

the irishness of Daisy Bates

The following is the 2009 Durack Lecture delivered at the University of Notre Dame Australia by Professor Bob Reece of Murdoch University, Sunday 18 October 2009.



'I'm as Irish as Patrick's pig', Daisy Bates told the *Adelaide News* in January 1941, 'but Australia has been my new home since I first landed in the West'. Having spent the first twenty or so years of her life in Ireland, practically all of it in Roscrea, north Tipperary, she nurtured for the rest of her days a strong sense of her Irish identity. While it is true that in Australia from 1883 she concealed her Catholic orphan convent school background, passing herself off as a member of the Protestant Irish gentry, she remained quintessentially Irish.

This was expressed in her greatest strength (and perhaps weakness) which was talk, good Irish talk, and plenty of it. She was intelligent, well-read, witty and had strong opinions on everything. She also loved talk for the sake and sound of it, as the Irish do. How ironic, and even tragic, then, that she should have spent so many years of her life in the desert mainly with Aborigines who, at best, could speak no more than a few words and phrases of English. The secret, perhaps, is that they

could always be counted on never to contradict or challenge her. Letters (and she wrote thousands of them during those years) became the substitute for normal conversation, the personal ones always being directed to people she believed were sympathetic to her late Victorian, 'west British' Imperial view of the world. Significantly, she kept none of her correspondence with her Roscrea family, which would have revealed her modest Catholic origins and 'blown' her elaborate cover in Australia.

That Daisy Bates was Irish is not always appreciated by the steadily declining number of Australians for whom her name still means something. She did not present herself publicly as being Irish and her accent was upper class English with the slightest Irish burr. In other words, she was one of those people who like to be mistaken for English and then say, as she no doubt did, 'But I'm Irish, doncherknow?' The Irish have suffered a cultural cringe towards the English for much longer than Australians have done and it can still be detected in parts of Dublin.



Visiting Daisy Bates for the first time at her tent near Ooldea Siding in South Australia in June 1932, the enterprising freelance journalist Ernestine Hill took a few days to solve the puzzle of this genteel, refined and well-read woman dressed in the anachronistic fashion of the late Victorian era and inspired by its Imperial ideology, but living in a tiny tent on the edge of the Nullarbor with only a few 'cannibal' natives for company:

She was Irish, it suddenly dawned on me. That explained everything, the idealism, the self sacrifice, the prejudice and pride, her fearlessness 'agin the government', all her intuitions and inhibitions, her delight in folk-lore, her perpetual adoration of royalty, and at the same time her lifetime loyalty to the lost cause of a lost people with all their sins and sorrows in her always loving heart and mind.

Sitting on kerosene boxes outside her tent during the long warm evenings, Daisy regaled the younger woman with stories about her youth in Ireland: about riding to hounds with the local Protestant gentry; about a doting father who taught her to ride ('Head and heart up, Daisy, hands and heels down!'), who introduced her to the novels of Dickens and Thackeray and took her to meet his friends at the exclusive Kildare Street Club in Dublin; about an eccentric magistrate grandfather who had to be carried drunk and protesting to bed every other night; about a grand Anglo-Irish family who 'adopted' her and took her on the Grand Tour of the continent, together with their own children and a German governess; and how her dear father rescued her now and again in France or Belgium, taking her out to dinner and reading more Dickens to her. All this and more Ernestine Hill used to colour her feature articles about Daisy—and further embroidered when she came to write her brilliant but unreliable memoir in the early 1970s.

Armed with this book, together with Elizabeth Salter's 1971 biography, which also repeated and sometimes embellished Daisy's romantic imaginings about herself, I visited her birthplace at Roscrea, Co. Tipperary in 1988 when I was invited by the Roscrea Heritage Centre to give a talk for the Australian Bicentennial. It was there that I discovered the real Daisy Bates, or, to cite her baptismal name recorded in the St Cronan's Catholic Church register for 21 October 1859, Margaret Dwyer, third child of Bridget and James Dwyer, shopkeeper of Main Street. A local historian had been alerted to the true story by a researcher working for Eleanor Witcombe, a well-known

Sydney screen writer who had in 1976 written a proposal for a film in which Katharine Hepburn was to have played the part of Daisy. Until then, Roscrea had just about forgotten all about Margaret Dwyer.

