. When Rector of Rathfarnham he

was a fairly frequent visitor to a neighbouring Carmel. The lodge at this convent's gate was kept by a man and his wife who often noticed the strange priest coming and going, but who found him "distant." They did not exchange more than a few words with him. One day, however, he got off his bicycle and addressed the woman: "You are in great trouble," he told her without preamble or explanation, "but don't worry about it. You have no cause for anxiety." With that he remounted and rode on. "Now Father," said the woman narrating the incident, "my husband and I were in fact at the time very much concerned at an unpleasant prospect that threatened us with ruin, but of which we were sure no one but ourselves had any inkling. In fact the threatened trouble never came to anything and we had nothing more to fear."

One more example may be given of the power and prescience Fr. Sullivan displayed while living. Typical of many stories that might have been heard around Clongowes is the following, told casually to a hard-headed lawyer twenty or more years after it happened, by the man who had no doubt about the supernatural quality of the part Fr. Sullivan played in it. The wife of this man living in a small town not far from Clongowes was taken very gravely ill. The doctor called in expert consultation, but little or no hope could be entertained. Even a serious operation was regarded as offering such slight hope of recovery as to be desperate, and it was decided not to go on with it. The man was not, and as far as one knows, never became a Catholic; but he had heard of a miracle-working priest over at the College, and in despair of human aid rode over to Clongowes on his bicycle and told Fr. Sullivan the straits in which he stood. Fr. John made his habitual answer: "The power of prayer, wonderful the power of prayer." Together they prayed for a time, and then Fr. Sullivan accompanied the man to his house and prayed again with the sick woman, using in his lavish way his favourite holy water. Then he bade the man be of good cheer, and told him to let the

operation go forward. So strong a conviction of Fr. Sullivan's wisdom and power had the poor man developed, that he completely changed his attitude, and though the doctors gave him no greater hope, he was responsible for the operation being performed. The woman recovered. Fr. Sullivan continued to visit the house and pray with them during the months of her convalescence. As the husband had no one to help him to nurse his wife during this time, he gave up a good job. But his devotion was rewarded. The day came when Fr. Sullivan was visiting, apparently for the last time. He spoke of the gratitude they owed to God that the woman was completely cured. The poor man agreed, but spoke of the one drawback ; he had lost his job, and did not know where to turn for work. Fr. Sullivan listened but gave no special advice. Some days later however he called : "About that work now," he said abruptly, " be at home tomorrow afternoon, news for you, a job offered, be at home tomorrow afternoon." With no more than that he departed. The next day was Sunday, and the man who had now perfect confidence in Fr. Sullivan, waited at home. Sure enough two men, complete strangers, called to see him. They were members of a big firm of manufacturers in Cork City, and they said they had heard he was looking for a job. The local agency of their firm was vacant. Not only did they offer it to him immediately, but promised that on the expected retirement of another agent in quite a big way, a more important position should be his if he did well. And this position he eventually received. Indeed, when the story was told he was still employed, though in the West of Ireland, by the same firm. At the time however he had never thought of them, and could not think how they had heard of him. He asked, and the explanation was simple : " We were on the road yesterday evening," they said, " and stopped to get some petrol. There was a Mr. Robinson there too from these parts, and we got chatting. When we heard where he was from, we told him we were on the look out for a good local man for this agency, and

he mentioned that he knew you were a reliable man out of a job, so we decided to contact you." Fr. Sullivan's attitude on such an occasion forbade questioning, but failing that, no inquiry that the man made could establish any connection between the priest and the men who came to him, or explained how he knew of the impending visit. It seemed to them merely an accidental contact. To the man it was one more piece of evidence for the power of his holy helper.

These and similar stories of aid for body and mind which Fr. John gave in his lifetime could be multiplied many times. It is not surprising that even when he was dead, those who had heard of his power and willingness to help, continued to turn to him. Nor do the cures attributed to him grow, with the passage of time, less remarkable or less numerous.

