

The Venerable John Joseph Steiner: A German-Irish Saint?

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There are saintly qualities to be seen in the lifetime devotion to the Catholic Church of John Joseph Steiner. Formally, a saint is 'a person acknowledged as holy or virtuous and regarded in Christian faith as being in heaven after death'.¹ Collins English Dictionary defines a saint as:

a person who after death is formally recognized by a Christian Church, especially the Roman Catholic Church, as having attained, through holy deeds or behaviour, a specially exalted place in heaven and the right to veneration; a person of exceptional holiness or goodness.²

Born into a German Lutheran family, Steiner was orphaned at twelve, sought answers to his faith and true calling

¹ (<http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/saint>) (8 Aug. 2012).

² *Collins English dictionary, complete and unabridged* (Harper Collins publishers, 1991, 1994, 1998, 2000, 2003)

(<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/saint>) (8 Aug. 2012). In defining a saint and sainthood Manuela Dunn-Mascetti offers phrases like 'models of piety and virtue', 'holy', 'human incarnations of divine power', providing an 'example, fellowship, and aid' for others on earth to follow, 'veneration' and 'the gift to effect changes in the lives of others (...) [and] attend to devotees'. *Saints. The chosen few* (New York, 1994), pp 9-29.

in life, before deciding to come to Ireland in 1856 at the age of twenty-four years. He was received into the Catholic Church and for the next thirty-eight years he walked the length and breadth of the country helping Margaret Aylward, Father Gowan and the Sisters of the Holy Faith Convent to collect funds for St. Brigid's Orphanage, Dublin.³ Steiner's story is one of piety, sacrifice, generosity, love for the poor, the needy and the Catholic Church; a German Lutheran orphan who devoted his life to collecting for an Irish Catholic children's charity, at no financial benefit to himself. John Joseph Steiner's work and devotion to Ireland was lost and forgotten as soon as the British government's emergency alien restrictions and the war propaganda machine ostracised him as an enemy alien as soon as the First World War began. Anti-German hysteria engulfed the final two years of his life, before his death in 1916. However, the 'little silver-haired, kindly-faced man, in clerical garb (...) generally known by no other designation than 'the wee old Brother'' still held the affection of the people that knew him, for his devotion to the cause of

³ Furthering reading on Margaret Aylward is found in: Jacinta Prunty, *Margaret Aylward, 1810-1889: lady of charity, sister of faith* (Dublin, 1999); Maria Luddy, *Women and philanthropy in nineteenth-century Ireland* (Cambridge, 1995); Mary Cullen and Maria Luddy (eds), *Women, power and consciousness in 19th century Ireland* (Dublin, 1995); Margaret Gibbons, *The Life of Margaret Aylward, foundress of the sisters of the holy faith* (London, 1928).

the Catholic Church and St. Brigid's Orphanage up to his death.⁴ I will attempt to tell the story of a German Lutheran orphan who became a saint for many Irish Catholic orphaned children.

John Joseph Steiner was born in Liebenzell, Württemberg (South-West Germany) on 26 August 1832. Liebenzell was very much a Protestant town. Even so, Steiner recalled that there were similarities between his adopted home of Ireland, predominantly Catholic, and the town of his birth. One such example was the local policeman who was involved in a variety of occupations and community responsibilities. In addition to being the town auctioneer he provided the equipment to shred the town's cabbage for their year's supply of sauerkraut (preserved cabbage). This local delicacy was an accompaniment for bacon on a Sunday. A similar dish of bacon and cabbage was a traditional meal in Ireland. It is not surprising that Steiner found so much solace in Ireland and its people.⁵

Steiner was born into a German Lutheran family. His family was of modest means. His father was a shoemaker, as was his grandfather. In his autobiography Steiner commented on his various relations, '...the greater part of whom were

⁴ *Irish Independent*, 20 Oct. 1914.