Born two years earlier than she claimed in order to conceal the fact of her first marriage in early 1883 at Charters Towers to Harry Murrant (better known as 'Breaker Morant'), Margaret Dwyer came from a middling strong farmer family with a cottage and a few acres of their own in the townland of Ballycrine, a few kilometres south of Roscrea, as well as thirty acres of leasehold. Most of the land was from her grandfather Hunt's side and after her mother's death from tuberculosis when she was four and her father's re-marriage and departure for America a few months afterwards, she spent some happy years living with widowed grandmother Catherine ('Biddy') Hunt at Ballycrine until she, too, passed on and the property was disposed of. At about this time, Daisy was taken up by an English charitable organisation and sent to stay with Anglican Church-connected people in Wales and Scotland. It was there that she claimed to have caught a glimpse of Queen Victoria at Balmoral. She also caught a glimpse of a more interesting future for herself and embarked on what was to be a career of social climbing.

Back in Main Street, Roscrea, living with her uncle Joseph at the old house, she and her sister Catherine attended the Air Hill National School run by the Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Mary until she was about twenty. In all likelihood, the Belgian and French nuns were preparing her to work as a governess and this is what she may well have done from the end of 1878 until November 1882 when she embarked on the *Almora* at Plymouth as an assisted immigrant under a Queensland colonial government scheme. Was her departure hastened by a young man of good family committing suicide on her account? We shall never know. Confined below deck with other young emigrant women for much of the time, she later passed off the voyage as something more like a pleasure cruise.

In the fullness of time, Eleanor Witcombe's comprehensive biography of Daisy Bates will reveal the whole story of Daisy's Irish origins. However, there are some anecdotes told to Ernestine Hill and published in the first instalment of her series in the *Adelaide Advertiser* in January 1936 which ring true: step-dancing on an overturned barn door to the music of a blind fiddler, the high-pitched keening of professional mourners at wakes and the Banshee of Ballycrine, cousin Allie's recitation of 'St Kevin and the Seven Churches' and Grandmother Hunt's fireside stories about the dark days of Irish history. And then there is the telling anecdote about her schooldays that she recorded in a wireless interview with the Australian Broadcasting Commission in Sydney in February 1941: 'I remember ... the grown-ups would say: "Daisy won't learn anything, she won't behave. Oh well, teach her to speak properly. That's all you need to do"'.

Daisy succeeded brilliantly in this without having to kiss the Blarney Stone. Blessed with a highly retentive memory, she could recite English poetry at length. She knew her countryman Edward J. Fitzgerald's translation of the *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam* by heart and was able to repeat all twenty-eight verses of James Buchanan's 'The Ballad of Judas Iscariot' until her death. There are stories of her and Catherine as avid readers who haunted the Roscrea library. Of the Irish lilts learnt in childhood, she could later recall only one line: 'Whin I wint for me mornin's mornin at Shanahan's ould sheebeen ...'. But she could dance an Irish jig to her own singing until her seventies. How much Irish language she knew is uncertain, but it seems likely that it was nothing more than a few words and phrases. Irish had been practically defunct in north Tipperary since the Famine.

By the time she reached Townsville in January 1883, Margaret Dwyer had become Daisy May O'Dwyer, reflecting a deliberate effort to undo the Anglicisation of Irish family names that had

been going on steadily for centuries and to invoke a noble pre Anglo-Norman invasion, even pre-Christian, Gaelic pedigree. O'Dwyer possessed just that interesting hint of a once-noble dynastic past.

Employed by a Charters Towers pastoralist as a lady's companion to his sister-in-law during her pregnancy, she later met young Harry Murrant whose horsemanship and bush-versifying persuaded her to marry him in March 1883. She was then twenty-two and he was nineteen, two years younger than was stipulated by law. On the marriage certificate she was now Daisy May O'Dwyer, 20, the daughter of James Dwyer, Gentleman, and Marguerite Dwyer. Murrant also styled himself 'Gentleman', but in the parlance of colonial Queensland this meant 'unemployed'. Married by an Anglican priest in a friend's house when the Catholic priest refused to countenance a mixed marriage, she henceforth embraced an Anglican identity and in time came to be a rabid critic of the Catholic Church and its political machinations in Ireland and Australia.