There is for example the case of Mrs. F. The two doctors who attended her in a difficult childbirth were emphatic about her condition : " When I was called in," wrote one, " her case looked so hopeless, and she in such imminent danger, that I sent for the priest to give the last rites before deciding on the medical measures to be adopted." He called in a second opinion, not daring to move the subject to hospital for operation or treatment. She was, however, eventually taken there and arrived in a very critical condition. "Four doctors,"writes her husband, " told me it was only a matter of minutes before she died." " Her condition," writes her surgeon, " was worse, the pulse was very weak and at times could not be felt ; she had been bleeding for many hours and the child was dead for at least a day." There was only one thing to be done, and an operation was performed—successfully. For a day indeed it looked quite impossible that she should live. " Even after the operation," writes her husband, " the doctors had no hope. The doctor who operated told me that he had been dealing with such cases for twenty years, and ' unfortunately,' he said, ' they all die.' " The husband added : " He could put it no other way than that she was called back from the grave by some miracle or other."

To his confrère, her family doctor, the surgeon said simply that it was the worst operation of its kind that he had seen, and the latter for his part agreed, writing : " It was certainly the worst in my experience for the past twenty-five years as a general practitioner." But her husband, writing to the Vice-Postulator of Fr. Sullivan's cause, summed up and explained : " I am delighted to tell you that the novena, and Fr. Sullivan's relic, worked a miracle . . . on the very day it finished she felt as well as ever. She is now at home since Saturday, and though still slightly weak, she is wonderful." Five years later, strong and in good spirits, Mrs. F. wrote to the same priest to ask his prayers for her, as she hoped soon to become again a mother.

Again one opens the file to read : T. S. had a spinal injury, and partial paralysis set in. The doctor attended him. The verdict we give in his own words : " He told me that he was very sorry to inform me that I would never walk again ; and that no doctor could do anything for me." But he offered to put his patient in touch with a Jesuit father who would tell him about Fr. Sullivan. A few days later the priest called, gave the man a relic, and promised to offer Mass on the coming Facts of the Most Precious Blood for his cure through Fr. Sullivan's intercession. Some days later the doctor visited the house again, and sat in conversation with the man and his wife for quite a time. " Then," writes the patient, " he remarked I was looking remarkably well, and asked me had I made any attempt to stand. I replied I had not. He said : ' make an attempt now.' He assisted me out of bed and to his wonderful surprise I stood up. . . . I shall always remember the anxious expression on his face when he said—' you are cured.' That is the fact, Father : Dr. X—— can certify that statement, and can prove that it was a miracle through the intercession of Rev. Fr. Sullivan." The event thus narrated in 1949 had taken place within a year of Fr. Sullivan's death. With the grateful phrase : " I was never a day sick since," the writer closes his story.

Two other cases may stand together. A girl had scalded her

hand ; it was badly treated, turned septic, and during six weeks of hospital treatment four operations were performed. The surgeon would say no more of his success than that she " could be thankful to have the hand at all." This did not satisfy her. She had heard of Fr. Sullivan in the hospital, and prayed to him now for a complete cure. Her prayer was answered in such measure that she was able to return to, and continue in, her trade—the *hand*-weaving of carpets by a guild of artistic embroiderers. Even more remarkable : A poor workman suffered from very bad boils which ordinarily took a long time to heal. He developed an unusually severe one and could not wear a collar or move his head freely. It was treated without success and he was told he must go to hospital and have it lanced. This would have been difficult for him as his wife was not strong, the children were all young, and the family in very poor circumstances. He consented to use a relic of Fr. Sullivan which his wife had treasured since she obtained it some months before. The boil was touched with this on Friday night. It disappeared almost immediately. It did not burst, but the large and angry swelling subsided so completely that on Sunday the man put on collar and tie and went to Mass completely cured.