⁵ Steiner's autobiography, 27 Dec. 1914 (H.F.A., Steiner papers, file JS/BC/09).

objects of pity, not in extreme poverty or destitution but otherwise afflicted.⁶ In 1844, at the age of twelve years, Steiner's father passed away and the young boy was orphaned. As he recalled: 'The policeman's bell clanged outside (...) it was my own name I heard – my own auction he was calling: "the twelve-year-old John Steiner is to be given, not to the highest, but to the lowest bidder."⁷

After the policeman auctioned off the young Steiner, he was taken in by kind foster parents where he was cared for while finishing his education, before training as a tailor from the age of fifteen in the nearby town of Calw. After eighteen months Steiner moved to Augsburg, where his brother was working and where he visited his first Catholic cathedral. In Bavaria he had found himself 'in a Catholic country [where] (...) the Catholic churches [made the] others seem old and lifeless'.⁸ However, Steiner remained confused about his religious affiliation. He viewed this time of his youth as 'a sinful, unbelieving and unhappy life.'⁹ In search of training opportunities, adventure and answers to his religious curiosity,

⁶ Autobiography (MS original and MS copy) of John Joseph Steiner, 27 Dec. 1914 (H.F.A., Steiner papers, file JS/BC/09).

⁷ Ibid. and L. G. Ó Dearbhaill, 'Beggarmen for babies', centenary celebrations, 1967, (Dublin, 1967), p. 40; (<http://www.holyfaithnetwork.net/linksarchives/27>) (15 Apr. 2012).

⁸ Ó Dearbhaill, 'beggarmen for babies', p. 40.

⁹ Steiner's autobiography, 27 Dec. 1914 (H.F.A., Steiner papers, file JS/BC/09).

Steiner travelled north to Gethin, near Berlin and onto other German states (Hamburg, the Island of Rügen, Stettin, Breslau, back to Hamburg, Prague and Dresden), before having to return home to fulfil his military conscription duty in 1853, at the age of twenty-one.¹⁰ On failing the entrance exams into the army, due to his short stature, Steiner decided to fulfil his year-long plan to travel to America, via London, to continue his training as a tailor. He travelled to London in 1854, where he worked as a tailor and regularly frequented several German Protestant churches in the east end of the city.¹¹ This area of London had become a German immigrant enclave in the nineteenth century, due to the employment and training opportunities offered in the city and Britain's advanced economy, compared with Germany.¹² After eighteen months, Steiner 'got into a kind of melancholy state'¹³ and he decided to embark on a journey to Bristol and onto Wales. He visited Merthyr Tydfil, Aberystwyth, travelling over the mountains of Snowdonia to Caernarfon and ended up living in Manchester. It was here that Steiner realised it only cost four shillings for the ferry fare from Liverpool to Dublin. 'I walked

¹⁰ Ó Dearbhaill, 'Beggarmen for babies', p. 40.

¹¹ Steiner's autobiography, 27 Dec. 1914 (H.F.A., Steiner papers, file JS/BC/09).

¹² Panikos Panayi (ed.), *Germans in Britain since 1500* (London & Rio Grande, 1996), pp 73-93.

¹³ Ibid.

[the] next day from Manchester through Warrington to Liverpool and then took shipping to Dublin. It was the beginning of the year 1856.¹⁴

Once in Dublin Steiner found work and accommodation with Mr. Reynolds, a Catholic tailor working at 15 North King Street. Through Reynolds Steiner would be introduced to the Catholic diocese of Dublin, Father Gowan and Sister Margaret Aylward, (founders of the Holy Faith Order in Dublin), and the Sisters of the Holy Faith Convent in Glasnevin. However, from reading Steiner's autobiography it appears that the single most important person in guiding him to his conversion into the Catholic Church was a customer of Mr Reynolds, a Mrs Colman from Phibsboro.¹⁵ Mrs Colman gave Steiner the Medal of the Immaculate Conception and taught him the prayer, 'O Mary, conceived without sin, pray to us who have recourse to thee.' More importantly, she sent on Steiner's name to Glasnevin Convent of the Sacred Heart, to begin his vocation as a collector for St. Brigid's orphanage.

However, Steiner's travels were not completed. On 25 March 1856 he left Dublin and walked to Belfast to take a boat over to Scotland and on to Edinburgh, where he stayed a few weeks. He then travelled back to London, where he settled to

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

work while he went through the procedure of being received into the Catholic Church on 21 August 1856. All the while travelling and working, Steiner would recite to himself the prayer he had learned from Mrs Colman. He remained in London for almost a year, with the intention to earn enough to enter into a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. However, he could not leave without visiting Dublin and his new friends he had left behind. Steiner resumed work at Mr Reynolds's shop in North King Street, Dublin about August 1857 and prepared for his forthcoming pilgrimage. Under the advice of Father Gowan, Steiner delayed his trip by two years. Steiner would never leave Ireland again.

