

his unparalleled exertions, and that our beloved country may yet hope to assert her liberty through the instrumentality of the man whose undeviating solicitude for her welfare has been well proved by a long and arduous struggle of three and thirty years, marked by an honesty and single heartedness unknown in the annals of history.

With respectful compliments to the gentlemen of your community, I have the pleasure to subscribe myself your much obliged and very faithful friend,

✱ Michael Anthony Fleming,  
Bishop of Carpasieu, V.A. of Newfoundland, &c.

The Very Rev. John Spratt, S.T.M.

### LETTER III

[*New-York Weekly Register and Catholic Diary*, September 17, 1836]

59, Conduit-st. London, July 28, 1836.

Very Reverend and Very Dear Sir—It is now so long since I have had the pleasure of addressing you, that I almost fear an apology is due for the delay, particularly as since my last I have had the gratification of receiving your kind communication, not only from our beloved country, but also from the “Eternal City,” the citadel of the Christian world.

Your kind and valuable gift, too, to my poor people of books, betraying, as it did, so much thoughtfulness for the wants of the poor, and anxious solicitude for the establishment in their hearts of the kingdom of Him who assures us that even a cup of cold water given to the least of them for His sake “shall not pass without a reward,” imposed upon me a ten-fold obligation to reply; but I know well that you seek not a return in terms of compliment—that reward you aspire to is not to be found in the sterile interchange of phrases demanded to etiquette, and, therefore, it was that for your kindness and attention, your flattering notice of my former communications, and charitable donation to my poor flock, I contented myself with paying you the sincere, though silent, tribute of gratitude, and pouring forth my humble but ardent aspirations to the Most High for your temporal and eternal happiness.

In good truth, during the past year my duties were of that pressing [nature] as precluded, not indeed the *possibility*, but the *propriety*, of devoting much time to answer the calls of friendship in the way of sustaining my part in an epistolary correspondence, and it is very probable that the most agreeable amends that I can now make for past omissions is to give you a succinct account of my manner of discharging those duties, and particularly of my visitation of the western part of the southern portion of this

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Genoa, Italy, May 15, 1847. For the biography of O’Connell, see Michael MacDonagh, *Life of Daniel O’Connell* (St. Louis, 1905), and Robert Dunlop, *Daniel O’Connell and the Revival of National Life in Ireland* (New York and London, 1900).

island during the last summer, and our toils through the autumn and winter during the prevalence of the small pox, the recital of which will, of itself, I feel, amply plead my apology. Even this gratification I could not enjoy in St. John's with convenience; but as I had memorialized his Majesty for a piece of ground for the site of a cathedral which I mean to erect in St. John's, I have found it necessary to come to London to press my claim and that of my poor people, and while awaiting the result, I feel the sincerest pleasure in communing in spirit with one whom I so much esteem.

In the course of my narrative of my visitation to the northward, in the former summer, you must have perceived that I had promised on that occasion to meet some Indian tribes of Morton Harbour in the Bay of Exploits, about the 10th of June following; and in order to explain why it was that I was unable last year to complete my visitation of the northern portion of the island, in a second tour, it will be necessary to direct your attention once again to my last letter.

You cannot fail to remember that the greatest source of inconvenience that militated against our comfort upon these occasions was the being obliged to make passages from one little harbour to another, and frequently to cross immense bays in a wretched four-oared skiff. You must at once be able to estimate the annoyance of being cooped up in a little narrow crazy thing of the kind, where you must of necessity constantly keep seated—for to stand upright would be to endanger the lives of all, by overturning the boat; and then to be obliged to pass whole days and nights in this miserable plight was more than my constitution could bear, and for some months after my return I continued in a very delicate state of health.

Notwithstanding this, having seen the wretched condition of so many of my people—having beheld the numbers who had never had an opportunity of approaching any sacraments—who had passed years upon years without having had an opportunity of assisting at the holy sacrifice—so many sheep wandering amid wolves in the wilderness—my bosom burned with solicitude to visit every creek and cove in the entire island; and to enable me to do this I must procure for myself a more convenient mode of transit.