One more instance—a fairly full record of a very serious case. An old lady had read Fr. F. McGrath's pamphlet Life of Fr. John Sullivan. It made a deep impression on her, but she mislaid her copy, and though she looked for it repeatedly it was not found until nearly two years later, when she came across it by chance and reopened it. Almost at once she got the bad news that her little grandson had been in a very serious accident. She promptly invoked Fr. Sullivan's help, and continued her prayers to Fr. John for the boy during the days which followed. The lad had been knocked off his bicycle and was taken to hospital suffering from severe chest and stomach injuries. His condition was very grave : An immediate operation was necessary. " His chances of recovery," wrote the surgeon, " were very slim," declaring that the boy's liver was so badly

crushed, and the bleeding so profuse, that though he did what he could to plug and remedy the condition, he " had at heart really no hope of the boy surviving," and after the patient had been taken back to bed, " withdrew, not expecting to see him alive again." But the boy did survive, and his condition next day was better than could be hoped for. In ten days time it became necessary to remove the plugs. The surgeon stated frankly, that he " had never really contemplated that the necessity of this would arise," believing the patient would die ; and that he approached the operation " with great misgiving," apprehending serious bleeding, which would be fatal. No such bleeding took place. Fully a third of the liver had in fact been so damaged that it had by this time completely disappeared. Nevertheless the boy made a swift and complete recovery. Some time later the surgeon re-examined him and found that even the slight remains of the wound where the drainage system had been, were now completely healed. The liver was probably again of normal weight. No wonder that the lad's grandmother and his aunt—a trained nurse—believed they owed a deep debt of gratitude to Fr. John.

A last instance of Fr. Sullivan's persisting will and power to help is best told perhaps by printing the simple letter which carries conviction by its own moderation. It is addressed to the Vice-Postulator of Fr. Sullivan's cause for beatification :

Dear Fr. O'Conor,

In September 1946, before the birth of my son Peter John, I had an operation for appendix at seven months and was anxious about my condition. Consequently when a friend, who attributed the cure of her asthma to Fr. Sullivan, suggested that I should seek his help I was glad to do so, and obtained a relic of Fr. John from a nurse in the home. This trust in his intercession was increased as the nursing-home to which I went for the birth had been already the scene of a remarkable intervention of Fr. Sullivan which is, I believe,

recorded in Fr. McGrath's life of him. The birth proved in fact a most difficult and painful one, and I was quite convinced that without very opportune and expert care either I or my son would not have survived. I was very grateful to Fr. Sullivan for his share in my happy delivery. I altered the name I had planned for the little boy, calling him instead Peter *John*, in honour of Fr. John Sullivan, and putting him under Fr. Sullivan's special protection which I often invoked for him. The " relic " I lent to a friend and it was not returned to me. I often felt I'd like another, but though the Jesuit fathers gave the parish Retreat each year, or I could have written to Fr. McGrath, I did not do so, though I cannot explain to myself why.

The special reason I wanted the relic was that, when he was two years of age, Peter John got a very bad cold which developed into a severe and chronic bronchial condition. Three doctors were called in and treated him, but with no good result. For the next five years the child suffered continuously from constant fits of coughing. Fits was the only word to describe these spasms. He choked, his face would discolour, his whole body be shaken and the ordeal frequently lasted for many minutes. He was in great distress during these fits and they completely cut him off from any vigorous exercises as running or quick movement brought them on. They were not however amenable even to rest. The little boy invariably woke several times at night. When the maid or I called him in the morning, getting up always involved a prolonged and violent outburst, and we had to wait patiently for its subsidence before he could rise and dress. At school he was, of course, cut off by his affliction. If he tried to join in vigorous fun or games he was quickly breathless and coughing and had to give up. Every remedy was tried : cough mixtures and medicines from the chemist being a big item in our household expenses. None were of any use.

Then during the women's retreat in Dalkey I went to

confession to one of the Jesuit fathers directing it and after the confession I told him I should very much like to have "a relic" of Fr. John Sullivan. I told him I thought I owed my own and my boy's life to his intercession, though I could not claim it was miraculous, and I mentioned the miracle which was believed to have taken place in the nursing-home. He there and then took from his pocket-book a small relic which he carried and gave it to me. When he assured me he could get another, I was overjoyed to have it. Though I asked him to commend my intention to Fr. Sullivan I did not say a word about Peter John's illness or condition.

