

SCHISM IN OSSORY:  
MORAN'S HANDLING OF THE O'KEEFFE AFFAIR 1872-79<sup>1</sup>

Philip Ayres

Fr Robert O'Keeffe (b. 1814) had been professor of science and languages at St Kieran's College, Kilkenny, before moving to the town of Callan in the early 1860s as its parish priest and manager of the Callan National Schools. He taught classes and introduced reforms based on up-to-date educational theory. Without consulting Bishop Edward Walsh in Kilkenny, O'Keeffe invited a community of French nuns from Béziers in the diocese of Montpellier to open a convent and girls' school at Callan in 1869, but Walsh blocked this, provoking O'Keeffe to threaten legal action. The Christian Brothers opened their own school in Callan, drawing students from the National School for boys. Many of these children subsequently returned to O'Keeffe's school, partly because O'Keeffe stated that the bishop was happy with the National Schools. O'Keeffe's curates (on Walsh's authority, they claimed) accused him from the altar of the friary chapel of lying, and of misappropriating funds raised for educational purposes. O'Keeffe subsequently won substantial damages from both curates. Convinced Walsh was behind the smears and innuendos, O'Keeffe sued him for slander, the action costing Walsh heavily. On the grounds that a priest must not take his bishop to the lay courts on ecclesiastical matters, O'Keeffe was suspended from functions, first by the vicar-general, Dr Edward McDonald, in October 1870, then by Walsh on 11 January 1871. O'Keeffe stood on his civil and ecclesiastical rights, refusing to acknowledge the validity of the suspension, arguing that it was inflicted without the ecclesiastical trial to which secular priests are entitled, and that the writ of the bull *In Coena Domini*, which condemns a cleric's bringing another cleric to trial in the lay courts for anything done in discharge of clerical duties, had never run in Ireland. Most of his parishioners were strongly on his side. Through late 1869 he had tried to persuade Cardinal Cullen (archbishop of Dublin, and Moran's uncle) to see his point of view. Cullen had handled the matter with typical caution, advising O'Keeffe in a conciliatory way to abandon the idea of bringing in the French nuns, and to submit to his bishop. O'Keeffe had written off to the cardinal prefect of Propaganda, Alessandro Barnabo, but had received the same advice in stronger terms.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> © Catholic Archdiocese, Sydney. Abbreviations: SAA: Sydney Archdiocesan Archives; DAA: Dublin Archdiocesan Archives; ODA: Ossory Diocesan Archives; ICRA: Irish College Rome Archives. ICRA correspondence is on microfilms at SAA. Dr Eris O'Brien's meticulous transcripts of Moran-related correspondence from Irish archives in Dublin and Kilkenny are in his papers at the Veech Library, Sydney, and will be spot-checked later on-site. The Moran biography is in an early stage of research, and additional references from the New Kirby Papers at ICRA, and from Propaganda Fide Archives in Rome, will be sourced on-site in the next few months and fed into this section, which covers Moran's first four years as bishop of Ossory, with some additional material at the end (in the future subjunctive) tracing the O'Keeffe affair to its conclusion in 1879. In Ireland Prof. Colin Barr, a leading specialist in the field, kindly read this, supplementing some of the primary references and checking others.

<sup>2</sup> See correspondence in Peadar Mac Suibhne, *Paul Cullen and His Contemporaries* (5 vols, Naas, Kildare, 1961-1977), IV, 254-6, and V, 43-4. Excellent recent treatments of the O'Keeffe affair include Colin Barr, 'An Irish Dimension to a British *Kulturkampf*?' *Irish Ecclesiastical Record*, [forthcoming], and Patrick Hogan, 'Fr Robert O'Keeffe', in William Nolan and Kevin Whelan, eds, *Kilkenny: History and Society* (Dublin, 1990). O'Keeffe published his own accounts of the developing dispute: [Robert O'Keeffe], *Cardinal Cullen and the P. P. Callan* (Kilkenny, 1872), and *Ultramontaniam versus Civil and Religious Liberty* (Dublin, 1875). See also Scrutator, *Ultramontaniam*

In April 1871 Cullen complained to Barnabo about the situation,<sup>3</sup> and was instructed the following month to deal with the matter conclusively. Weighed down with work, Cullen decided a suitable coadjutor bishop should be appointed to the diocese of Ossory to deal with the matter locally. The man he had in mind was his nephew, Patrick Francis Moran, who on Cullen's behalf wrote at the end of that month to Tobias Kirby, rector of the Irish College in Rome and go-between for the Irish episcopate in its relations with the Propaganda, pointing out that in Kilkenny things were going 'from bad to worse', that three law suits were pending, and that Bishop Walsh, at 82, was unable to administer his diocese:

So get the authorities at once to give the Cardinal power to convene the clergy for electing a Coadjutor, or at least let him get power to interfere directly in Callan, to make such changes of the curates there as he may judge expedient and to appoint *ad interim* an administrator of that Parish. I am sure if Fr. Nicholas Murphy was sent administrator of that parish for a few months he would very soon bring back all the people to union and peace. (One of the delusions of the poor Bishop is that the Cardinal wants to bring away his new Cathedral to Dublin.)<sup>4</sup>

Cullen eventually received the power he sought, and after breakfast on 30 August he and Moran caught the express to the picturesque city of Kilkenny, 81 miles SW from Dublin on the Great Southern and Western railway, to visit the bishop and inform him officially that the Holy See had given permission for the election of a coadjutor. Cullen had already drawn up the form for the summoning of the clergy, and he had it signed by the bishop and addressed to Walsh's vicar-general. The election was fixed for 19 September. They expected to find Walsh weaker than he in fact was—he showed them over the Catholic cathedral (St Mary's) and St Kieran's College. On the 2.30 p.m. train back to Dublin they found themselves seated in the same compartment with the 79-year-old Protestant bishop of Ossory, Dr James T. O'Brien, evangelical, author of books against the disestablishment of the Church of Ireland. His cathedral was St Canice's, dating from 1255, the older of the two cathedrals in Kilkenny by six hundred years and the largest in Ireland after St Patrick's in Dublin. A cruciform structure in the early English style of gothic, it was rich in sepulchral monuments and memorials dating from pre-Reformation times, and its adjacent library was full of rare and valuable books. By sad contrast the Catholic cathedral, St Mary's, completed in 1857, was devoid of historical interest. The question no doubt often arose in the minds of the town's Catholics, and perhaps in Moran's mind as he made small talk with Bishop O'Brien: which is the *true* Catholic cathedral?<sup>5</sup>

Moran's birthday was on the vigil of the Feast of the Seven Dolours, three days before the election. 'How happy I am', he thought, 'that it falls this year on the vigil of so great a feast'. On the spot he formed a resolution: 'I must henceforward adopt as my morning and evening motto the words of the Mass and Office today, "Mother behold thy Son", thy poor miserable sinful child has recourse to thee. Thou hast always been a Mother to me. Oh how can I ever

---

*versus Education in Ireland: The Case of Father O'Keeffe, P.P. Shortly Stated* (London, 1875), *Scrutator, The Home Rule and Ultramontane Alliance* (London, 1875), and *Legisperitus, Mr. O'Keeffe and the National Board* (Dublin, 1873), among other contemporary pamphlets on the subject. See too E. R. Norman, *The Catholic Church and Ireland in the Age of Rebellion 1859–1873* (London, 1965), pp. 431 ff., and the references to the Parliamentary Papers on p. 431.

<sup>3</sup> Cullen to Barnabo, 30 April 1871, Propaganda Fide Archives, *Scritture riferite nei congressi, Irlanda*, vol. XXXVI.

<sup>4</sup> Moran to Kirby, 31 May 1871, Kirby Papers, ICRA.

<sup>5</sup> In his diary on 15 April 1873 Moran wrote: 'Went to Dublin at 2½ p.m. Great numbers of Protestant Synodsmen in the train with me, inter caeteros Mr. Kavanagh M.P. Nevertheless no accident happened to the train. How can the Almighty have patience with such a mockery of a church as that which now presumes to call itself the Irish Church[?]' Moran Diaries, Moran Papers, SAA.

make any return for the innumerable favors and mercies thou hast shown, holy Mother?’<sup>6</sup>

On the morning of the 19<sup>th</sup>, in the Kilkenny cathedral dedicated to the same holy Mother, the High Mass of the Holy Ghost was sung. Then the cathedral was cleared. All the parish priests entered and took their places. Bishop Walsh was present, with Cardinal Cullen presiding. The names of the parish priests were called. Fr Robert O’Keeffe was among them, intending to vote for his cousin, Fr Matthew Keeffe, parish priest of Aghaboe. Cullen warned him that he was ineligible to vote because censures had been inflicted on him, and as he had not bothered to appeal from them, Cullen was bound to assume—and certainly in public—that they were valid. O’Keeffe tried to justify himself, but Cullen told him they were assembled for a fixed purpose and this was not the time to enter into the question. He had, however, received special faculties from the Holy See to examine O’Keeffe’s case, and would do so on another occasion. O’Keeffe bowed to the decision. The scrutiny—the formal discussion of the merits of the candidates, and the taking of votes—proceeded from noon until 3 p.m. (with the candidates having departed, of course). Back in Dublin that evening Moran received telegrams informing him of the result. In the *terna* (or list of three preferred candidates) he received 13 votes, Fr Matthew Keeffe 13, and the vicar-general Dr Edward McDonald 8. Because Moran, as a monsignor, ranked senior to a parish priest, he had won. There was no reason to believe that Rome would disregard the result. ‘*Me miserum*’, Moran wrote in his diary that night, ‘May God in his mercy grant a good Bishop to the See: may he keep his holy protecting hand over me and never permit so high a dignity to be conferred on one so unworthy unless he foresees in the mysterious way of his Providence that it may be to his own greater glory and the salvation of souls.’<sup>7</sup>

The results of the vote are intriguing. To what extent did the strong support for Matthew Keeffe reflect sympathy for his cousin? Why was Cullen, presiding over the scrutiny, unable to secure a more convincing win for his nephew? Moran claimed he had had no contact with the parish priests of Kilkenny, did not know why they voted for him, did not even know at first that he was being proposed.<sup>8</sup> At least his performance was better than it had been the previous year, when, of eight candidates at a similar election in the diocese of Ardagh (within the ecclesiastical province of Armagh), he had come last with just one vote.<sup>9</sup> Cullen, of course, had not presided then. Moran was not a popular choice for Ossory, and his popularity there would not improve on closer acquaintance. Though kindly beneath the reserve and sternness, even congenial in relaxed circumstances, he was strict in the demands he made on himself and those under his authority. His administration of Ossory would inspire fear in some quarters, gratitude and appreciation in others, but rarely affection.