Let me now fast-forward her life through her subsequent marriages to Nowra stockman Jack Bates and English marine engineer, Ernest Baglehole, the birth of her son Arnold Hamilton Bates, her time as a governess on pastoral stations in New South Wales and as a journalist and goodness knows what else in England from 1894 until 1899. Now we see her at Beagle Bay in Western Australia's Kimberley district in early 1900 assisting the sixty-five year old Matthew Gibney, Catholic Archbishop of Perth, in rescuing the Trappist Fathers' mission from disaster. Here she is singing Irish ditties such as 'Thro hedges and ditches I tore me old britches, for you Maryanne, for you Maryanne' to her countryman while they single-handedly survey 10,000 acres of mangrove and scrub allocated to the mission by the Western Australian government. Here she is observing Abbot Nicholas' anthropological work with the Aborigines. She says that she is bitten by 'the virus of research'. After four months of back-

breaking work, Gibney presents her with the gold watch given to him by his sister Margaret (for whom he sometimes mistakes her in his moments of delirium, born of exhaustion) and tells her, with no sense of the delicious irony: 'Mrs Bates, if I hadn't known differently, I would have sworn that you were a Catholic'. In her mischievous obituary for Gibney in *The West Australian* twenty years later she pointed out that he was descended from the O'Rourke whose wife ran away with McMurrrough, King of Leinster, and whose appeal to the King of England for support against the vengeful O'Rourke led to the English gaining their first foothold in Ireland.

After Beagle Bay and an epic overlanding of cattle from Broome to the Murchison district, where Jack had taken up some pastoral leases, she returned to Perth with their teenage son, Arnold. Struggling to make a living out of freelance journalism from articles in *The Western Mail*, she edited a few columns each week on local and Irish matters for Gibney's *Western Australian Catholic Record* for three months in early 1903. Drawing on the Irish newspapers subscribed to by Gibney and cabled news published in the Perth press, she offered a shrewd commentary on current affairs. At this time, agitation for Home Rule was at one of its periodic lows and she made no explicit comment on the issue. However, her attitude can probably be gauged from her enthusiasm for Wyndham's Land Bill in the British Parliament which would enable Irish farmers to buy the land they were occupying and pay it off over twenty years. Interestingly, she applauded the revival of traditional Irish music for St Patrick's Day ceremonies and the publication by the Irish *Weekly Independent* of county histories, while deploring the lack of a good Irish dictionary. She advocated the acquisition by the state of the Hill of Tara as 'the greatest national monument' in the same category as Stonehenge. She also displayed a good knowledge of Irish Revival literature in the form of Emily Lawless' *Grania*, Jane Barlow's Irish *Idylls* and Shan F. Bullock's

The Squireen. However, the opening of the Dun Emer Press at Dundrum by the Misses Yeats brought out her disapproval of what she saw as no more than 'the latest addition to women's work'.

Unwilling to pronounce on the Irish character, she nevertheless summarised with evident approval a magazine article by Lady Onslow, the Irish wife of a previous Governor of Western Australia, entitled 'Feminine Characteristics, English, Irish and Scots':

An Irishwoman will be genial and effusive the moment you meet, and will prattle away in a seemingly most confiding manner, but it is all on the surface, merely the social exterior, and only to friends and friends indeed will she allow a glimpse of her inner life. She has the brightest spirit, the gayest wit of the three, and is far the easiest for mere acquaintance to get on with. But she lacks something of the strength of character, the endurance, the capability of doing what is right every day, dull days, bright days all the same because it is right.

It may have been that Daisy recognised something of herself in all this.

Employed by the Western Australian government in May 1904 to produce a vocabulary of Aboriginal languages, she



taught herself to become an anthropological fieldworker, picking the brains of eastern states authorities like A.W. Howitt, R.H. Mathews and the Revd John Mathew through correspondence. Continuing to write on Aboriginal subjects for the Perth press to supplement her meagre government income, she became something of a local expert. In growing demand as a public speaker, she gave a talk at the Perth Town Hall in early February 1909 (under the auspices of the Australian Natives' Association, of all things) with Governor Sir Gerald Strickland in the chair, employing the latest technology in the form of lantern slides and phonograph recordings of Aboriginal corroborees made by Professor Baldwin Spencer. However, some of her passing remarks affronted Perth's Irish community.