I brought home the relic and pinned it under the boy's vest and he wears it since all day. He of course had often heard me speak of Fr. Sullivan and, no doubt, in some degree shared my hopes and prayers. The first night he wore the relic he had one of his violent outbursts of coughing—alas, these were so frequent we thought nothing of it. But there were no more that night. He slept without interruption, and waking next morning, though the maid waited for the usual waking paroxysm, there was none. Since that day—ten days ago—he has not had a single return of the cough, not so much as one outburst. Yesterday returning from school, he declared that at the interval he had been playing football and games with the others and made a reference to me. He said: "I can run about without coughing." I attribute his cure entirely to Fr. Sullivan's persistent care of him and I shall report its maintenance to you, for I am sure it will be maintained in due course. In the meantime, even if it were only a respite, these ten free days have been a good gift of God through Fr. Sullivan's intercession.

These are by no means all the incidents in which sensible and even expert people believed that Fr. Sullivan intervened to succour them. There are scores, rather hundreds of others, but to prolong the list would be to prepare a case rather than

to tell the story of a life. That will be a part, though perhaps a small part, of the Official Process which has been instituted to enquire into Fr. John's claims for Beatification. A small part, because the Church has always been aware, and is more aware today than ever before, that extraordinary gifts and even miracles are neither an integral part of holiness, nor an adequate cause, or a full proof of it. Even apart however from its legal value as evidence, such renown as Fr. Sullivan enjoyed as a wonder worker could not grow up and become established among so many people, without there being a special sort of approach to him in life or in history. It is primarily because these stories, these true stories, depict Fr. Sullivan as someone in the closest touch with the Divine and Beneficent Being whose Providence shapes our lives, that they are told here.

Long ago a simple country woman asked a religious to bless her eyes or her head or her hand and cure her of some ailment. The good man was in no hurry to comply, not fancying himself as cast for the role of thaumaturgist. But his client had no sympathy with his scruples. "Ah, Father," she said, " why do you hesitate ? Haven't you the power, and I have the faith ! " In like case Fr. Sullivan did not hesitate. It is hard to doubt that he had in his own person both the faith and the power.

The strange thing is that those scores and hundreds of folk who sought him out in life and who told unquestionably wonder tales of Fr. Sullivan were not so impressed by any of the supernatural or miraculous powers they believed him to possess as by the imprint of his sanctity, his visible union with God, his own complete absorption in the other world and his indifference to his own comfort. In their opinion of him they were unshakable. He was " a saint." They were grateful for his time and effort so lavishly given, but a little awed to realise he was scarcely conscious of his own share in the transaction in hand. And it may be noted in passing that just as such a reputation is not built up in a day, Fr. Sullivan's position and powers were not a nine days' wonder, indeed they were scarcely a

matter for wonder at all and certainly not for fuss or controversy. Ten years is a long time and he had been known to his own people for just twice that time, almost as much sought after one year as another, with a following that owed little or nothing to any passing emotion or to one alleged cure rather than another, still less to mass excitement. Long before the end he was just taken for granted and they explained the matter very simply : " You have to be hard on yourself to work miracles," declared one who was seeking him out. " Fr. Sullivan is hard on himself."

XIII

THE IRISHMAN

THERE is something primitive and rugged in the story of this man's apostolate. It is something which lies deeper than the rather gaunt austerity of his surroundings, his worn figure, his stripped rough living, or even his wonder working. Once a priest speaking on an occasion of congratulation and festivity startled and chastened a table full of his fellow clergy with the statement that in his opinion only one of their number could have settled down happily in the Golden Age of the Island of Saints and Scholars if by some trick of a time machine, he found himself back in the sixth century. Only one man, he repeated, one man of us all can I see in his natural environment, working and praying in St. Ronan's cloister, chanting his office with monks of St. Columbkill's or St. Finbar's training. Fr. Sullivan was not present that night. But how truly of him might it have been said that he could have passed his days easily and happily in the company of the great saints who made the traditions of the