Endorsing the results of Kilkenny vote, on 11 December 1871 the Sacred Congregation *de Propaganda Fide* elected Moran coadjutor-bishop of Ossory with right of succession to the see, and titular bishop of Olba. He learned on Christmas eve that this had been confirmed by the pope on the 17<sup>th</sup>. ‘Oh my good God’, he wrote in his diary that evening, ‘thou hast imposed this burden, thou alone canst give strength to sustain it’. This was more than conventional piety—he wrote to Tobias Kirby on the 27<sup>th</sup> that he was ‘filled with fear when I look on my want of experience’. Ossory presented a substantial challenge. Things were in a state of drift under the ailing Bishop Walsh, and it would take a strong hand to knock the diocese into order and raise the quality of its spiritual life—yet Moran had never administered as much as a parish.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Moran, entry for 17 September 1871, Moran Diaries, Moran Papers, SAA.

<sup>7</sup> Details in this paragraph, and the quotation, are from the entry for 19 September 1871, Moran Diaries, Moran Papers, SAA.

<sup>8</sup> Moran to Kirby, 4 October 1871, Kirby Papers, ICRA.

<sup>9</sup> See Emmet Larkin, *The Roman Catholic Church and the Home Rule Movement in Ireland 1870–1874* (Dublin, 1990), p. 40.

<sup>10</sup> Entry for 24 December 1871, Moran Diaries, Moran Papers, SAA; and Moran to Kirby, 27 December

The diocese to which he was now heir, in the province of Leinster and the ecclesiastical province of Dublin, had an area of close to a thousand square miles. It was bounded, roughly speaking, by the Suir on the south, by the Barrow on the east, and by Tipperary and King's County on the west. In the north it included the southern part of Queen's County. It had ancient origins, for it corresponded geographically with the old kingdom of Ossory which had been founded in the second century by King Aengus Osrithe and christianised by St Kieran, probably in the fifth century. St Patrick had preached there. Ossory was the ideal diocese for Moran as it was extraordinarily rich in the remains of antiquity: ruins of churches going back to the days of the earliest Irish saints, stone circles, earthen hill forts, round towers, pillar stones, holy wells, ancient abbeys and priories including Kells Priory, and Norman castles.

Moran took the train to Kilkenny on 29 January of the new year to notify Walsh officially of his appointment as coadjutor, finding that the old man had 'completely lost his memory'. It was clear Moran would be the effective bishop, in fact even before his consecration he was informed by Cardinal Barnabo that the administration of the parish of Callan was being confided by Rome to him personally, in view of Fr O'Keeffe's contumacy in refusing to abide by Cullen's order of suspension, issued on 13 November 1871. Through Kirby, Moran received permission to have his consecration fixed for 5 March, the feast day of the patron saint of Ossory, St Kieran.<sup>11</sup> Meanwhile he lost no time in asking his friend Sir John Bernard Burke, Ulster king-of-arms and editor of *Burke's Peerage*, to see to the design of a coat of arms based on those of St Francis de Sales: three stars and the motto '*omnia omnibus*'.<sup>12</sup>

Bouts of fever plagued him through February and March, and he almost fainted several times at his consecration, held in Dublin at the Marborough Street cathedral where his uncle presided, assisted by Bishop James Walshe of Kildare and Leighlin, Bishop Thomas Furlong of Ferns and other bishops. The archbishop of Cashel, Dr Patrick Leahy, preached, praising Moran as a man '*episcopabilis*' (worthy to be a bishop): a scholar who had taken his place amongst the scholars of Rome where he was a professor, an archaeologist of recognised pre-eminence in Ireland, a man acquainted with the practicalities of ecclesiastical administration. Afterwards they all dined at Clonliffe. 'Grant', Moran implored the deity that night, 'that I may live for thee alone, love thee alone, and labour for thee alone'.<sup>13</sup>

Severely weakened by fever, anxious over the anticipated burden of his responsibilities, he was on the brink of a nervous breakdown, unable to assume office for two weeks after his consecration. Finally, still weak, at 8.30 a.m. on 19 March he set out from his quarters in Eccles Street in emotional disorder, crying uncontrollably all the way to the Kingsbridge rail terminus. With his cold worsening, on the ride south he was racked by continual coughing, guaranteed to exacerbate a fever. On the point of alighting at the Kilkenny station he said the Angelus to himself, then stepped out onto his new diocese. A group was there to welcome him, including the mayor and the vicar-general, Dr Edward McDonald, but Moran's throat was hoarse and he was unable to respond adequately. McDonald took him in his carriage to St Kieran's College, which was to be Moran's residence for the next few months, then to the ramshackle, damp and unhealthy house of the old bishop, opposite the cathedral. Walsh received him kindly, lifting his weak arms and placing his hands on Moran's head, telling him, in faltering tones, that he gave him all the powers he himself had.<sup>14</sup>

Moran's private accommodation at St Kieran's College included an excellent sitting room and

---

1871, Kirby Papers, ICRA.

<sup>11</sup> Entry for 29 January 1872, Moran Diaries, Moran Papers, SAA; Cardinal Barnabo to Moran, 22 February 1872, Moran Papers, ODA; and Moran to Kirby, 5 February 1872, Kirby Papers, ICRA.

<sup>12</sup> Letter from Bernard Burke, 27 January 1872, in letters received by Moran, DAA; and *Kilkenny Journal*, 9 March 1872. '*Omnia omnibus*': 'all things to all men', also a motto of St Paul's, implying adaptability (but not duplicity) in the promotion of truth.

<sup>13</sup> Entry for 5 March 1872, Moran Diaries, Moran Papers, SAA; and *Kilkenny Journal*, 9 March 1872.

<sup>14</sup> Entry for 19 March 1872, Moran Diaries, Moran Papers, SAA.

bedroom, and a magnificent study or library, but he was disturbed to find that ‘The students are allowed to be at home about five months every year’ and that ‘They do not wear soutanes, and seldom attend the ceremonies in the Cathedral. I hope when I may have power to remedy a good deal of this but for the present I could not in any way interfere’.<sup>15</sup> He quickly assumed that power. Walsh’s mind was wandering, and when in late March Moran saw that the ceremonies for Holy Week were being poorly performed and poorly attended, because the bishop had been unable to perform them for several years and the priests had gone ‘rusty about them’, he took it on himself to appoint a priest as master of ceremonies and simply ordered the students to attend them.<sup>16</sup> He wrote to Cullen in late April that he had heard that spirits and tobacco were readily available at Maynooth and that the students there freely broke regulations, unrebuked by their professors—the place clearly required a visitation, which should be arranged at the next meeting of bishops. (At that meeting Moran was appointed a member of the Maynooth board of governors.)<sup>17</sup>

High among the august traditions of Ossory was rebellion. In the unsuccessful rebellion of 1641 Ireland’s national resistance had been centred in Kilkenny, headquarters of the Catholic Confederacy. During the second half of the nineteenth century Ireland was experiencing an age of rebellion, not just a moment, and there was a strong scent of victory as Westminster legislated one reform after another. Moran knew that he would be judged largely by his response to the intensifying nationalist mood. He knew too that his uncle was regarded by nationalists (unfairly) as collaborating with the power centre, Dublin Castle, and that Kilkenny would associate the nephew’s outlook with what they took to be the uncle’s unless Moran was seen quickly and publicly to occupy distinct political ground of his own. Wisely, he adopted a middle ground: implicit and gradually more vocal support for such popular causes as land rights and Home Rule, but opposition to a politicising clergy. The second position was the hard part. Throughout his period in Ossory Moran would consistently and rigorously oppose the politicisation of the pulpit, but his attitude to the participation of priests in political rallies would be *ad hoc*, shifting according to the strengths of political winds and the degrees of radicalism displayed by the priests participating. He would become overtly nationalist by the early 1880s, and more radically so in Australia, to the surprise of those who had known him in Kilkenny.

He staked out this middle ground early, in a speech of mid-April 1872 to the Kilkenny Catholic Young Men’s Society (over whose meetings he regularly presided), urging them to leave their politics on the threshold when meeting as a society founded on purely religious principles, but telling them not to discard politics either, to take an intelligent interest in the political world and vote conscientiously, that he who loves religion loves country, that patriotism is a necessity, involving constant combat against social perils (he mentioned secret societies and drunkenness). They should debate fruitful subjects, and he told them about the lecturers he proposed inviting to speak to them. The same week he received an address from the Leinster Union, a workingmen’s benevolent society, and by way of reply stressed the importance of the working class, who were the ones who kept faith through persecution and were now the objects of those inculcating false principles and fomenting discontent.<sup>18</sup>

During his first weeks in Kilkenny he supervised the foundation of a refuge for women driven

---

<sup>15</sup> Moran to Kirby, 21 March 1872, Kirby Papers, ICRA. The soutane was a long, buttoned gown, in black, worn as an outer garment by Catholic priests.