D. Raymond Fitzgerald wrote the next day to *The West Australian* that while he esteemed her expertise on the Aborigines, 'it was very much to be regretted that Mrs. Bates in the course of her lecture stooped to insult a large section of the community by comparing the despised blackfellow with the Irish'. John P. Foley, honorary secretary of the Perth Gaelic League, thought that she had insulted not only the Irish, 'but also the Welsh, Scotch, Cornish, and British, as we are all one family, and descendants of that great Milesian race which existed thousands of years before the Christian era'. 'Celt' wrote the same day of her 'insult to the Irish race', saying that if there were points in common between the Irish and the Aborigines, so there were 'many points in common between every man born and the ordinary monkey'. He did not believe that the Aborigines 'could ever produce a Kitchener, a Wolseley, a Sir George White, a Beresford, a Kelly-Kenney, a French, a Shackleton, a Robert Emmet, a Theobald Wolfe Tone, a Burke or a Grattan, not to mention thousands of others'.

Writing in response to these challenges, Daisy played her surprise card: 'Perhaps when Mr. Fitzgerald knows that I am even more Irish than he is, he will acquit me of even the faintest

intentional slight to my countrymen'. Her soft upper-class accent had until then concealed her true identity.

Referring to her work with the Aborigines, she claimed that her success had been very much due to her own 'Celtic temperament' and her consequent understanding of their temperament. While with Bishop Gibney at Beagle Bay ten years earlier, she recalled, they 'more than once remarked upon their likeness to ourselves in the characteristics mentioned' [i.e. in her lecture]. Furthermore, she concluded,

So far from being offended by this similarity of certain characteristics, I am rather inclined to feel proud in that our own Celtic race is so old, that it has some little affinity with those whom many of the most recent writers think are the oldest race on the globe.

Faced with such a robust and articulate defence, Fitzgerald could do nothing but retreat, confessing that he had misunderstood her remarks and apologising for any annoyance caused by his error. Ironically, he had demonstrated the truth of one of her original observations during the lecture: that the Irish were very much like the Aborigines in being 'quick to take offence, and quick to forgive'. Not content with this signal victory, however, she later claimed to have given a similar lecture in that citadel of Irish Western Australia, the Celtic Club, where she was cheered and feted. Alas, the Club's minute books do not bear out this typical embellishment to what was already a good story.

Fast forward now through her time with the Cambridge Anthropological Expedition and the obnoxious A.R. Radcliffe Brown, and with the Aborigines at Eucla and Fowler's Bay in South Australia, to the years from 1919 to 1935 when she spent camped in her tent at Ooldea Siding on the edge of the vast Nullarbor Plain. In the great silence there was plenty of time to think about the Ireland of long ago, to create a romantic idyll of childhood at what she called 'Ashberry House' with her younger

brother, Jim. In an undated poem (which I found in her papers in the National Library in between Aboriginal vocabularies and recipes for steam puddings) she invoked an enchanted time communing with the fairies who inhabited the nearby stream:

Oh it's I would sit in Ashberry house in the light of a
summer's eve,
In Ashberry House with my books and my dreams and
longings fulfilled.
For sitting now by the drought struck plain, comfortless,
weary, and old,
Tis only the longing and dreams I have of Ashberry
house of old ...

Oh Ashberry house on the back of the hill where I was
born and bred,
And in childhood traced the thirty odd springs that
made the wide river bed,
And the little banks with their fairy flowers and fairy
tenants too,
We saw them always, my brother and I, as we made
ourselves fairies too

'Here is nothing to compensate, but the call of duty and love', she wrote at the bottom of the last sheet, 'in the light of the moon by the edge of the plain'. Little did it matter to her that her connection with 'Ashberry House' in Roscrea was entirely made up.

And then there was the endlessly diverting subject of the similarities between the Aborigines and the Irish. Among the things which gave her strength were the constant reminders of her Irishness provided by the Aborigines, some of whose cultural traits she has earlier remarked upon as being similar to those of the Irish. The personal rapport she enjoyed with them she attributed to 'an innate racial affinity'. Enlarging on this, she wrote:

In their native state the Aborigines possess many of the characteristics of the Irish, being light hearted, quick to take offence and quick to forgive ... it was the easiest thing in the world to start a row in camp a word, a look, a sneer ... and the males rush for their spears and range themselves beside those whom they must by hereditary law fight with.

But the fight usually begins and ends with a war of words: 'a babel of sound in which each person talks at the top of his voice, taunting, daring, complaining', after which 'the belligerents, getting their grievances thus ventilated, retire in comparative good humour'. She found that the Aborigines, like the Irish, were without malice but quick to jealousy. In their songs and dances there was a 'Celtic mysticism' which struck a common chord with her. Their magic was like the peasant superstitions passed on by her old Irish 'nurse'. She believed that a few fortunate races, including the Aborigines and the Celts, 'had been endowed with cheerfulness as their main characteristic ...' which enable them to deal with adversity.