Irish Church. Their independence, their awe-inspiring mortification, their power to create about them the faith that breeds miracles, their preoccupation with great and real devotions, to the Trinity and the Incarnation and the Holy Spirit, the absence in them of all that may a little irreverently be called holy frills. These things call up Fr. Sullivan. He was surely a perfect example of the spirit of the Celtic Church. Layers of superficial habit which modern times and his own circumstances wrapped round the core of the man finally withered and dropped away and left a figure essentially like the concept we have of those who sailed with Brendan or Coleman or defied the Merovings with St. Columban. Nor was this altogether accidental. Not only did his very name betray his blood but in youth he had imbibed ideas that never left him. John Steele would say that his mother, Fr. Sullivan's gracious foster-mother, had taught him " He must be a priest like St. Patrick."

In that short testament we have cited so often, it is noticeable that Fr. Sullivan far from the Holy Island in time and space, goes back to the plain stone walls and the strong simple lines of the Celtic church on Devenish. It is with St. Molaise that he claims kin for his old teacher. Beyond doubt, had his humility permitted it, he would have claimed for himself a like holy succession. It was his by right—and he links a wonderful cross section of our modern nationhood to what is oldest and most precious, most firmly rooted in its past. There is perhaps no such thing as Irish sanctity but there are characteristically Irish saints. Fr. John is one of them.

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XIV

"THE SAINT"

THE end came unexpectedly. He had so long lived in a fashion that defied all the laws of medical prudence, that it was easy for those about him to forget this. To the last he had not a grey hair, nor was he ever ill enough for bed or the doctor. If at times his emaciation appeared frightening, it did not seem progressive. Then the blow fell. The illness was brief. Ironically enough, the end may have been hastened by the fact that Fr. Sullivan, once on the invalid list, was joyfully bidden by his medical advisers to eat the nourishing foods he had long abandoned. In a pre-rationed world little was understood about the effects of habitual fasting. At any rate he grew worse. For about a fortnight he was confined to bed in the Clongowes infirmary. During these days the School Matron, who later became herself a religious, was deeply impressed by seeing him constantly absorbed with his crucifix. He was without a thought for his own comfort. By the Nurse's rule of thumb he was

the perfect patient, for to the last morning, and then only when he was actually in danger of death, he never rang his bell. On Friday, February 17th, he was seized with very severe and evidently dangerous internal pain. He was at once anointed and taken to St. Vincent's Nursing Home in Leeson Street.

The hours left to him might now be counted, and during them he was looked after by a young nun whose recollection of them is still vivid. She had been brought to Clongowes just before her entry into religion to see the holy priest in whom her mother had great faith and to get his blessing. The experience had been disappointing ; he blessed her but showed no particular interest in her or her aspirations. Her dominant impression of him was as a shabby and dull figure. But she was with him when the surgeon, an old acquaintance and admirer of Fr. Sullivan, made his examination and operated. He found a gangrenous obstruction which left no hope. Though the skilled hands seemed to her almost incredibly gentle, she knew that Fr. John must be suffering agonies. He said not a single word of this, and his silence, except when he joined in the prayers about his bedside, remained impervious. Several times she and others inquired about the pain or sympathised with him in the agony which they knew he was enduring. His unvarying response was " The Holy Will of God, blessed be the Holy Will of God." For the most part however he gave no sign that he saw or heard what passed about him, lying with closed or deeply downcast eyes and not speaking except to join in the prayers offered up about him. Before he left Clongowes he had asked the Minister of the house, who was perhaps closest to him of all his brethren, to put his breviary in his bag. Fr. Kenny replied that of course he would be dispensed from his " Office," and it seemed unnecessary as the reading would be an unwise strain. Nevertheless Fr. Sullivan persisted, giving his friend to understand that on the contrary the familiar prayer, the effort at concentration, with the habit of attention, would be a help, distracting his mind from his own plight and keeping

his thought with God. Readers will be reminded of the man who in Sheila Kaye Smith's *Christian Fairy Tales* suffered from the hallucinations brought on by overstrain and was only in command of his person when reciting the daily Divine Office. But this was no fairy tale. It was a very grim reality—a battle with a giant of pain.