<sup>16</sup> Moran to Cullen, letters of 21 March and late March 1872, letters from Moran, DAA. On Good Friday, 29 March, he said the Mass of the Presanctified in the cathedral and was appalled by the ‘very miserable procession, the worst I ever saw’—entry for 29 March 1872, Moran Diaries, Moran Papers, SAA.

<sup>17</sup> Moran to Cullen, 27 April 1872, letters from Moran, DAA; and entry for 24 September 1872, Moran Diaries, Moran Papers, SAA.

<sup>18</sup> *Kilkenny Journal*, 20 April 1872.

by want to prostitution, an industrial school and a convent for the Sisters of Charity, who had been active in the city for the past eleven years,<sup>19</sup> but the newspapers were more interested in the O’Keeffe affair and how Moran would tackle that. In March 1872 Moran, on behalf of Bishop Walsh, informed the Commissioners of National Education that O’Keeffe had been suspended and replaced as parish priest by Fr Martin. The Commissioners subsequently decided on that basis to dismiss O’Keeffe as manager of the Callan National Schools. Four days later O’Keeffe struck out at Moran, in a letter of 27 April which he read to his congregations, and which Moran later released to the Catholic *Kilkenny Journal* where it appeared (along with Moran’s reply) on 8 May:

Callan, Saturday, April 27<sup>th</sup>, 1872

Right Rev. Sir,

It has been announced more than once in the Friary Chapel of this town that you would administer the Sacrament of Confirmation on a day of next month to the children of this parish in that chapel; but I hereby inform you that I will not allow you to administer that Sacrament to any parishioner of mine, except in my church, and on my presentation of the subject. You cannot be so ignorant as not to know that the parish priest is accountable to God for the proper reception of sacraments by his people, and that no other priest or bishop can administer holy things to his people in violation of his canonical rights. I, therefore, announce to you my determination and that of my two congregations, for whom I shall read this letter on tomorrow before I send it to you, not to permit you to confirm a single child of my parish in opposition to the canons of the Church. Thanks to a merciful Providence, and the implicit confidence of my attached flock in their pastor, I am well able to hold my own, and to “treat any invasion of my civil or ecclesiastical rights with the moral or physical resistance which may be necessary to repel aggression *juxta moderamen inculpatae Tutelae*<sup>20</sup>.”

I remain, Right Rev. Sir,  
Your obedient servant,  
Robert O’Keeffe, P.P.

Replying to this on 2 May, Moran wrote that he was not annoyed in the slightest by the threats. He added, in an even more theatrical style than O’Keeffe’s, ‘For my part, I will be only too happy to receive insults, nay more, I will joyfully lay down my life, if, by doing so, I may withdraw even one of the straying faithful of Callan from the brink of the abyss on which they now stand’. He claimed he had

never felt so honored as when, on the occasion of my first visit to Callan, one poor man thought fit to insult me. I am more indebted to that poor man than I can say . . . for no other person has ever conferred a greater honor on me. And I felt that honor the more because it was my happy privilege to receive those insults in Holy Week, the time specially set aside for meditating on the sufferings and humiliations of our dear Saviour for love of us.

Towards O’Keeffe he felt only ‘paternal love’, but O’Keeffe was deluding himself in continuing to assume the title of parish priest of Callan and in referring to ecclesiastical canons which existed only in his imagination. Those parishioners who continued to follow him (the majority at this stage) were separating themselves from the Church, but Moran ended by praying ‘that the God of peace, of mercy, and of love, may ever guide your steps’, signing himself ‘Yours affectionately in Christ’.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>19</sup> *Kilkenny Journal*, 24 April 1872.

<sup>20</sup> ‘*juxta . . .*’: consistent with the moderation of a blameless guardian.

<sup>21</sup> Copies of these letters are in the Kirby Papers, ICRA. They were printed in the *Kilkenny Journal*, 8

Round two began with a rejoinder from O’Keeffe on 8 May, read to his congregations. He saw Moran ‘simply as assistant to Dr Walsh’. Moran had sent the education commissioners ‘a lying certificate of my being canonically suspended’, and O’Keeffe vowed to ‘convict you of that lie before a jury of my countrymen’, for his civil rights came above ‘the pretensions of a Pius IX’. If Moran came to confirm children in Callan’s friary chapel, O’Keeffe and his parishioners would occupy it in advance (as they had already occupied the church), but Moran need not flatter his ‘burning zeal for martyrdom’ with the expectation that any injury would be done him. However, the ‘insult’ of Holy Week would be repeated ‘in your favourite devotional month. The hat and rug will be exhibited before your face in the month of May. Your uncle can tell you all about them; but lest this letter should see the public light, I deem it prudent to be silent on the subject’. He signed himself ‘Your obedient servant’. May was the special month of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The significance of ‘the hat and rug’ is elusive. In reply, Moran referred to O’Keeffe’s admirers: ‘Even in the Protestant Synod you have found panegyrist’, he acknowledged, but Jonathan Swift had somewhere said

that the Pope occasionally weeds his garden, and that the weeds thrown over his wall are often admired as fragrant flowers by the over-heated champions of Protestantism. I fear that some of your anonymous eulogists must belong to that class of Protestants, or perhaps may themselves be such weeds from the Pope’s garden. I pray you, be on your guard against such false friends: rest assured that they seek only to lead you astray into the paths of perdition, and to separate you from the one saving fold of Jesus Christ.

As for the month of May, yes, it was Moran’s favourite devotional month, for Mary ‘is indeed the spiritual Mother of each one of us, our life, our sweetness, and our hope in this vale of tears’.<sup>22</sup> The correspondence was released to the *Kilkenny Journal*. Moran used the friendly press to the maximum, the Orange press charging him with ‘liking to see his name at the end of a column of elaborate humility’.<sup>23</sup> By now O’Keeffe’s struggle had gained national prominence and was being debated at Westminster in terms of the violation of civil rights. Protestants naturally supported O’Keeffe morally and materially, even to the extent of withdrawing their children from the Protestant school in Callan and sending them instead to O’Keeffe’s school to reinforce the slowly dwindling numbers there. Moran believed, moreover, that ‘Fenians’ saw O’Keeffe as their patron and were pushing his cause in Kilkenny and beyond.<sup>24</sup>

The day set for the confirmations in Callan was Tuesday, 21 May, in the friary chapel, for O’Keeffe was very much in possession of the church. The sacrament is normally administered by the bishop and it was a new experience for Moran—a fraught one. He walked from the curate’s residence to the chapel at 6.45 a.m. to say Mass, and found about 70 police in front, lined up with muskets, and numerous mounted police besides. The county inspector walked up to him and Moran asked ‘Why so large a force?’—he had requested three or four. The inspector laughed. ‘You’ll see’, he said. Even at that early stage a hostile crowd had begun to form (‘the mob’, as Moran calls them), and printed circulars were being handed around. The Mass went off without incident and Moran prepared for the confirmations. Around 9.30 a.m. a large crowd, headed by Fr O’Keeffe riding in a black brougham, started to move out from the chapel-yard towards the friary, bent on frightening the children away and forestalling the ceremony. The tolling of the friary bell seems to have enraged them. ‘We heard their

---

May 1872.

<sup>22</sup> Letters, O’Keeffe to Moran (8 May 1872) and Moran to O’Keeffe (13 May 1872), copies in the Kirby Papers, ICRA. The Swift reference is to *A Tale of a Tub* (1704).

<sup>23</sup> *Kilkenny Express*, 17 May 1872.

<sup>24</sup> Entry for 7 June 1872, Moran Diaries, Moran Papers, SAA; Moran to Kirby, 11 June 1872, Kirby Papers, ICRA; and Moran to Cullen, 19 July 1872, letters from Moran, DAA. On the treatment of the case in Parliament, and O’Keeffe’s correspondence with Lord Russell and Gladstone, see Norman, *The Catholic Church and Ireland in the Age of Rebellion*, pp. 432 ff.

demoniacal shouts as they came along', Moran wrote in his diary that night, with that tendency of his to see any religious conflict in terms of good *vs* evil. A line of mounted police promptly drew up across the road just before the crowd reached the friary, leaving the other end of the road open for the children, who entered the chapel by a side door. Two hundred of them presented. There were twenty priests at the confirmation, besides the friars of the town. According to press reports that Moran cites in his diary, 'Nothing could exceed the rage of Fr O'Keeffe when he began to speak. He became quite black in the face, and having opened his mouth could not shut it for some minutes'. A rumour had got abroad among his supporters that at his approach the friary doors would open and the railings tumble down. Some appear to have thought he would perform a miracle. The uproar was clearly audible inside, and on two or three occasions the children were seized with panic.<sup>25</sup>