Besides the personal inconveniences I myself had to endure on the former occasion, it pressed heavily on the poor people themselves. I was obliged, in every little place I went to, to look for a crew, and it not unfrequently happened that *three* men who manned my boat composed the entire adult male population of the harbour, and here was an additional and most powerful motive to induce me to adopt some other means of effecting my visitation.

I gave directions to have a small vessel built of about 30 tons burden; and this vessel was not ready to sail until the middle of July, for which reason I was compelled to abandon my primitive intention of visiting the northward, and consequently was obliged most reluctantly to disappoint the Indians; but as I was already aware that they were a people exceedingly jealous of the least attempt to deceive them, lest they should happen to be subjected to any inconvenience, or to feel any annoyance at not finding me at the time and place of meeting, I sought and found an opportunity of

acquainting them of the circumstance of my detention and consequent change of route, and told them I would certainly meet them in the Bay of Despair about the close of that month.

The noon of Friday, July 17th, found me weighing anchor on board the little schooner *Madonna* with a crew consisting of three hands and the skipper, accompanied by the Rev. C. Dalton,<sup>14</sup> pastor of Harbour Grace, who had been the zealous and unflinching companion of my toils the year before, and the Rev. M. Berner,<sup>15</sup> pastor of Buren, and although our deck was encumbered with a thousand feet of board, or as we call it here *lumber*, we sailed out of the harbour in gallant style, and in a few minutes cleared the southward point, and in an hour cast anchor in the harbour of Petty Harbour, and discharged our lumber for the chapel.

This little town is within the district or parish of St. John's, and about eight miles distant, and *separated* from it by a road, or rather path, that is hardly passable but in winter. The entrance to the harbour is esteemed dangerous, but the harbour still affording good anchorage and shelter from every wind. Like almost all other towns, there are no streets, but the houses stand irregularly scattered about, but there is here this peculiarity, (which, indeed, occurs in one or two other places in the island also) that the site of the town is so very rocky as not to afford sufficient earth for the raising of one month's supply of vegetables for the inhabitants. But I shall again have to advert to this place. I shall proceed with my narrative.

The wind that served to bring us into Petty Harbour would not serve to bring us out again: we were compelled to tarry for the remainder of that day, and the entire of Saturday, and on Sunday after having offered the divine sacrifice we again set sail for the southward; but the wind again heading us we were obliged to put into Ferryland which place we were not able to make until about noon on Monday, although distant from Petty Harbour only about nine leagues.

This harbour affords quite a contrast to Petty Harbour; in the latter to the very water's edge, where the hills do not come down precipitously to the shore, the land is covered with immense masses of stone imbedded upon a foundation of solid rock, so that you would be inclined to think that it was almost necessary to exercise ingenuity in order to discover a site for a house; and as for gardens, I believe the largest in Petty Harbour would hardly measure ten yards square, and even to these the only means of conveying manure is on men's backs up steep craggy precipices, while in Ferryland you find yourself in the midst of a smiling country, the immediate neighborhood of the town flat and fertile, but surrounded by high and sterile hills.

The harbour itself is rather capacious, being about three quarters of a mile wide when you pass an island that stands at the entrance called *Island du Bois*. It is well sheltered, except to the north-east, and affords good

<sup>14</sup> See note 10.

<sup>15</sup> The Rev. Michael Burney, one of the missionaries who arrived in Newfoundland in 1831. He lived until 1885 and died in Burin (*Howley, op. cit.*, 266-267).

anchorage; but the winds from the north-east produce a heavy and dangerous swell within. The houses here are generally more comfortable, and here several large concerns are falling to decay, owing to the declension of the fishery, which has been formerly carried on with great spirit on this coast.

I had not intended to put into Ferryland, at least until I should be returning, because, as the summer was rather advanced, I preferred pushing on as quickly as possible to give an opportunity to those in sequestered situations who had never had the gratification of seeing their bishops, or of approaching the holy sacrament of confirmation, and as I had a few years before administered confirmation in that harbour, I was not so anxious on their account: and for these reasons when I did land I found the people not prepared, and the clergyman, the Rev. Timothy Brown,<sup>16</sup> absent, and therefore I took a boat and proceeded to Fermeuse, about four miles west, and having chanced to meet the Rev. J. Duffy,<sup>17</sup> the curate of this district, as I was stepping on board, that rev. gentleman accompanied us.