Reynolds introduced Steiner to Margaret Aylward.¹⁶ He was soon persuaded by her and Father Gowan to become a collector, between 1857 and 1858.¹⁷ Steiner came to be in awe of the generosity of the Irish people to the Orphanage's cause

¹⁶ Sister Alice Aylward, archivist at the holy faith convent, Glasnevin, Dublin kindly explained to me on one of my visits that Margaret Aylward's orphanage was more a fostering service, providing shelter for children who found themselves homeless or parentless. The orphanage would care for the children until a suitable home was found, often provided by the wealthier subscribers to the orphanage collection. I have to thank Sister Alice for all the help and hospitality she gave me on my visit.

¹⁷ Incidentally, 1858 was year that the Mary Mathews case and trial started, which Mary Aylward served a six months imprisonment on a contempt of court charge in 1860 – for information on the case and Aylward's role see Maria Luddy, *Women and philanthropy in nineteenth-century Ireland* (Cambridge, 1995), p. 80.

as he travelled the towns and countryside of Ireland. He recalled:

This in a special manner is true of the very poorest who are so willing to give even their last penny and find it very hard to accept my refusing to take it from them. Many times it pains me to take anything, seeing such utter destitution among those (...) sometimes telling me the history of their heavy trials and then finishing up by saying (...) 'Thanks be to God'.¹⁸

His vocation became his devotion to the children of St. Brigid's Orphanage and the fostering services the organisation provided for many of its unfortunate inhabitants. Steiner travelled the length and breadth of Ireland, collecting for the cause of the children of St. Brigid's for the next four decades. Steiner's entry in the 1901 census return shows him living in 19 Quay Street, Donegal and his occupation is recorded as tailor.¹⁹ The 1911 census shows Steiner living in Dunleer Town, Louth, as a boarder of Mr Frederick Murray, a hotel manager.²⁰ It is interesting to note that Steiner's occupation

¹⁸ Steiner's autobiography, 27 Dec. 1914 (H.F.A., Steiner papers, file JS/BC/09).

¹⁹ '1901 Census Report for John Joseph Steiner' (http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/pages/1901/Donegal/Donegal/Quay_Street/1167821/) (14 Sept. 2010).

²⁰ '1911 census report for John Joseph Steiner' (http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/pages/1911/Louth/Dunleer/Dunleer_Town/570162/) (14 Sept. 2010).

was recorded on the census as a 'Collector' in 1911, emphasising the fact that he was becoming well-known for travelling the length and breadth of Ireland collecting donations for the Orphanage.

However, his life and profession were seriously restricted in 1914 with the start of the First World War, just like the lives of millions of others. As soon as the United Kingdom had declared war with Germany on 4 August 1914, Herbert Asquith's government was already working on legislation to bring the whole of the country onto a war-footing. Several pieces of legislation were put into operation during the first few months of the war which had restrictive effects upon British and Irish societies and the daily lives of its citizens. Within four days of war being declared, Asquith's Government introduced the first piece of legislation, the Defence of the Realm Act, 1914, on 8 August, later amended by the Defence of the Realm Consolidation Act, 1914, introduced in November. This gave government wide-ranging emergency powers and made provision for 'securing public safety and the defence of the realm'.²¹ It included putting in place public restrictions, such as prohibiting the lighting of

²¹ 5 Geo. VI., Defence of the Realm Consolidation Act, 1914 [U.K.] (27 Nov. 1914); (http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/pathways/firstworldwar/first_world_war/p_defence.htm) (14 Aug. 2012).

bonfires, flying kites – which could attract German Zeppelin raids – or discussing naval or military matters, while also introducing social control mechanisms, such as the censorship of the national press and the country's publishing companies. The Defence of the Realm Acts of 1914 have been described by Panikos Panayi as 'the most draconian legislation ever enacted by a British Government'.²²

The next major measure to be introduced was the Aliens Restriction Act, passed by Parliament on 5 August 1914 and implemented by 24 August 1914.²³ The Act directly affected enemy alien subjects residing in Great Britain and Ireland, often through residence or travel restrictions. Enemy aliens included people of German, Austrian or Hungarian nationality and later included Turkish nationals after 5 November 1914. Various geographical areas around the British Isles were labelled 'prohibited', especially to civilians of foreign origin, as they were often in very close proximity to Britain's naval, military and intelligence operations. This included Irish cities and ports such as Dublin, Belfast and Cork, as well as military bases, such as the Curragh camp. It also affected other industries of importance to the nation's security, such as the rail network, ship-building, munitions and

²² Panayi, *Germans in Britain Since 1500* (London, 1996) p. 116.