In Dublin three days later Moran ran into Dr James Murray, Bishop of Maitland (New South Wales), for whom he had acted as Irish agent, and invited him down to Kilkenny for a few days' stay at St Kieran's College, where they reminisced about their years in Rome and discussed the 'cheering' state of the Australian mission.<sup>26</sup> At this time Moran was on the point of beginning a series of visits to every one of the parishes in his diocese, determined to raise standards and increase the level of devotion—for example, he insisted on making the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament universal in Ossory, at least on the first Sunday of each month.<sup>27</sup> One of the first of these visits was on 12 June, to Ballyragget, a model parish in his view: drunkenness had been 'completely banished' and the children of the schools, in rotation, came each day to visit the Blessed Sacrament during play-hour. By way of contrast, on the following day he visited another town and found 'no Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. The plea is that the people are poor. Nevertheless the Parish Priest keeps two horses: and he has on hand £60 from the death of his predecessor'.<sup>28</sup> (Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament entailed expense, as incense and at least ten wax candles were required features.) In another parish he found that 'the Blessed Sacrament is not preserved in the Tabernacle: no ostensory, no Benediction of the Most Holy Sacrament', and in yet another 'A most miserable little chapel, but whitewashed for the occasion. Everything about the Altar dirty and wretched. No curate. The Parish Priest looks on himself as only appointed for a time till another Parish becomes vacant'. At Castletown there was 'A fair shell of a church but everything about the Altar most miserable. I spoke rather severely about it . . . No Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament and the Blessed Sacrament not kept in the Tabernacle'.<sup>29</sup> By mid-July he had completed his visitation of the northern half of the diocese and given confirmation in 17 parishes. In some parishes there was devotional fervour, but he told his friend Tobias Kirby that 'I find in many parishes . . . a total want of public devotions. In many of those I have visited there never was benediction of the Blessed Sacrament'. However, he was putting things right. He added that

In my exhortations to the people after each Confirmation I touch always on the three heads: 1. prayer; 2. love of the sacraments e.g. penance and Holy Eucharist; 3. devotion to the Blessed Virgin. And then in fine I pledge all the children publicly to be Apostles of Temperance, that is, to say in their families one Hail Mary every day that

<sup>25</sup> Entry for 21 May 1872, Moran Diaries, Moran Papers, SAA; and Moran to Cullen, 21 May 1872, letters from Moran, DAA.

<sup>26</sup> Entries for 24 and 29 May and 1 June 1872, Moran Diaries, Moran Papers, SAA.

<sup>27</sup> The Benediction of the Blessed (or Most Holy) Sacrament, which may be performed immediately after Mass or at a separate time as an afternoon or evening devotion, consists of hymns, litanies or canticles sung before the consecrated host, which, housed in a monstrance (also called an ostensory), is exposed on the altar, surrounded by lit candles. The ritual concludes with the priest taking the monstrance in his hands and making the sign of the cross with it over the kneeling congregation as a silent benediction.

<sup>28</sup> Entries for 12 and 13 June 1872, Moran Diaries, Moran Papers, SAA.

<sup>29</sup> Entries for 20 June and 8 and 10 July 1872, Moran Diaries, Moran Papers, SAA.

God may grant to themselves and their families and all their friends, the virtue of Temperance. I hope this will train up the rising generation to a hatred of drunkenness which is at the root of all the vice that exists in this country.<sup>30</sup>

The last point was a powerful one—drunkenness (a form of gluttony) is perhaps more wilful and culpable than lust, since the sexual drive (unlike drinking to excess) is in-built physiologically and presumably harder to resist. And drunkenness is a provoker to other sins. Certainly Moran was quick to help those whose fault was concupiscence, gaining them dispensations wherever possible in order that they might marry. He wrote to Kirby again four days later: ‘Will you be good enough to obtain a Dispensation in 2<sup>o</sup> and 3<sup>o</sup> consanguinitatis between . . . and . . . both of this Diocese. They have been guilty of copula carnalis:—have had intimacy for twelve months—and are spoken of by the people. This of course will render it very difficult for her to get another match’. And there were more complex problems:

The case for which one of my Priests at St John’s parish in this city wrote to you was: Titius sinned with the mother of Caja. He also sinned with Caja who is in child from him. In order to repair the injury done to Caja he is content to marry her, if a dispensation be mercifully granted on account of the first mentioned crime. Please send the dispensation as soon as you can, as the matter is very urgent, *ad servandam famam puellae*. It is probably better to send it direct to me in order to prevent any further mistake.<sup>31</sup>

On the matter of degrees of sinfulness, it always seemed to Moran that any transgression was more culpable when committed by a priest. On a retreat towards the end of July he noted down some of the points under contemplation:

Death in itself, its uncertainty, its certainty, uncertain what my dispositions will be when death comes. Oh truly we should work out our salvation in fear and trembling:—Death of the sinner dreadful, especially of a sinful Priest:—how happy the death of the Saints, above all of the holy Priest. The Priest must guard his sacerdotal character . . . The last Judgment is terrible on account of the Judge: the Examination: the sentence . . . Hell is but a perpetuation of the terrors of the Judgment . . . Mortal sin in a Priest how grievous its guilt:—how dreadful its consequences:—how difficult to repair.

These contemplations appear to have been associated with ordinations—he ordained his first two priests on 28 July 1872, the day before the retreat began. (Many of the priests he subsequently ordained, former students of St Kieran’s, went on the Australian mission, and in Moran’s last full year in Kilkenny, 1883, nearly all those he ordained were heading for Australia.)<sup>32</sup>

Bishop Walsh died a few days later, on 11 August, and Moran succeeded to the see. With enhanced authority he turned to matters of wider social import. He looked into the backgrounds of some of the teachers in the Catholic schools and found that at Goresbridge there was an assistant teacher who had studied at one of the government’s Model schools, seen by Catholics as godless. The man was promptly dismissed, Moran telling the parish priest he should remove one of his assistants for the same reason. ‘I have not been able to find any other from [the] Model school among the teachers in Kilkenny’, he noted in his diary.<sup>33</sup> He then turned his attention to ways he might improve conditions at Kilkenny’s workhouse (or poor-house), particularly for the children there. He had heard that the Limerick poor-house had been turned ‘from a hell to a heaven’ by the introduction of nuns, and arranged for a group of

<sup>30</sup> Moran to Kirby, 13 July 1872, Kirby Papers, ICRA.

<sup>31</sup> Moran to Kirby, 17 July 1872 and 16 January 1874, Kirby Papers, ICRA. ‘*ad servandam . . .*’: to save the reputation of the girl.

<sup>32</sup> Entries for 30–31 July and 29 July 1872, Moran Diaries, Moran Papers, SAA; *Liber Ordinationum a me + P.F.M.*, St Kieran’s College archives.

<sup>33</sup> Entry for 6 September 1872, Moran Diaries, Moran Papers, SAA.

nuns to take charge of the local workhouse and reside there as nurses and school-teachers.<sup>34</sup>

At Callan he introduced a community of Sisters of Mercy from Athy, believing they would prove ‘more efficacious than any other means for humanizing and converting the hardened schismatics’.<sup>35</sup> He established them in handsome form. At his own cost he purchased a big old house with four acres of land attached, adjoining the town. This may have been a nobleman’s residence in former times, for it was all enclosed by a fine wall, with a little moat within, and a garden, separately walled. The house was conveniently arranged and cost Moran £500 to get possession from a former parish priest. Unfortunately it was in such disrepair that he had to lay out another £200 in putting it in order. Later he would build these nuns a substantial new convent. He received the first four nuns there on 28 November 1872 and saw them installed, feeling such confidence in them that, as he wrote on 5 December, ‘I now intend to leave Callan in the hands of the Nuns’. Fr O’Keeffe threatened to turn them out but thought better of it—twelve months earlier he had had around 2600 adherents out of 3400 parishioners, but by now Moran was estimating his numbers at 1200 and falling fast.<sup>36</sup>

As Christmas approached, Moran spent time in Dublin in the libraries of the Royal Irish Academy and Trinity College. He had recently completed an article for the *Irish Ecclesiastical Record* on the twelfth-century English pope Adrian IV, who, it was claimed, granted overlordship of Ireland to Henry II of England by the bull ‘Laudabiliter’. Gallican Irish Catholics like O’Keeffe loved to hurl this in the face of ultramontanists as an example of their precious papal ‘infallibility’ in action at Ireland’s dire expense. It was a potent weapon. True, the text of ‘Laudabiliter’ does not go so far as to transfer *hereditary possession* of Ireland from Adrian IV to Henry II, but in subsequent centuries it was always cited as doing so, and there may have been an additional document, now lost. Moran’s article was re-published in the *Kilkenny Journal* almost at once and also issued as a pamphlet, *The Bull of Adrian IV* (Dublin, 1873 [check this](#)), as his contribution to a long-running debate on the genuineness of the bull. He believed it was a forgery, but more recently the science of diplomacy strongly suggests that it is genuine.<sup>37</sup> During his first year as bishop of Ossory Moran also published his edition of the *Acta Sancti Brendani* (Dublin, 1872)—the records of St Brendan—and followed this up with *Monasticon Hibernicum* (Dublin, 1873). This was an updated and annotated edition of Mervyn Archdall’s similarly titled but error-ridden history of Irish abbeys, priories and other religious establishments (Dublin, 1786).

Early in 1873 Moran learned that he was being prosecuted by O’Keeffe for libel and slander, and his solicitors promptly engaged two barristers for the defence. At the same time O’Keeffe was pursuing a case against Cullen, the man who had most recently suspended him. Moran had simply done his duty in announcing the suspension, and told Cullen that the trial gave him not ‘the slightest concern’, that he would not deny using words declaring O’Keeffe suspended from his faculties, but that he would deny malice.<sup>38</sup> O’Keeffe sued Moran on three counts, for

<sup>34</sup> Entries for 26 November 1872 (Limerick’s poor-house) and 1 January 1873 (Moran accepts from board of guardians, Kilkenny workhouse, terms for the entry of nuns), Moran Diaries, Moran Papers, SAA.

<sup>35</sup> Moran to Kirby, 23 October 1872, Kirby Papers, ICRA. Moran estimated that by that date 400 in Callan had abandoned ‘schism’.

<sup>36</sup> Moran to Kirby, 5 December 1872, Kirby Papers, ICRA; and entries for 22 October and 28 November 1872, Moran Diaries, Moran Papers, SAA. In the letter to Kirby, Moran encloses a list of subscriptions for the new Protestant church in Rome, commenting ‘They know their time is short and they are trying to make use of it’. This anticipates either the restoration of the temporal power of the pope (in which case it is wildly optimistic) or the Second Coming (‘the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because *he knoweth that he hath but a short time*’—Revelation 12.12).