Citing one Christmas morning when fifty 'sure-of-welcome' Aboriginal visitors came over the sandhill at 8 o'clock as 'surely an embarrassment to anyone except an Irishwoman', she reflected on the generous hospitality which characterised both groups:

In the old Ireland that was, hospitality was never ending and the old native Irish and the Australian aborigines are truly akin in their idea of hospitality, for the stranger or visitor who crossed the threshold of cabin or castle was at once made 'free of the house'; and the meal of potato and butter milk in the cabin, though it might be the last bit in the house, was as royally offered as the were the more aesthetic viands in castle or country home; and so with the aborigines, visitors always received the best that was in camp, and however scanty the food supply, the visiting groups never suffered hunger.

On the negative side, 'a native, like an Irishman, [is] always ready to please you and he will say white is black "if yet honour

ses it is.”Consequently, she always avoided asking leading questions when attempting to obtain information from the Aborigines.

Another point made by her was the similarity between Aboriginal and European beliefs and her conviction that ‘the Celtic race held more of the debris of the superstitions, customs, and beliefs, of the early human race, than any other peoples’. Referring to some of the familiar sacred pagan places in Ireland such as the Devil’s Punchbowl and Fingal’s Cave and their strict avoidance by ‘the dear simple people’, she revealed something of her own superstitious make-up:

I myself attribute much of my poor fortune to the fact of my having rashly entered a ‘fairy fort’ during a visit to Ireland and plucking a bough from the fairy thorn that grew within the magic circle of the ‘good people’s ground’ - that magic tree which had never before within remembrance been touched by human and profane hands.

A Social Darwinist to the core and fascinated by the question of the racial origins of the Aborigines, Bates was convinced of a direct link between darker skin colour and what she regarded as ‘low’ traits. Thus, of the two main marrying divisions of the Bibbulmun of Western Australia’s South-West, the Wordungmat and the Manitchmat, she described the allegedly darker and ‘lower’ group as the result of their having battled with a hostile environment. When the Cambridge anthropologist A.R. Radcliffe Brown commented that ‘the struggle for existence must always produce a higher type not a lower’, she replied: ‘No, witness parts of Ireland’.

There was plenty of time during these years at Ooldea to think of the less attractive things about Ireland, to vent her splenetic opinions on the Catholic Church and what she saw as its political ‘wire-pulling’ in Ireland and Australia. Much of this vitriol seems to have originated from a personal grudge—her belief that Archbishop Clune of Perth (Gibney’s successor) had

intervened with the Western Australian government to get a job for a Catholic woman in the Aborigines Dept. which she considered she was best qualified to take.

This was the sore point raised with Gibney at her last meeting with him in Perth in May 1921:

Two things Bishop Gibney said to me ... ‘Why don’t you use your influence to get the Chief Protectorship [of Aborigines] here?’; and later, ‘why don’t you become a Roman Catholic and all things will be possible for you?’ I asked him: ‘In all the 20 years of your knowledge of me, have you ever felt I was in need of reproof in any way?’ ‘No’, he said, ‘there isn’t a Catholic who can hold a candle to you’. ‘Then how can I become better by being a Roman Catholic’. ‘You’d be better off’, and there we left it, and I hugged the old man - he is 89 and safe - and told him he was a dear in spite of his religion’. But there is the temptation - you must be one of them, as however good you are and capable they will block your efforts.

While in Perth she also paid a visit to Government House to lunch with Sir Francis Newdegate, the Irish Unionist governor who was soon to distinguish himself by attempting to ban Archbishop Clune from returning to Perth after his peace mission to Ireland engineered by Lloyd George himself.

In her private letters to William Hurst, editor of the Melbourne *Argus* and *The Australasian*, between 1919 and 1922 when political events in Ireland were coming to a head, she had a good deal to say about Irish affairs and the role of the Catholic Church. While she had no access to a wireless, she was a voracious reader of newspapers. In February 1919 she wrote to Hurst from Ooldea about post-war unrest in Australia, reporting remarks she claimed had been made to her by Cardinal Patrick Moran of Sydney ‘in a heat’: ‘We (meaning Rome) will never rest until we see England humiliated and at our feet’. ‘And that will be never, Cardinal’, said I in equal Irish heat. Yet I am alive and the Cardinal is dead, and only his puerile attempt to make Australia a Spanish and therefore Catholic country is all

I remember of him’.