²³ Royal Assent given to the Aliens Restriction Act, 1914 (Hansard, HC deb., 05 Aug. 1914, vol. 65 c2041).

telecommunications facilities, such as the Marconi wireless facilities situated around Ireland.

Panikos Panayi states in *Germans in Britain since 1500* (1996), that: 'During the First World War Britain virtually became an autocracy, within which the state took direct action to deal with any perceived threats.'²⁴ Civilians of German, Austro-Hungarian or Turkish descent would now have to register as alien enemies with the local police office. If an alien enemy wished to travel outside a five-mile radius of their home address, the individual would have to apply for a travel permit. Steiner became a victim of the Alien Restriction Act when war broke out in August 1914. His wartime story was portrayed in four *Irish Independent* articles, the first of which was on 14 October 1914 with the headline: 'Alien Enemy Danger, Orphanage Collector Fined £10'.²⁵ The 82-year-old Steiner was arrested for travelling more than five miles from his residence, St Anne's Road, Drumcondra, without a travel permit. The police sergeant commented during Dublin's Northern Police Court hearing on 13 October, that when Steiner was arrested he stated that, '... he had been 58 years in

²⁴ Panayi, *Germans in Britain*, p. 116.

²⁵ *Irish Independent*, 14 Oct. 1914. The same article also mentioned the arrest of a German waiter at the dolphin hotel, by the name of Joseph Bohn. Bohn's offence was giving false particulars, stating to the police that he had never served in the military forces.

Ireland and did not think the Aliens Order referred to him.²⁶ A fine of £10 was imposed on Steiner for being, ‘...an unregistered alien enemy and travelling more than 5 miles from his place of residence without a travel permit.’²⁷ Under the newspaper article, Lord Charles Beresford - British Admiral and politician - was quoted as saying:

The crowd of alien enemies in our midst (...) are creating a real danger to the State (...) the present regulations are futile (...) prohibited areas, which are defined and regulated, have been made out on systems which are childish in their innocence (...) [More drastic steps should be taken] for preventing aliens being able to give information to our enemies.²⁸

The article clearly demonstrates the xenophobia that was building momentum in Britain and Ireland towards the enemy alien nationalities. Spy-fever was also being created by the British Government and the British press in the first few months of the war, culminating in further tensions and even

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid. Lord Charles Beresford was described as a leading member of the British parliament’s “radical right” group, alongside individuals like Leo Maxse (editor of *The national review*), Arnold White (journalist and author of *The hidden hand*, 1917) and William Joynson-Hicks (M.P. for Brentford) in Panikos Panayi, *The enemy in our midst. Germans in Britain during the first world war* (New York and Oxford, 1991), p. 40; p. 63; p. 67; pp 76-7.

physical violence in some cases between the alien population and the host nation throughout the British Isles.

The next article associated with Steiner is a letter received and published by the editor of the *Irish Independent* on 20 October 1914. The author’s name was not given in the letter but the sympathy for Steiner’s case was more than evident:

VENERABLE GERMAN FINED, WELL KNOWN
IN THE NORTH-WEST

Poor old John Joseph (...) [the] little silver-haired, kindly-faced man, in clerical garb (...) “the wee old Brother” (...) What an exemplary life this beautiful old man has led, journeying from town to town, tramping hills and valleys (...) Steiner’s only worldly concern was the cause of the orphans (...) But in the eyes of the law he is an “alien”, and (...) brought before Dublin Court for failing to comply with the provisions of the Aliens Registration Order, 1914 (...) Anybody who knows the old man can easily understand his forgetfulness or ignorance in a matter of this kind (...) But the law is the law and the dear old man must pay the penalty. There is not a Catholic in Ireland who will not sympathise with this venerable worker for the cause of poor children.²⁹

²⁹ *Irish Independent*, 20 Oct. 1914. This page of the newspaper also contained an article stating ‘Fierce anti-German riots’ in London, where many German-owned shops were damaged on High Street, Old Kent Rd and other south London locations. Thirty men and women were charged at Greenwich Police station – including two British soldiers. The incident happened after public houses closed and 350 men of the army service corps had to be called in to quell the riot.