<sup>37</sup> See the article by C. McGrath on ‘Laudabiliter’, with bibliography, in the *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 2nd edn (Detroit, 2003), Vol. 8, p. 379.

<sup>38</sup> Moran to Cullen, 6 and 8 January 1873, letters from Moran, DAA. See also Moran to Kirby, 15 January 1873, Kirby Papers, ICRA; and entries for 4 and 6 January 1873, Moran Diaries, Moran

each of which he claimed £1000 damages: (1) that Moran had announced to the National Board of Education that O’Keeffe had been suspended as Callan’s parish priest, in consequence of which he was deprived of the management of the National Schools in Callan;<sup>39</sup> (2) that Moran had announced from the altar that O’Keeffe had been deprived of all faculties to administer the sacraments; and (3) that Moran had deprived him of members of his congregation by announcing from the altar that O’Keeffe had ceased to be parish priest of Callan. If he could win his case against Cullen he stood a good chance of winning against Moran.

It is interesting to contemplate O’Keeffe’s motives in initiating his various law suits. He told his followers in February that he hoped to get £5000 from Cullen’s case and would distribute £4000 amongst them,<sup>40</sup> yet later in the year he would be negotiating with Moran for a return to the fold, just as he had earlier tried to come to terms with Cullen. He rejected an invitation to join the Old Catholics of Germany (who had left the Church over the issue of papal infallibility),<sup>41</sup> probably because once outside the Church there would be no deal left to do. His law suits put him in a stronger position to bargain with his adversaries, for he could offer to drop the cases as part of a *quid pro quo*. Moran’s costs were £219 for solicitors alone between 1873 and 1875,<sup>42</sup> with court costs and damages on top of that. It was in O’Keeffe’s interests to settle the dispute while he still had a good number of followers.

In late May the verdict in the the Cullen case was announced after an initial disagreement within the jury: guilty, in line with the charge of Chief Justice James Whiteside of the Queen’s Bench. O’Keeffe’s argument that the bull *In Coena Domini* (condemning a cleric’s bringing a brother cleric before a lay court for discharge of clerical duties) had never run in Ireland was a winner—so far. (In February 1875 Whiteside’s verdict against Cullen would be reversed on appeal, by which time the various processes would have cost Cullen £3000 in legal fees.) Moran’s view was predictable: ‘Everyone is amazed at the audacious bigotry shown by Whiteside:—the Jury are undoubtedly very weak to allow him to dictate to them, but they have shown their appreciation of O’Keeffe’s character by giving him one farthing damages’.<sup>43</sup>

This boded ill for Moran’s trial, but in September O’Keeffe offered to heal the rift, feeling himself at an advantage on account of the express desire of a number of bishops that peace be restored in Ossory.<sup>44</sup> At 2.30 p.m. on the 19<sup>th</sup>, a Friday, he called at the bishop’s house (to which Moran had moved after the death of Bishop Walsh). Moran told the servant to show him upstairs to the sitting room. ‘I received him as cordially as I could’, he recorded, ‘but he seemed to be in great terror. He remained for about a quarter of an hour’. O’Keeffe insisted he was driven to the course he took, saying it had reduced him to ruin. Moran would not allow

---

Papers, SAA.

<sup>39</sup> On this question see Legisperitus, *Mr. O’Keeffe and the National Board* (Dublin, 1873), particularly pp. 3–4. The pamphlet supports the Board’s action.

<sup>40</sup> Moran to Cullen, 10 February 1873, letters from Moran, DAA. His statement in this letter that attendances at O’Keeffe’s church had now fallen to around 150 was incorrect—as late as May 1874 O’Keeffe still had a combined 400 at his two Masses, as many as at Callan’s ‘orthodox’ chapels. Entry for 4 May 1874, Moran Diaries, Moran Papers, SAA. Three weeks later, in a letter to Cullen, Moran downplayed the numbers—240 were attending O’Keeffe’s church, he said (perhaps with a ‘mental reservation’: ‘. . . at the better attended of his two Masses’). Moran to Cullen, 27 May 1874, letters from Moran, DAA.

<sup>41</sup> Entry for 19 March 1873, Moran Diaries, Moran Papers, SAA. It was Lowry Whittle who invited O’Keeffe to join the Old Catholics.

<sup>42</sup> Maxwell & Weldon, solicitors: itemised costs for 1873–75, Moran Papers, ODA.

<sup>43</sup> Entry for 27 May 1873, Moran Diaries, Moran Papers, SAA; and see also Moran to Cullen, 28 May 1873, letters from Moran, DAA (similar in tone).

<sup>44</sup> Senior British politicians had bought into the fight too, including Lord John Russell and Disraeli, who were intimating that Cullen was the pope’s greatest enemy in Britain (Moran’s comment: ‘Pilate and Herod seem to be agreed on that point’—Moran to Cullen, 19 April 1873, letters from Moran, DAA).

him to enter on a justification of the past, but said that the moment he 'ceased to wage war with the Church of God' he would become his friend. O'Keeffe replied that all he wanted was to live, so Moran asked him, in token of his sincerity, to keep his parish church closed the following Sunday and to hand over the county chapels to Fr Martin for Mass. O'Keeffe agreed, asking when he should call again, and Moran replied that he would let him know after Sunday (two days away). 'It is hard to know', Moran thought, 'whether or not he came in a spirit of humility and sincerity. Sometimes he put on his usual laugh and began his common tirade'.<sup>45</sup> O'Keeffe fulfilled his part of the bargain, and Moran considered his options: offer him a suitable pension, or another parish after 12 months' proof of sincerity. O'Keeffe called again on the Monday but seemed 'as obdurate and hardened as man can be', though he still wanted a reconciliation and talked about money, agreeing to a conference on Wednesday. Arriving punctually at noon, he found witnesses present. According to Moran, he 'went down on his knees and began to cry. But it was all moonshine. His whole object is money'. O'Keeffe said his debts included £270 back-pay owed to his school-teachers, £70 for repairs to his church, £70 for repairs on his house, and, all-up, £440. This did not include unpaid legal expenses. He agreed, in return for an appropriate pension, to withdraw from all parochial administration in Callan, to give possession of churches, schools and so on to Moran's nominee, and to abstain from saying Mass for twelve months. There was another mid-day meeting on Saturday the 27<sup>th</sup>, again with witnesses present. At this meeting Moran refused to pay O'Keeffe's legal expenses, and said that any agreed pension (he was offering £120 per annum, which O'Keeffe laughed at) would cease immediately O'Keeffe 'did anything that would be a disgrace to his sacred profession'. O'Keeffe would not accept this on any account, possibly because he felt that such a clause would imply past misconduct, though Moran thought it was because he had more law suits in mind. In any case 'all ended in smoke', with O'Keeffe going away muttering 'It will be a long day now before you will see peace', whistling as he walked through the town.<sup>46</sup>

In October 1873 the nationalist movement took a great stride forward with the launching in Queen's County of a program for Home Rule, fixity of land tenure and a free denominational education. The originators of the program were two priests of the Ossory diocese, the Rev. Matthew Keeffe PP (who had equalled Moran's vote for co-adjutor bishop of Ossory) and the Rev. Thomas O'Shea PP. The *Leinster Independent* attacked these men and their program but the *Kilkenny Journal* supported them, claiming that the *Leinster Independent* was the only paper in the United Kingdom to impugn them, and referring to the strong support they enjoyed from 'the patriot priests of Ossory'.<sup>47</sup> A number of these patriot priests wrote to the *Journal* in support of the program. 'Monster' rallies followed—at Tholsell on 21 October in support of the Queen's County program, at Kilmacow in the name of the Kilkenny Tenant League in late October (presided over by the Rev. Daniel Brennan PP),<sup>48</sup> and at the Parade, Kilkenny, on Wednesday 12 November, a fair-day. This was the biggest meeting of them all, with a crowd of up to 30 000 (estimates vary) supporting 'the declaration of the men of Ossory' for the Queen's County program. Bands played as the throngs arrived, in great processions, to hear the speeches. The Rev. John Kelly PP of Castlecomer, one of Moran's best priests, was appointed chairman of proceedings. As reported by the sympathetic *Kilkenny Journal* (not entirely to be relied on for objectivity), the Hon. George Bryan, senior MP for the county, a substantial land-owner and a Catholic, who had opposed the meeting's being called, was refused the chairmanship. He branded Fr Kelly and the clergy in attendance as 'a gang of

<sup>45</sup> Entry for 19 September 1873, Moran Diaries, Moran Papers, SAA.

<sup>46</sup> Entries for 19, 22, 24 and 27 September 1873, Moran Diaries, Moran Papers, SAA; Moran to Cullen, 19, 21, 22, 24, 27 September 1873, letters from Moran, DAA. The figures for O'Keeffe's debts vary between the diary entry for 24 September and Moran's letter to Cullen of that date. Figures given here are from the diary.

<sup>47</sup> *Kilkenny Journal*, 15 October 1873.

<sup>48</sup> *Kilkenny Journal*, 22 and 29 October 1873.

ruffians', but his words were drowned out by the howls of the crowd. An opposing crowd were so effectively beaten back with stones and sticks that, according to the *Journal*, the presence of police was quite 'unnecessary'. In short, it was mob-rule.