Ridiculing Moran’s saying of Mass at Port Curtis in Queensland where he believed that the Spanish navigator de Quiros’ priest had said it four hundred years earlier, she expressed satisfaction that his attempt to convince the Victorian branch of the Royal Geographical Society of the Spanish discovery of Australia had been defeated by ‘cold science’.

Her longest disquisition (or, you might say, rant) on Irish affairs was brought on by reading the Irish Catholic nationalist poet and novelist Katharine Tynan’s second book of memoirs, which Hurst sent her in early 1921. On 16 August 1921 she wrote to him:

Naturally being an understanding woman, [Tynan] stood by Parnell, but would she have believed it if she had been told that Parnell would never have allowed himself to be swayed by Rome and they saw his leadership and success imminent? Neither poor Mrs. O’Shea nor Parnell knew of the plot. She innocently carried it out and Parnell was a gentleman. I can remember my elders discussing the matter, every member of the Kildare Street Club knew that Parnell would not ‘come to heel’, and bets were made even as to how he would be ‘disqualified’ in Irish eyes. Like Butt before him and Redmond afterwards, Parnell died of a broken heart, for like the others he realised at last that the people for whom he had given his life’s work to restore to nationhood ‘had not in them the elements of nationhood’. Like the Poles they are an unstable and unreliable people. The rebellion of 1916 sent poor Redmond to his grave. I forget or perhaps I never heard how the string pullers removed Butt.

Even such political writers as Miss Tynan can see the uselessness of enclosed orders, both male and female, McCarthy’s book shows that wherever convent or monastery, so is there is misery and vice and poverty undreamed of outside Ireland. And within the last twenty years convents and monasteries have increased by dozens, and French and German ‘Orders’ are here there and everywhere. The cry of the Sinn Fein leaders that the best men are leaving Ireland is true, but not as Sinn Fein states because they will not live

under English rule, but because they are amenable to any person of whatever nationality who is placed over them - and each little village has such an ‘authority’, always unscrupulous - their very lives are in danger. So they leave shop or farm or workshop and their places are taken in many cases by Germans and others, but the Irish name will remain over the shop! The wire pullers at the moment think they have a willing tool in de Valera, but, like Theodore in Queensland, they have to get a half-breed in charge. To utter an Irishism, Ireland has got out of her own hands and her better men see that it is too late and also too dangerous to retrieve their manhood, and so they leave their country, for their own good.

The system of education in Ireland is so pernicious and so polluted for it is entirely under the supreme control of the Sacred Congregation of the Propaganda - the modern Inquisition - that until it is superseded by free, compulsory and secular education, Ireland will continue to be a land of assassins and informers.

Nor was Australia free from the malign influence of Sinn Fein and the Catholic Church:

They are getting Sinn Feiners into Australia by the hundred, disguised as nuns, priests, Brothers, Christian Brothers and in thousands of ways. The Papal Delegate in Sydney has his hand on the pulse of every movement in N.S.W. and elsewhere, and just think of the sort of Irish who are willing to perform any low, mean or traitorous work for a Dago Master! [i.e., the Papal Nuncio]

This, she believed, was due to the fact that many of the Agents-General in London promoting immigration to Australia were Catholics: ‘They have been home [in England] some time, and that is why we are getting the influx of Republicans, assassins and other Irish immigrants’.

On the Papal Nuncio’s departure for Rome, she took another shot at the ‘Dago Master’, helpfully supplying a newspaper photograph of him:

Do look at the face of that Italian who has happily left Australia

and tell me if you can see anything in it but a 'pedigreed' Bill Sikes [sic]? There is not one Christian or ideal expression in it. Look at the juggernaut underlip? The man is drunk with the power he has secured. Poor Sydney! to be in the power of such a relentless body. I do not think he will return. He has mastered English, and another Italian may be sent out to gain knowledge of English and Australia in pursuit of their century-old policy towards the British Empire. This man will either gain the council of the Curia or will be sent to some other country to perform the same pernicious work he has so successfully performed in Australia.

In September 1921, she wrote to Hurst:

Do you know why Dr Mannix returned via Japan? To avoid having to speak to Archbishop Clune of W.A. Clune is the Peacemaker, highly placed, that Mannix means, not the tool de Valera. Between the two Orders - Clune is a Redemptorist, I don't know what Mannix is - there is deadly enmity, all the more deadly because it must not come out. If you only realized how these Catholic Orders hate each other!