The next day's edition of the *Irish Independent* had another letter from John Robert O'Connell of 34 Kildare Street, Dublin, clearly showing the "spy-fever" and xenophobia being created by the British Government and the press had not permeated all aspects of Irish society. O'Connell stated to the editor of the *Irish Independent* that 'as an old friend of St. Brigid's Orphanage' and due to the 'self-sacrificing and unwearied labours' of Steiner, he felt the £10 fine his possible arrest and internment was unjust. O'Connell 'personally called at the Police Courts and paid the money, so that Mr. Steiner is now relieved from any further anxiety...'.³⁰

The new restrictions did not prevent John Joseph Steiner from continuing his charitable endeavour as a collector. His collection books, carefully preserved at the Sisters of the Holy Faith Convent Archive, exemplify just how devoted Steiner was to his work, as were the subscribers to the cause. The journal pages from this period entitled 'Names of Subscribers from Dublin and the Surrounding Districts since November 1914' show how Steiner had to limit his travels to within the Dublin area, due to the travel restrictions placed upon him as an enemy alien. This title given to these pages illustrates the frustration felt by Steiner at his inability to travel

³⁰ *Irish Independent*, 21 Oct. 1914.

to his regular subscribers throughout all provinces of Ireland.³¹ He often found as much comfort and solace from visiting his subscribers as much as they enjoyed his visits. The pages clearly show not only his confinement to Dublin but also the Dublin people's charitable generosity during a time of war. Individual contributions ranged from 2s. to 10s. and from people of varying wealth. A list of Steiner's subscription collections can also be found in St. Brigid's Orphanage 58th Annual Report (1915) booklet, detailing the subscribers and amounts collected between January 1914 and January 1915.³²

Also held within the Convent archive is a collection of letters written by Steiner, his subscribers and the Sisters. These letters give details of Steiner's endeavours to collect donations during 1915. The correspondence starts with a letter dated 1 January from Mary Hunt of Clara Vale, Co. Wicklow. Mary Hunt was writing on behalf of the mother and sister of Mr. Arthur Byrne, a young British Army lieutenant who came from the landowning family of Cooney Byrne House, near Rathdrum and had enlisted a few months earlier. The mother and sister requested Steiner to ask the nuns of the Holy Faith

³¹ Taken from the 'Collection books belonging to Mr. Steiner: 1892-1897', including some collections taken after 1914 (File JS/BC/09, Sisters of the holy faith convent archive).

³² St. Brigid's orphanage 56th annual report, 1913 and St. Brigid's orphanage 58th annual report, 1915 (H.F.A., Steiner papers, file JS/BC/09).

Convent to pray daily for the safe return of their son and brother. The mother was genuinely scared that 'it is likely he will never see another Xmas day in this world.' Arthur Byrne had enlisted out of economic necessity, as his family had been left in a poor state since Parnell's Land League movement had gathered pace and landed estates had lost both land and rent over the previous few years. Arthur Byrne's grandfather had been one of St. Brigid's Orphanage first benefactors. Steiner believed this to be 'such a [sic] urgent and deserving case' in a letter dated 5 January to the convent sisters.³³

Another of Steiner's letters, written on the 20 February, was the first indication that his health was deteriorating. Writing to one of the sisters at the convent, he admitted, 'It is only with difficulty I am able to [write the letter], as I have little use of one hand.' A further letter written on 16 March stated: 'Please excuse the long delay in answering your very kind letter, but I was so very ill (...) I hasten to write these few lines wishing you and all the Sisters a very happy St. Patrick's Day (...)'³⁴

Even though his illness was still evident in his 27 March letter, due to 'the weather being so changeable', Steiner

³³ Correspondence, 1 Jan. 1915, 5 Jan. 1915 (H.F.A., Steiner papers, file JS/BC/09).