'There is self respect, independence, manliness and pluck in the Priesthood of Ossory, no less than learning and sanctity', the *Journal* asserted, describing Fr Kelly as 'the great mind and firm unbending will that ruled the destiny of Kilkenny' (the reporter may have been reading Thomas Carlyle). In his speech, Kelly declared that 'the exigencies of his country demanded that the order of priesthood should undertake also the duties of citizenship in Ireland'. This meeting marks the definite establishment of the Home Rule movement in Kilkenny, and just ten days later in the Dublin Rotunda the National Conference on Home Rule opened its sittings. A momentous political process was underway. The *Journal* printed a list of priests in attendance at the Kilkenny meeting—almost all of them were there. But there is no mention of Moran—he chose to visit the new industrial school instead.<sup>49</sup>

Monster rallies were not his kind of show (this would change in Sydney), but he could not avoid final responsibility for the behaviour of his clergy. It was to Moran that the democratically elected George Bryan MP appropriately complained on 14 November, with dry wit, about the behaviour of the priests at the rally. As Bryan had been prevented from putting his views on Home Rule (he wrote), and as he believed that the clergy of Ossory were the most reliable exponents of the people's minds, perhaps Moran would care to communicate with his clergy to ask them: does George Bryan hold the people's confidence? Should the opinion of the clergy prove adverse, he said, he would resign.<sup>50</sup>

Two days later Moran sent admonitions to three of his priests including Fr Kelly PP of Castlecomer. From the painful scenes at the recent meeting, he wrote, it was evident that efforts were being made to introduce dissension and identify political aspiration with personal quarrels foreign to the matters under discussion. He reminded them of their duty when such a spirit of division got abroad—they should promote social harmony—and he referred them to the relevant decrees of the diocesan statutes, ordering them to 'take no part for at least twelve months in any political meetings in this county'.<sup>51</sup> He must have realised that this letter, printed in the *Kilkenny Journal*, would turn thousands against him. He wrote a private reply to Bryan which Bryan made public, fortunately for Moran as it turned out. Bryan belonged to a prominent Catholic family (they had their own oratory, which remained in the family until the property was sold in 1936). Moran wrote that neither he nor his clergy, he was sure, wanted Bryan to resign, particularly on the eve of a general election. The presence of so many clergy at the meeting was not a demonstration against Bryan personally, but meant to promote peace and order (this rather contradicts what he had written in his circular of the 16<sup>th</sup>). The clergy and people were united (in the circular he had referred to divisions among the people), and he hoped that peace would be restored and that devoted men would be elected. Bryan refused to accept that the clergy had peaceful motives and were not against him personally, but Moran's letter brought the *Journal* and its readers behind him once more.<sup>52</sup> In the general elections of February 1874 (following which Disraeli formed his second cabinet, displacing Gladstone as prime minister), Bryan, together with another Catholic, John Martin, was re-elected for Kilkenny County by a very wide margin. Both men had been publicly backed by Moran, who criticised the candidacy of L. G. F. Agar Ellis and his advocacy of 'civil and

<sup>49</sup> *Kilkenny Journal*, 15 November 1873; entry for 12 November 1873, Moran Diaries, Moran Papers, SAA. The Dublin *Freeman's Journal*, also a nationalist paper, was far more sympathetic to Bryan.

<sup>50</sup> *Kilkenny Journal*, 19 November 1873.

<sup>51</sup> *Kilkenny Journal*, 22 November 1873. The paper's editorial, normally so enthusiastic about the new movement, is significantly silent on the matter in this issue. What disturbed Moran most about the meeting, of course, were the 'riotous proceedings' (entry for 14 November 1873, Moran Diaries, Moran Papers, SAA).

<sup>52</sup> *Kilkenny Journal*, 26 November 1873.

religious liberty' and opposition to Home Rule (Ellis lost his seat).<sup>53</sup>

Although the schism in Callan had not yet been ended, and though Moran could do little but watch as his clergy became increasingly politicised, by the end of his second year in Kilkenny he could point to significant achievements, including the calling of a 'quasi' diocesan synod in June 1873 (some of the complex formalities went unobserved), the first time in 200 years anyone had attempted to hold a diocesan synod in Ossory. Moran's aims were to unify his clergy and encourage other bishops to call synods ('the great difficulty they have is to know how to go about it').<sup>54</sup> By August 1873 he had visited every parish. By September of that year a new industrial school for poor and neglected children, offering basic education and training in work skills, was ready for occupation in Kilkenny, funded by local contributions which Moran had managed to solicit (running costs for such schools were only partly offset by capitation grants from the government). St Kieran's College had been transformed: 'The Students of the Ecclesiastical House dress with the Soutane and Soprano', Moran told Kirby, 'precisely as in your College in Rome. They attend the ceremonies in the Cathedral and walk through the streets in their full uniform to the great joy of the people. Next year I hope to send you some first-rate students'. The convent at Callan was 'flourishing', he said, and the town's Christian Brothers had 120 boys in their school—'Indeed the schism there is almost extinct', he claimed. 'Only a handful of obstinate people now adhere to Fr. O'Keeffe.'<sup>55</sup> (This was an exaggeration—five months later Fr O'Keeffe still had a combined 400 at his two Masses, as many as at Callan's 'orthodox' chapels.<sup>56</sup> Moran may have been anxious to allay concerns in Rome about the schism in his diocese.) He was successfully promoting devotional societies throughout his diocese, writing to Kirby in January 1874 that

the Confraternity of the Holy Family, for men, was established here last month after the late mission. They meet once a week on Wednesday evenings for their devotions. They have a sermon and Benediction, and they sing hymns and recite the Rosary. Last night there were about 800 men, members of this Confraternity, present in the Cathedral. We have a second branch of it in St. John's Parish at the other side of the town. They meet there on Sunday evenings as the people have to come in from the Country, and they have about 500 members already enrolled. I hope this Confraternity will be a great means for preserving the members from drunkenness. We have already seen some fruit from it. During the past Christmas holidays, as I have learned from the Excise officers, ten puncheons (each of which is equal to the Roman botte) less of whiskey were consumed than during the same Christmas time last year, in this city alone.<sup>57</sup>

Again, because Moran knew Kirby would pass this information to people in Propaganda there may have been some exaggeration in it. If not, then the diversion of 1300 men in and around Kilkenny (or a substantial proportion of them) from the pubs to this confraternity is a remarkable achievement. Moran devoted his Lenten Pastoral for 1874 to attacking intemperance, calling it the curse of Ireland and a reproach to the Irish commonly used by outsiders. He urged publicans to restrict opening hours during Lent.<sup>58</sup>

<sup>53</sup> See the *Kilkenny Journal* for 4 February 1874. Moran read 'civil and religious liberty' as code for secular education. Although he thought Martin 'a respectable man', he had disliked Martin's backers in the previous elections: 'the most rabid Fenians in the country. There was a regular but silent terrorism exercised and the burden of the mob's cries was down with the Priests'. Moran to Kirby, 17 January 1871; and see Emmet Larkin, *The Roman Catholic Church and the Home Rule Movement in Ireland 1870–1874* (Dublin, 1990), p. 91.

<sup>54</sup> Moran to Kirby, 9 May 1873, Kirby Papers, ICRA.

<sup>55</sup> Moran to Kirby, 28 December 1873, Kirby Papers, ICRA.

<sup>56</sup> Entry for 4 May 1874, Moran Diaries, Moran Papers, SAA.

<sup>57</sup> Moran to Kirby, 22 January 1874, Kirby Papers, ICRA.

<sup>58</sup> *Kilkenny Journal*, various dates. The paper normally printed Moran's pastorals as a matter of course. In

The Ossory Archaeological Society was inaugurated by Moran on 7 January 1874. Its meetings were held at St Kieran's College, where the Society's museum was set up. Archaeology was an aspect of religious devotion for Moran, exemplified in this diary entry:

Confirmation in Tullagherin. 68 children confirmed, population about 1500, was united with Thomastown till about 25 years ago. A magnificent old round-tower near the ruined monastery. It is beautifully placed and can be seen from all the country around. The whole field of about two acres on the summit of the hill around the round-tower is filled with artificial mounds which manifestly mark, and still present the traces of, the old monastic buildings. There is an ancient ogham [Irish-inscribed] standing stone very close to the tower, among the tombstones. It is one of the most frequented burying-places in the County. Visited Kilfane: the garden of Sir John Power, and its wonderful trees: ruins of old church of the Norman time. No drunkenness at all, thanks be to God, in the parish. Tower of Kilbline on the road.<sup>59</sup>

The Ossory Archaeological Society issued ten series of publications in three volumes between 1874 and 1884, many of its articles written by Moran.<sup>60</sup> He contributed to all series except the last, and the Society evidently ended with his departure in 1884. His other major contribution to Irish antiquarian studies during his Ossory period was his three-volume *Spicilegium Ossoriense*, a very large collection of primary historical documents running to 1646 pages in all.<sup>61</sup>

Moran's trial opened in Naas on 17 March 1874. The jury was balloted, nine Catholics and three Protestants being chosen. The first man chosen became the foreman—he was married to one of Moran's cousins, but the prosecution knew nothing of that. O'Keeffe as plaintiff was examined and cross-examined on the first day, Moran the following. The jury were unable to agree and were discharged.<sup>62</sup> The re-trial opened on 21 July, with O'Keeffe conducting his case in person. According to Moran, Chief Justice Whiteside of the Queen's Bench 'gave him constant directions, indeed acted more as his counsel than as Judge. I endeavoured to lay down as fully and as clearly as possible everything connected with O'Keeffe's suspension, as there were several persons from Callan in Court. Whilst cross-examining me O'Keeffe was most demoniacal'. (Moran's vocabulary is characteristic.<sup>63</sup>) The next day Whiteside 'gave his charge

1873 Ireland had been consecrated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Moran devoting his Lenten Pastoral for 1873 to the subject, and there were appropriate ceremonies in the cathedral.