In the event of course the office became impossible and Fr. Sullivan relied on the recited prayers about him. After the operation his suffering was such that his surgeon could write : "I think it would be very hard for those who have not had a similar type of experience to imagine the appalling intensity of the pain that he had to endure." Yet, "after his operation, he was cheerfulness itself. He was extraordinarily grateful for what poor service I had been able to give him and was humorous and confident. His morale was so good that I cheated myself, hoping against hope that he would survive."

During life as we have seen, Fr. John easily lost count of time while he prayed alone or with others, and now time would have little meaning for him. As is customary with a patient, almost incapable of unaided effort, the Sister-in-charge, or another who took her place from time to time, recited prayers of Thanksgiving for Communion or preparation for Extreme Unction. It seemed to help him. More than once the Sisters suggested the continuous effort might tire him, but even when he was incapable of speech and in evident agony he appeared to follow every invocation and especially to be supported by those which expressed hope in the Life to come. In the circumstances, though the Sisters themselves were almost wearied, they did not fail him. This vocal prayer was not of course uninterrupted, there were long silences between what we may call its sessions and until the end it was in no sense continuous. Fr. Sullivan, for his part, showed his humble confidence in the prayers of others. Then at about 6 p.m. on Sunday evening it was evident that he might die at any moment, and the young nun, whose testimony we have given, narrates that

from that point to his death the same evening the murmur of intercession about his bedside was almost unceasing. In the hour before midnight he died. Almost his last conscious act was a prayer to God to bless and protect the boys of the school he had made his own. In words so simple he might have used them himself, his Rector and very old friend who was present summed up the last act : " He died well."

And now was seen what has happened so many times in the stories of the saints, a spontaneous outburst of that admiration and homage which in lifetime they had " held off " almost grimly. All the day the dead man's room was thronged with admirers who came to pray, and if possible carry off some little " relic." Even the young doctors and the students of the hospital, a body surely not prone to pious extravagance, were noticed taking little locks of that abundant hair. Next day the body was taken to Clongowes. A requiem Mass was sung in his own " People's Church," at which the Bishop presided. Spontaneously at the close of it the whole congregation filed up to touch the coffin with beads or crosses or pious objects. Then the body was carried for the last time down the long, straight avenue, between the walls of naked trees, to the lovely but very lonely plot where the dead of the college have lain for a hundred years. Perhaps it will never be so lonely again. For from that time to this, it is often visited. Someone has put at the foot of his grave a little kneeler, so rude and simple that Fr. John himself with all his love of the bare ground, need not have disdained it. And there in all weathers one may find now a solitary figure perhaps seeking peace, now a little family group petitioning perhaps the bodily cure of a sick parent. And that such requests still command his pity and his powers, the hundreds of letters that tell of favours granted, hundreds of folk who come to Gardiner Street only to be blessed with his crucifix, tell beyond doubt.

For a time a man's memory will live and be cherished by those who personally knew him, but as these die away and the

from that point to his death the same evening the murmur of intercession about his bedside was almost unceasing. In the hour before midnight he died. Almost his last conscious act was a prayer to God to bless and protect the boys of the school he had made his own. In words so simple he might have used them himself, his Rector and very old friend who was present summed up the last act : " He died well."

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years pass, it blurs and softens like the inscription on a headstone which takes the wind and rain. It is a sweeping but true statement that all who knew Fr. Sullivan believed him to be a man of outstanding holiness. The passage of time has not altered that conviction among those of them who survive. On the contrary they assert almost unanimously that time has but strengthened their conviction that he was a man quite out of the ordinary whose acquaintance was a unique and salutary experience. It might attract or frighten, but from externs, and still more from his own brethren, trained one might almost say to criticism, the verdict is astonishingly unanimous. He had no school, no disciples, no one felt a special call to support his doctrine because none could or did gainsay it. Accept the Christian faith, and one must admit the fitness of loving God above all things, with all one's heart and soul and strength and will. Take Christ for a model, and one must admire the man who daily took up his cross to follow Him. Those who saw most of him were most impressed.