³⁴ Correspondence, 16 Mar. 1915, (H.F.A., Steiner papers, file JS/BC/09).

was still able to send a collection of donations totalling 15s.³⁵ Steiner was finding it more difficult to collect the same amount of donations from his regular subscribers in the city due to the high prices of goods and rents in Dublin city. By the 26 April Steiner stated, 'There is such distress in the City. The people find it hard to give subscriptions, there are so many looking for relief who were formerly in good circumstances.' By 1 May Steiner wrote that '...distress in the City is getting worse every week, many will have to close their shops (...) not being able to pay their rent (...)'³⁶ The month of May also saw the sinking of the passenger liner, *Lusitania*, torpedoed by a German U-boat off the Old Head of Kinsale on 7 May. Ireland did not experience the anti-German riots that many towns and cities in Britain did after the sinking and death of 1,198 civilians. However, the xenophobia and anti-alien public feeling created by the country's press and right-wing politicians made the British Government intensify the restrictions on its alien population. Internment of enemy aliens grew from June onwards and plans for repatriation of suspicious aliens led to the authorities demanding all enemy aliens to apply for 'exemption from repatriation certificates'.

³⁵ Correspondence, 20 Feb. 1915, 16 Mar. 1915, 27 Mar. 1915 (H.F.A., Steiner papers, file JS/BC/09).

³⁶ Correspondence, 26 Apr. 1915 and 1 May 1915 (H.F.A., Steiner papers, file JS/BC/09).

Steiner was granted exemption from deportation on the 25 October 1915.³⁷

Steiner's health deteriorated further in the second half of 1915. In a letter to the convent sisters, Steiner explained that he had 'met with an accident again'. On this occasion he was knocked down by a horse and car near Donnybrook, which resulted in considerable bruising to several of his joints. Steiner admitted that 'I consider it next to a miracle not to have been killed.'³⁸ At the start of October, Steiner was sick again with a common cold that affected his breathing and his ability to walk any distance.³⁹ It is uncertain how long it took him to get over this bout of sickness, but he did not mention his health in his last letter dated 24 December, where he wished the convent sisters a Happy Christmas. John Joseph Steiner did not see peacetime. He passed away at the age of 84 years, on 29 March 1916. He died at the Mater Hospital with the convent sisters praying at his bedside. His devotion to the cause of St. Brigid's Orphanage was exemplified by his last words which directed a Sister to one last contribution for

³⁷ Copy of letter exempting John Joseph Steiner from deportation or repatriation, 25 Oct. 1915 (national archives of Ireland, chief secretary's office registered papers, CSORP/1918/18748).

³⁸ Correspondence, 1 Aug. 1915 (H.F.A., Steiner papers, file JS/BC/09).

³⁹ Correspondence, 9 Aug. 1915 (H.F.A., Steiner papers, file JS/BC/09).

St. Brigid's in his coat pocket.⁴⁰ His death notice in the *Irish Independent* read:

STEINER – March 29, 1916, at the Mater Hospital, John Joseph Steiner; born at Liebenzell, Wurtemberg, in 1832, came to Ireland in 1856, was for 58 years a devoted collector for St. Brigid's Orphanage, 46 Eccles St., Dublin. Deeply regretted. R.I.P.⁴¹

He was buried in the Convent Cemetery in Glasnevin in recognition of his crucial contribution to St. Brigid's Orphanage, the same cemetery where Margaret Aylward and Father Gowan were also buried.

John Joseph Steiner's devotion to the Catholic faith and particularly to the work of St. Brigid's Orphanage was clearly evident. Even when the British and Irish authorities increased the restrictions on the residence and movement of aliens during the First World War many Irish people attested to Steiner's character and continued to subscribe to the orphanage. 'The Irish took John Joseph Steiner to their hearts'⁴² and Steiner in return reciprocated their feelings with his devotion and prayers. Steiner was not canonised as a saint by the Catholic Church after his death. However, through his

⁴⁰ Ó Dearbhaill, 'Beggar man for babies', p. 43.

⁴¹ *Irish Independent*, 30 Mar. 1916.

⁴² Ó Dearbhaill, 'Beggar man for babies', p. 43.

deeds, goodness and devotion to God and Ireland's orphaned children, Steiner certainly deserved a specially exalted place in heaven and the right to veneration by future generations and it is probable that during his lifetime the children he helped and the people whose lives he touched used the term 'saintly' to describe the work and devotion of the "wee old Brother".