<sup>59</sup> Entry for 10 June 1873, Moran Diaries, Moran Papers, SAA.

<sup>60</sup> Moran's major contributions to the Society's volumes include his inaugural address and an article on St Fiacc in series 1 (1874), a multi-part article on the early Irish missions in Great Britain in series 2, 3 and 4 (1878), a multi-part article on the bishops of Ossory from the Anglo-Norman invasion to the present in series 7, 8 and 9 (1882–3), as well as the following shorter articles in series 4, 5 and 6 (1878–9): Fruits of Irish Piety among the Britons; Missionary Career of St Columba and Her Companions in Scotland; The Successors of St Columba in Iona; Irish Saints in the Kingdom of Strathclyde; Some Other Irish Saints in Scotland; First Missions to the Anglo-Saxons; St Aidan, Irish Bishop of Lindisfarne; The Immediate Successors of St Aidan; St Cuthbert; and Irish Missions in the Other Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms.

<sup>61</sup> *Spicilegium Ossoriense: being a Collection of Original Letters and Papers Illustrative of the History of the Irish Church from the Reformation to the Year 1800*, in three series (Dublin, 1874, 1878, 1884). The genesis of the collection is a letter from Moran to Cullen of 31 January 1874: 'I have been thinking that it would be well to publish a *Spicilegium* of the documents which we have, many of which were copied at your Eminence's expense. I made an experiment some short time ago, to see whether such a volume of sufficiently important documents could be made up, and I was amazed at the amount of documents which I have from Elizabeth's reign to the year 1800 . . . If your Eminence thinks it would be useful to put together a *Spicilegium* I will select sufficient for an octavo volume all at once'.

<sup>62</sup> More details in Moran to Cullen, 20 March 1874, letters from Moran, DAA; see also entries for 17, 18 and 19 March 1874, Moran Diaries, Moran Papers, SAA.

<sup>63</sup> That is, he 'turns up the contrast'. In October 1874 Cullen mailed Moran the proof sheets of a Pastoral, inviting comment. Moran suggested changing 'sexual love' to 'impure love', and 'wanton

altogether like an advocate for O'Keeffe and dictated to the Jury a verdict against me', calling Moran's public pronouncements on O'Keeffe libellous and unjustified. After an hour's deliberation the jury brought in a verdict against Moran, with damages of £50. With court costs and counsel's fees these trials set Moran back by £450.<sup>64</sup> Though he thought Whiteside an anti-Catholic judge, it is significant that in 1843 as a barrister Whiteside had defended Daniel O'Connell. This was not the last action brought against Moran by O'Keeffe.<sup>65</sup>

Moran's continuing interest in the Australian mission was stimulated by visits to Kilkenny in September and October by Matthew Quinn, bishop of Bathurst (seeking priests), and Thomas Croke, bishop of Auckland and soon to be archbishop of Cashel, a militant nationalist in the MacHale tradition. When Cullen consecrated Martin Crane as first bishop of the Victorian city of Sandhurst (now Bendigo) in September, Moran was assistant-consecrator.<sup>66</sup> The Australian mission was the destination of many of the graduates from St Kieran's, which at this time was expanding its non-ecclesiastical side in competition with a local Protestant college. Moran was seeking £3000 for a new wing when a bequest of that amount came out of the blue with the stipulation that after the donor's death the interest go to support the education of missionaries (which accorded with Moran's preference).<sup>67</sup>

The discipline he imposed on his diocese was unrelenting and often harsh. On the one hand it smartened up slack priests, as in the parish of Lisdowney:

There has been the greatest possible improvement since the last visitation. The High Altar beautifully decorated: everything requisite for Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament: a rich carpet: a good choir and harmonium: the Blessed Sacrament kept constantly in the Tabernacle. Nothing of all this the last confirmation. The children were well prepared.<sup>68</sup>

On the other hand it probably alienated the more independent-minded among the faithful. For instance, Moran believed that Catholic children should attend either the state-supported National (parochial) Schools, most of which had gradually become denominational,<sup>69</sup> or private Catholic schools such as those provided by the Christian Brothers and many of the convents.

with her lovers' to 'pursued her wicked course'. Moran to Cullen, 23 October 1874, letters from Moran, DAA.

<sup>64</sup> Entries for 21 and 22 July 1874, Moran Diaries, Moran Papers, SAA. Moran to Cullen, 22 July 1874, letters from Moran, DAA.

<sup>65</sup> O'Keeffe was again suing Moran for libel in February 1875, in the court of Queen's Bench. Walter Hawe, formerly a school-teacher employed by O'Keeffe at Callan, had stated in a letter to Moran that O'Keeffe had misappropriated funds of £180. Moran had forwarded the letter to the National Board of Education, thus 'libelling' O'Keeffe. Moran pleaded no libel: his communication with the Board was privileged, prompted by a sense of duty. The next month O'Keeffe initiated proceedings against Moran for appointing Fr Martin administrator of the parish of Callan. By now Moran saw any adherent of O'Keeffe's as headed for perdition, noting on 19 March 1875 that a certain Dooley 'to-day dropped dead at Coolagh. It was only yesterday that Fr. Drea called to this man and urged him to attend the station which was being held for that district. He refused to do so or renounce his schism. He died before the Priest could reach him although he galloped his horse the moment that the intelligence reached him. How terrible are the judgments of God!' Moran Diaries, Moran Papers, SAA.

<sup>66</sup> Entries for 21 and 25 September and 31 October 1874, Moran Diaries, Moran Papers, SAA. The following year he was visited by the Rev. Dr John Cani, vicar-general of Brisbane, where Dr James Quinn was bisho. Cani told him of the rapid growth in the Catholic population of Queensland, now at 40 000. Entry for 25 May 1875, Moran Diaries, Moran Papers, SAA.

<sup>67</sup> Moran to Cullen, 2 November 1874, letters from Moran, DAA; entry for 8 December 1874, Moran Diaries, Moran Papers, SAA: 'Mr Richard Devereux, so munificent in all his charities, gave me to-day a cheque for £3,000. The interest of 5% to be paid to himself during his life and to be applied after his death to the maintenance and education of young missioners for foreign missions.'

<sup>68</sup> Entry for 16 May 1874, Moran Diaries, Moran Papers, SAA.

<sup>69</sup> The original intention had been that they would cater for Catholics and Protestants alike, offering some denominational religious instruction in addition to secular instruction.

Decidedly, they should not attend the Model Schools, which were secular and entirely free from local Catholic control. To this end he was prepared to infringe on civil rights, employing sacraments as weapons: in confirming children at Borris-in-Ossory, he noted, 'I rejected one young lad named Corcoran because he goes to the Model school in Birr. His father sends all his sons every-day into the Birr Model school in spite of all remonstrance'.<sup>70</sup> One cannot imagine an action more calculated to lose entirely a man of independent spirit. Attendance at a secular school was virtually an excommunicating offence in Ossory—though not in Rome, where all elementary education was now secularised. It was not as though the boy had come to Confirmation unprepared, or had incorrectly answered a question on a matter of faith.<sup>71</sup>

By contrast, Moran's conduct as a member of the board of governors of the Kilkenny lunatic asylum was liberal. Though shocked to learn that the same chapel was used by Protestants and Catholics alike, he did not insist on changing the arrangement. At a meeting in September he successfully moved that an inmate be given into the charge of his friends. The patient was set at liberty, Moran inviting the inspectors to consider the charges made by the man against the management of the institution.<sup>72</sup>

In late May the *Kilkenny Journal* published Moran's memorandum to his clergy on the National or parochial schools (overseen by the National Board of Education). He stresses the duties of parents, who should send their children to school at an early age, and the duties of teachers and priests, who should watch over any neglected children. He notes that the National Board allowed clergy to give religious instruction at appointed hours, yet many clergy were not availing themselves of the opportunity, seldom visiting the schools. It was impossible to transfer to teachers the priests' prerogative of teaching religion. Teachers should be trained, and as the government would not support Catholic training colleges the bishops were doing it on their own account—a central training institution was almost complete. There were 2072 Catholic children in parochial schools in the municipal area of Kilkenny in 1871, a big increase over the previous decade, given a declining population, and now in 1875 these numbers had further increased to 2803. The more numerous country schools also enjoyed big increases in attendance. However, the figures for Kilkenny county showed that a third of Catholic children over four were illiterate. Moran had compiled population statistics for each parish in his diocese. In its 41 parishes and districts there were 120 978 people, 216 schools, and 18 058 Catholic children at school (though the average daily attendance was far lower, only 10 732). New primary schools and schools for infants had recently opened. In only one Catholic parish was education conducted by Protestant teachers, the local nobleman insisting on their participation.<sup>73</sup> (The majority of both Protestants and Catholics, it should be noted, wanted and demanded a strictly denominational system of primary and secondary education.

The struggle to improve the education of the poor was inextricably bound up with their social condition, with the issue of tenant rights, and with the great national movement for Home Rule, largely agrarian and Catholic in inspiration.<sup>74</sup> There was widespread demoralisation

---

<sup>70</sup> Entry for 14 July 1874, Moran Diaries, Moran Papers, SAA.

<sup>71</sup> In this regard Moran was following Cullen, who had implied in a pastoral of 1869 that children attending the Model School in Marlborough Street would be denied the sacraments. See Desmond Bowen, *Paul Cardinal Cullen and the Shaping of Modern Irish Catholicism* (Dublin, 1983), p. 137. Some Irish ecclesiastics (Archbishop MacHale of Tuam, for one) tolerated Model Schools. With Moran's strict discipline over Ossory compare the laxity in the ecclesiastical province of Cashel at this time. According to Cullen 'The parish priests do as they like, and they or some of them are tending to do away with the reforms made by the [1850] Synod of Thurles. There is a great tendency that way. I have just heard that in a parish of that province the parish priest who is also vicar-general gets all the children baptised in the private houses and has all the Confessions heard in the private houses'. Cullen to Kirby, 6 April 1875, Kirby Papers, ICRA.