He had been prepared to receive us at Fermeuse; and when, upon my arrival there, I proceeded to examine those whom he had instructed upon the importance of the sacrament, and the dispositions necessary to receive it worthily, I was gratified to find that among one hundred and twenty individuals there was not one who did not give abundant proofs that a zealous and indefatigable teacher had found a docile and susceptible congregation, and that the seeds which the Rev. J. Duffy scattered had not fallen by the "road side", or "among thorns", but had been laid in a fruitful soil, and promised an abundant harvest.

On the next day, Tuesday, the 21st, after having offered the divine sacrifice of the mass at the chapel, and exhorted a densely crowded congregation, I administered confirmation to that number, and immediately after sent forward a messenger to acquaint the people of Renew's that I should visit that harbour next morning.

On the morning of Wednesday, 22d, having made our matin offering of the holy sacrifice, we again took boat for Renew's, about four miles distant, and entered the harbour about noon. This is a poor fishing harbour, but inhabited by a very intelligent people; and here, as well as in Fermeuse, the Rev. J. Duffy's zeal in the promotion of religion is manifested in the construction of a commodious church, attached to which will be a comfortable residence for the clergyman. The people here, too, I found exceedingly well instructed, and all the children well acquainted with their catechism, owing to the unaided exertions of the same rev. gentleman; and on the following morning, Thursday, 23d, I administered confirmation to 140 persons, a large proportion of whom were converts to our holy religion.

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<sup>16</sup> Apparently the Rev. Timothy Browne, an Irish Augustinian, who came to Newfoundland in 1812 and served the Church there, particularly at Ferryland, until his return to Ireland in 1840 (*Howley, op. cit.*, 242).

<sup>17</sup> The editor has been unable to gather any biographical details of Father Duffy other than those contained in these visitation letters.

From this place we returned the same day to Fermeuse, having again enjoyed the hospitality of Mr. Neill: we joined our little vessel and on the next day we proceeded on our voyage, but having got as far as Trepassey Bay, we got completely becalmed and enveloped in a dense fog, and therefore found it necessary to come to anchor under Cape Pine, the western entrance of the bay. This being a most dangerous shore, we took advantage of a light breeze that sprung up during the night, and got under weigh once more; but after a short time the wind died away, and we again got becalmed at the entrance of this bay, where the tide runs eight knots an hour.

The night was intensely dark, and we continued drifting for a considerable time, when we were alarmed by the cry of the seamen, "breakers astern", and immediately we could distinctly hear the sullen roar of the surge as it rushed against the rocks, and breaking, dashed its foam into the face of heaven, as if in anger at the interruption; and inevitable death seemed to threaten. We let go our kedge anchor; but the force of the tide and the violence of the swelling waves rendered it of little avail; yet was it not altogether useless, for by pulling upon the hauser we brought her head a little around, and then cutting away our anchor, a slight air of wind springing up at the same moment our vessel's side all but touched as she drifted along the ridge against which we had been running, and in this manner, at the expense of our anchor and cable, were we, by the interposition of Divine Mercy, saved from a fearful and instantaneous death.

I shall close for the present, my dear Sir, and as my delay here is likely to be for some days, it is more than probable I shall resume my narrative before I leave London; but, in the meantime, allow me to recommend myself to your pious prayers, that Heaven may endow me with the grace of constancy and divine service; and that, undismayed by the dangers, unsubdued by difficulties, I may in all things learn to rely upon Him who to the blind gave light, strength to the enfeebled, and on the clay-cold bones of the dead bestowed life and vigor.

Believe me, with sincere affection, your obliged and humble servant,

✠ Michael A. Fleming,  
Catholic Bishop of Newfoundland, &c.

The Very Rev. Dr. Spratt, Carmelite Convent, Dublin.

#### LETTER IV

[*New-York Weekly Register and Catholic Diary*, October 1, 1836.]

Sablonniere Hotel,  
London,  
August 4, 1836.

Very Rev. and Very Dear Sir,—In my last I closed with a description of our dangerous adventure under Cape Pine, at the entrance of Trepassey Bay, where we most providentially escaped the greatest danger in which I had