On 17 December, after the signing of the Anglo-Irish Treaty, she wrote:

I don't like the Sinn Fein 'oath of allegiance'. It is too 'Ignatius Loyola' for loyalty and I query whether the settlement is real. If there had been a decent Irish leader - say Parnell - to negotiate, we might be sure of honor taking part, but a breed like de V.! How can Glynn and the rest stand his awful face alone! To me he seems the mangiest of mongrels!

The serious prospect of civil war in Ireland by mid-February 1922 prompted her to make the novel suggestion to Hurst (which she clearly hoped *The Argus* would take up) that Irishmen 'of standing and position' in Australia and the United States should go home to Ireland and help stabilise the Irish Free State and set it on its feet by taking part in 'a clean game'. In the current situation she believed that its rulers were being 'pulled hither and thither by the Curia' and that there was 'no chance for the

quieter Irishman at home'. Nevertheless, she was pessimistic about outside intervention of this kind ever materialising:

I think they will all wait until the inevitable happens and Ireland is once more 'enslaved': civil war may ensue, Ulster may be overrun and a republic antipathetic to England formed, and then all the Irish must be subdued again as the Boers were.

In the meantime, she was convinced that the Curia had almost destroyed the Irish gentry and was now doing the same with the English and the h as well as 'vulgarizing Sydney and Queensland'. As evidence of this, she cited the sensational Sister Ligouri (Bridget Partridge) case which had dominated the Australian newspapers during the latter part of 1920 and its demonstration of what she thought was a corrupted justice system.

She was also convinced that the Catholic Church had thoroughly penetrated the Australian political system:

You have only to look at the list of Labor executives, of Aldermen etc. etc., to know that the RC church has kicked them in, as it will kick them out if they don't come to heel. Theodore wants you all to forget that he was made and run by Dr Archbishop Duhig, as he will be run by Mannix if he gets into the Federal Parliament.

In South Australia she believed that there was an 'unholy alliance' between the Germans and the Roman Catholic elements of the labour movement, both of which she cordially detested.

The only thing that she thought was saving Australia from the acceleration of Irish Catholic influence was the unpopularity of the new Papal Nuncio, who had been coldly received by the bishops in Ireland when the Pope sent him on a peace mission there during the Civil War. Nevertheless, the process was well advanced:

When the eyes of the public are opened now and then to the penetration of RCs into every service in the state, Mannix

sends his criers out with sectarianism, and because fair play is rooted in every Britisher, sectarianism is deprecated and a good man will vote for a bad R.C. because he thinks there hasn't been 'fair play'. How our enemies play on that weakness! The W.A. Labor Ministry has several *protégés* of Clune and his predecessor in it. Do you know what is a good Catholic? It is a good man who will lie and steal and perjure himself and his mother and all his relations, who will bury every principle he naturally possesses at the bidding of his Spiritual Father.

Bates claimed to have visited a relative who was a bishop when she returned briefly to Ireland in 1894:

He was a beautiful horseman and I could ride anything but I never had hands and we'd get away from the picnickers [sic] and I told him I would only become an R.C. if he married me. Like all RCs he hated England. We talk of the German hate that's only a product of say half or three quarters of a century - but the Irish seminaries and schools and colleges at home and in Rome are schools of hate and have been ever since the Reformation. And every scrap of propaganda going on from China to Peru is against England, against the Empire and is as futile as throwing rotten eggs on the side of H.M.S. *Hood*.

From all this we can form some impression of Daisy Bates' Irishness, boosted it has to be said by a certain amount of assimilated Australian prejudice. Like many other Irish expatriates, she believed that the best people had left Ireland and that it was now incapable of solving its own problems. Added to this was her own special brand of rabid anti-Catholicism of which perhaps only an Irish Catholic-turned-Protestant could be capable. Distilled in the fierce heat of the desert, it was the philosophy not of an enlightened prophet but of an embittered self-exile whose views thankfully remained in the private realm. While not dismissing them out of hand (there will be some readers, no doubt, who also have thoughts about, and perhaps issues with, the religious and with the political role of the Catholic Church in Ireland and Australia), I think that this opens up a much broader subject. It is enough to have

established Daisy Bates, 'Great White Queen of the Never-Lands' was, in the privacy of her little white tent in the desert, a sectarian bigot as well as an Imperial patriot.

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