The proverb that no man is a hero to his valet is only true in Fr. Sullivan's case because he had no valet. It is true nevertheless that those who were closest to him admired him most. And in the last years he had the kind of valet a saint may have. In Brother Murray, a widower who had at a mature age given up a prosperous business to enter the service of God in the Society of Jesus, Fr. Sullivan received as his sacristan in the "People's Church" a man wholly fitted to be his helper. There is little doubt that Brother Murray formed his character on the father he admired and loved unreservedly. Wholly devoted to Fr. Sullivan and his clients in the "People's Church," he comforted them on the latter's death, collected alms and food and old clothes for them, and was never happier than when he had something to give away or some service to do. A gallant rather than a skilful driver, the first motor that the Society of Jesus in Ireland owned had been his before his entry. He used an ancient van almost as Fr. Sullivan used his bicycle, doing jobs

for one and carrying help to another. And he imitated his hero in other ways ; for he seemed to need no relaxation in a well-filled day, but long visits to the Blessed Sacrament, or the extra decoration of some altar or shrine. From his prayers too there seemed to go out a power, and he too was sought for his spiritual alms. Who were his patrons ? God's mother, Saint Joseph and Saint Ignatius certainly. But once, when a rising flood of water that seemed inexplicable, threatened to flood their beloved " People's Church " this most active of men, instead of sallying out to combat the rising tide, was seen to fall on his knees in the church and loudly and openly invoke Fr. John. Whereupon, and instantly, without human effort, the impeded passage without must have cleared, for the waters immediately began to subside. There were many more, like that Brother, each with their own degree of knowledge or of contact who felt or would feel for the rest of their lives an influence from the life that was finished.

Yet those who scarcely saw him in passing, even those who only knew what a parent or friend told them, felt also the impact of his holiness. Twenty years after his death there is no sign that his shadow grows less, or that he has lost ground in the esteem of men. On the contrary, his character has revealed itself bit by bit in its stark essentials. The small eccentricities or oddities are remembered only as the accidents, the little details that serve to focus the subject of a significant portrait. But the colours and outlines of that portrait do not grow dim, on the contrary it is now clearer than ever that they have a vividness and life of their very own.

Even an unimaginative man who lives for some years in that part of the country which saw most of Fr. Sullivan's dedicated life, as he hears this man and that tell his tale, as he meets the woman whose children he blessed, whose sick he visited, whose souls he comforted, gets a certain sense of a haunted countryside. It is a white magic certainly, but a pervading presence to be discovered even in the landscape. It is a

kind presence and a benevolent but an unearthly one. Perhaps he will remember Paul Klee's famous picture of the God of the Northern Woods, the veiled countenance not merely seen between the trees, but fashioned from them. So in a manner the rutted boreens and roads, the thorny twisted hedges, the cold bog pools reflecting the sky, the wide clean spaces of Fr. Sullivan's unluxuriant, unlovely but well-beloved parish, seem filled with his picture ; they paint a solitary, gaunt, uncolourful figure, but one toned to its pattern of birth and death, of labour and grief and courage and hope.

Anyone writing or reading a life of Fr. John Sullivan comes perforce to a point where he asks himself why he is doing so. What gives this priest, so many years after his death, a valid claim to such attention ? There was certainly nothing in his external achievement. His story could hardly be more monotonous, his work more narrowly bound in scope and space. He wrote no weighty book, he initiated no movement, he contacted few remembered people. Moreover, he lacked that sterling attraction, charm. His letters are very few and certainly not literature. Research and documentation are vain, and the most careful excavations turn up only unpromising dry bones. His intimate friends, if he had any, can tell no secrets : he must have had such, but even when suspected they baffle biography. During the Second World War a chaplain leaving Clongowes in haste for the high seas borrowed from the college a small golden chalice. Again and again he was puzzled, for the paten bore clearly the name of a Dublin city church and an altar number, and the church was not the Jesuit one at Gardiner Street. He brought it home safely and questioned the sacristan at last. All he heard was that one day Fr. Sullivan had appeared with the chalice begrimed and battered. He cleaned it roughly and gave it to the sacristan to be sent to the goldsmith. When it came back he took it away again, but in a few days returned it : " Brother," he said, " you can use it now for Mass if you like." Theft ? Desecration ? Repentance ? Reparation ? There