<sup>72</sup> Entries for 16 April and 15 September 1874, Moran Diaries, Moran Papers, SAA.

<sup>73</sup> *Kilkenny Journal*, 26 May 1875.

<sup>74</sup> There were, however, significant Protestant nationalists, like Sir John Gray, three times elected MP for

amongst the poor (reflected in alcoholism), a perpetual insecurity and dread of tomorrow. Most people lived on the land or in small towns servicing the land. For tenant farmers there was still no fixity of tenure.<sup>75</sup> In many places they faced continual threats of ejection in the name of progress, efficiency and productive change (cattle, for instance, were more profitable and less bothersome than tenants). As landlords reduced the numbers of tenants they impoverished not only the people they evicted (this number was steadily increasing through the 1870s) but the townspeople, effectively forcing hundreds of thousands abroad. Moran's diaries have few references to such facts. It was how things were.

A minor revolution was about to occur and Moran must have been engaged in planning it, because he told Kirby on 19 June that the people of Callan would soon 'take possession of the parochial Church and thus put an end to the whole schism'.<sup>76</sup> O'Keeffe, unaware of these plans, was about to make the mistake of going off to England on a lecturing tour organised by his Protestant friends in London. On Sunday, 20 June 1875, he told his congregations they could hear Mass wherever they pleased for the next month. Nine days later his church was taken over by his opponents. It was a *coup d'église* whose details Moran relished:

At 5 o'clock this morning the people occupied the Parochial Church of Callan. They gave the care-taker five minutes to open it peaceably and when these were elapsed they burst in the sacristy-door and passed inside the church and unbarred the doors. Two men whom O'Keeffe left in charge of his house passed along the roof of the church and pulled up the rope of the bell and tolled the bell to summon their adherents, but no one came. The "boys" procured a ladder and having given outside a good blow to the louvres of the belfry, the two O'Keeffites ran away. The rope was then let down and the bells soon joyfully announced to Callan that the Church was in the hands of the people. Some of the police got into the parochial house and prevented the people from occupying it. Everything passed off most peaceably, thanks be to God.<sup>77</sup>

The next day Moran sent word to Fr Nolan, his administrator at Callan, 'to purify the Church and free it from the Interdict'—he had obtained special powers from Cardinal Cullen for this purpose. O'Keeffe rushed home from London, arriving on 1 July, and was refused admission to the church by the crowd assembled outside. Police opened a path for him to the parochial house, and he was hissed and hooted as he passed through. On Sunday, 4 July, there were large attendances at the church. A guard stood at the entrance, asking everyone who wanted admission, 'Are you with the bishop?' Those who declined to answer 'Yes' were refused admission. A counter-attack by O'Keeffe's supporters was mounted on the church the next day but failed for want of numbers. Inside the church it was found that prior to departing on his lecture tour O'Keeffe had removed candlesticks, vestments and anything of material value. He now kept to his house—in Moran's words, he spent 'a great deal of time in his garden singing and whistling, and eating gooseberries and cherries, &c.' Police armed with muskets were constantly on guard in the garden and around the house.<sup>78</sup>

This was the beginning of the end for O'Keeffe, but there was one final, violent event. It was a credit to neither side but reflects most adversely on the 'orthodox'. In describing it with typical relish, however, Moran is not necessarily culpable, since for any Christian, particularly an evangelical (and in his own way he was one), life is constant spiritual warfare. As Moran tells it, at Callan just before noon on 11 October, the Feast of St Canice,

O'Keeffe caused the Parochial Church Bell to be tied and lifted out of its socket, exposing the

Kilkenny, each time unopposed—he died in 1875.

<sup>75</sup> A land act of 1870 protected their improvements, and compensated them to some extent if evicted, unless eviction was for non-payment of rent, or (as in many cases) inability to pay an *increased* rent.

<sup>76</sup> Moran to Kirby, 19 June 1875, Kirby Papers, ICRA.

<sup>77</sup> Entries for 20 and 29 June 1875, Moran Diaries, Moran Papers, SAA.

<sup>78</sup> Entries for 30 June and 1, 4, 5, 7 and 16 July 1875, Moran Diaries, Moran Papers, SAA.

people to great risk if they attempted to ring it. This excited the people to absolute frenzy. In a few minutes they formed three breaches into his house, removed a great portion of the roof and carried his furniture into the streets. A number of the police were soon on the spot and they used great violence towards the people, who never threw a stone or struck a blow the whole time. Two or three times the police put their bayonets to the breasts of the people who formed a line at the entrance gate in order to prevent the furniture being brought back. Not one of the people flinched and the magistrate knew too well that had a drop of blood been spilled, not one of the policemen could escape from the enraged crowd that was around them. One of the police inside O'Keeffe's house gave a poor man two or three stabs in the arm but it was not anything serious.

The mob pulled open the drawers of the desks and chests after they had taken them outside, rifling through O'Keeffe's personal effects for anything of interest, discovering with delight a letter from the Queen's private secretary declining the offer of a copy of one of O'Keeffe's books.<sup>79</sup>

Four days later the military went into Callan in force, the police too forming platoons in different parts of the town. Then they proceeded to make arrests. Twenty-five were taken off to the Kilkenny jail where they joined others arrested in that city. 'They are in good spirits', Moran observed, 'and quite proud of suffering a little in so holy a cause'. He sent for an attorney, instructing him to visit them and assure them that everything would be done to speed their release and to see to their comfort in the meantime. Committal proceedings were held in Callan on 19 October (the town was still in a state of siege), and bail was refused. In Dublin the previous day Moran had visited Sir Michael Hicks Beach, chief secretary for Ireland, at his lodge, talking with him for an hour and seeking his intervention. 'He has no liking for O'Keeffe and seems to know him well', Moran noted, 'But he declined to interfere in any way at the present stage of the case, saying it was only when sentence was passed on the prisoners that the government could show leniency'. The law would have to take its course.<sup>80</sup>

On 24 May 1876 O'Keeffe signed an indenture drawn up by Moran's solicitors, Maxwell & Weldon, by which he surrendered the parochial house and other parochial property in Callan.<sup>81</sup> As far as the house was concerned this seems to have been merely a formality, for he was still living there in August 1877, presumably with Moran's consent: 'I went to the Parochial Church in Callan to give the medals to the Members of the Confraternity of the Sacred Heart . . . Poor unfortunate O'Keeffe was the whole time in the parochial garden, in straw-hat and white linen coat, doing some gardening operations about the peas. How sad to have him thus end his days'.<sup>82</sup> He would finally submit in late May 1879—Moran would receive the news in Rome. In the words of Denis O'Haran, private secretary to Moran as cardinal archbishop of Sydney,

We had just passed the Corso and the Palazzo di Venezia when the porter from the Irish College followed us and delivered to his Lordship a rush cablegram that had arrived at the College immediately after we had left. I saw Dr. Moran's hand shake as he read and I saw big tears flowing down his cheeks and fall on his hand and on the paper as he reread the cable. We were alongside the famous Jesuit Church, the Gesu.

Moran explained that the message was from O'Keeffe, unwell and likely to die; 'that he was wholeheartedly repentant; that he asked forgiveness from all whom he had scandalised; that as the Chief Pastor of his soul he craved his Bishop's pardon and Blessing. They were tears of joy I had witnessed. We went directly to the post office whence his Lordship sent his message of

<sup>79</sup> Entry for 11 October 1875, Moran Diaries, Moran Papers, SAA.

<sup>80</sup> Entries for 15, 18 and 19 October 1875, Moran Diaries, Moran Papers, SAA.

<sup>81</sup> Entry for 24 May 1876, Moran Diaries, Moran Papers, SAA.

<sup>82</sup> Entry for 5 August 1877, Moran Diaries, Moran Papers, SAA.

peace, conveying pardon and reconciliation.<sup>83</sup>

In 1880 O'Keeffe would move to Thomastown, dying there on 31 January 1881. Moran would write in his diary on that date:

Rev. Robert O'Keeffe, formerly P.P. of Callan, died after one day's illness. During the past twelve months he has led a very edifying life in Thomastown. I allowed him £9 per month for his support. He wrote some short time since to one of his friends in Ballycallan parish that he was most happy. His death took place in Thomastown and was as pious and happy as could be desired. R.I.P.

Possibly O'Keeffe, an intelligent and subtle mind, could have been conciliated at an early stage and much expense and discord spared. Cullen and Moran ruled out any effective conciliation by refusing to consider the rights and wrongs of the case in their discussions with the man. In the early meetings between the opposed parties, compromise formulas appear never to have been explored. On the early issue of the French nuns, for instance, O'Keeffe might have been asked at an early stage to put his proposal in limbo and raise it again in three years' time, and Walsh asked to lift his suspension, bringing matters back to the *status quo ante* without overly embarrassing either side. But the only way out that he was offered was submission. After he began to broadcast his campaign across the Irish Sea, and as suit followed suit, face-saving became impossible.

---

<sup>83</sup> Entry for 30 May 1879, Moran Diaries, Moran Papers, SAA; Denis O'Haran, typescript memoir of Moran, O'Haran files (Box U1735), Moran Papers, SAA. O'Haran, however, is often unreliable (one instance among several: thinking Moran was four when his mother died, O'Haran writes elsewhere that Moran told his mother he wished to be a martyr. But in fact Moran was only 14 months old when his mother died, and of course could not have told her that).