is no more to be said or guessed. Fr. Sullivan kept his secrets ; his own secrets as well as those of others. He was as reticent as the people he made his own. He lit indeed a candle, and perhaps set it on the mantel, but then he pulled down the blinds and closed the door. Yet such was the glow of that inner light that it still drew men shut out from shared experience or betraying ecstasy. In his lifetime a whole countryside, after his death a whole country, gathered to catch the gleam that shone through, and to warm themselves at the glow of a life that was lit for the praise and comfort of Another. A thing done for God was done for all eternity.

NOTE

It is necessary to add to a brief impressionistic sketch that those who wish for a fuller record of many of Fr. Sullivan's activities will find it in *Father John Sullivan* by Fr. Fergal McGrath, S.J. That is the indispensable book for the historian, and the foregoing pages have been written largely to introduce to the subject those who were too young to have read it when it appeared. This little book is based on personal experience and impressions of the author and of those whose privilege it was to have known its subject in life. It has tried to avoid mere repetition, but of course there is some, even of incident, and Fr. McGrath's generous attitude in allowing his book to be plundered is gratefully acknowledged. The stage which the process of Fr. Sullivan's Beatification has reached seemed to invite a fresh survey and fresh appraisal. Some of the favours that are attributed to him in this book were actually examined for the first time during its writing—a reminder of the duty of those to whom knowledge of such things may have come to communicate with the Vice-Postulator of the Cause, Fr. O'Conor, S.J., Gonzaga College, Clonskea, Dublin. As the

record grows there will be, one hopes, fuller lives, but none will be written from a surer certainty of Fr. Sullivan's holiness and its reward. May he then obtain good gifts to reward in turn the devotion and kindness of the many people who helped this book, and especially those who now rule his old school in Portora, and those who lecture and study in his old classrooms at Milltown Park. For the author is painfully conscious that he cannot thank them sufficiently.

Suggested prayer for private use for the promotion of the Cause of Beatification and Canonisation of the Servant of God and for seeking favours through his intercession :

O God, Who dost glorify those who glorify Thee, make sacred the memory of Thy Servant John Sullivan by granting through his intercession the petition I now make (specify the petition) and hastening the day when his name shall be numbered amongst those of Thy saints.

Father Michael Browne, S.J.

By Thomas Hurley, S.J.

" It is impossible to go into detail in the wonderful work of Father Browne ; but he emerges as one of the most humble and saintly creatures ever asked to preach to priests and people. It is timely that the life of such a renowned member of the Society of Jesus should be put before the people of Ireland to revive the memories of the old people and to inspire the young."—*Irish Independent.*

" The book is a tribute to a saintly priest which those who knew him will best appreciate. The general reader has the picture of a man who struggled with ill-health and a fiery temperament and accepted the Gospel recipe of prayer and fasting without reserve." —*Irish Ecclesiastical Record.*

"An excellent new biography that will be enjoyed by all priests is that by Father Hurley, S.J., on Father Michael Browne, S.J., who was one of the best known Jesuits in Ireland until his death in 1933, after forty-three years of priestly work for souls. As it is impossible to do justice to such a long work in a few lines, I must content myself with venturing the hope that the story of this saintly priest will be widely circulated and that his fellow-labourers will derive much help from this fine description of his high spirituality and untiring labours."—*Homiletic and Pastoral Review.*

"A book in which 'the saint'—that was the name which was almost universally given him, all his life through—lives again, just as he was when we knew him on earth."—*Irish Monthly.*

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